



**PROVISION FOR POST-PROJECT EVALUATIONS FOR THE UNITED NATIONS
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EVALUATION REPORT



UDF-REU-08-263: Strengthening Civil Society Across Borders to Develop Democracy

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Disclaimer

The views expressed in this report are those of the evaluator. They do not represent those of UNDEF nor of any of the institutions referred to in the report.

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I. Executive Summary

(i) Project data

The project "Strengthening Civil Society Across Borders to Develop Democracy" was implemented by Euclid Network from 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2011. The UNDEF grant amount was of US\$ 300,000 with a project budget of US\$ 275,000, and an evaluation component of US\$ 25,000.

The project's goal was to increase the capacity of NGOs in Moldova and Ukraine in advocacy and networking and improve the functioning of existing mechanisms for engagement between civil society and government.

(ii) Evaluation findings

The project was clearly consistent with UNDEF's mandate and was **relevant** to needs in the areas covered. In both countries, opportunities for constructive cooperation between civil society and local government had been missed. This is especially true in Ukraine, where mutual suspicion continues to prevail. It is less true in Moldova, where political change mid-project brought in a government that is more open to civil society engagement; however, this development took place after the project had begun.

As documented in the project final narrative report and confirmed by this evaluation, the project was highly **effective**. Not only were planned activities implemented, but anticipated results, in the form of capacity building for advocacy and networking, were achieved. More important, the project resulted in a range of concrete initiatives, both at the local level and at the level of improved NGO representation in national policy making.

There was good value for money when impacts achieved are compared to the amount expended, so the project may safely be judged to have been **efficient**, that is, to have delivered good value for money. Good use was made of international and national human resources.

The local initiatives and increased national involvement of NGOs in policy processes both had concrete **impact**, ranging from promoting the participation of blind voters to making amendments to the new law on associations (Ukraine) and the human rights action plan (Moldova).

The **sustainability** of the project has several dimensions. It has contributed to the ability of the five national implementing NGOs to raise international support, as proven by the fact that several have successfully done so since the end of the project. Sustainability at the level of local NGOs is not assured, although establishing a credible claim on fiscal resources, especially at the local level, has been successful. Sustainability (and future impact) could have been better assured if a web-based means of keeping in touch and searching for new partners had been provided for. In general, the web presence of the project does not stand up to the quality of its results and impact.

(iii) Conclusions

The basic premise of this project was that when civil society and government, here often local authorities, engage constructively and pro-actively, common ground will be found and better approaches and solutions developed. This project confirmed that approach. **Promoting cooperation between government and NGOs can have as much impact on strengthening the role of civil society as promoting NGOs in their "watchdog" role.** It

might be added that the two approaches are complementary, as the enhanced involvement of civil society in national policymaking in both Ukraine and Moldova was in part a result of the contribution of this project.

The success of this project demonstrated again the crucial importance of high-quality implementing partners, whether international or national. UNDEF has understandably tended to move away from international implementing agencies, but this project provides another example where the presence of a reliable, experienced international partner contributed significantly to the success of the project. However, it also points to the emergence of second-generation international implementing NGOs, namely those who are national in charter but have substantial experience in implementing international projects and are beginning to find their feet in international funding circles.

The project provides a good example of the value added of regional approaches when there is an appropriate group of countries and / or NGOs involved. In this series of evaluations, examples have been found both of projects where the regional dimension detracted, and where it added. This project clearly fell into the latter category. The sharing of cross-border experiences clearly leveraged results and impacts (although the extent to which these cross-border ties are maintained could have been enhanced by a better sustainability strategy).

Local NGO sustainability remains challenging. However, the key result is that local NGOs were empowered to present themselves as a credible claimant on local fiscal resources, a key for long-term sustainability.

As evidenced by the lacklustre recommendations that emerged from the final project conference, **the value added of this project was at the concrete level of collaborations formed to address mutually recognised problems; it was not at the broader level of re-defining the relationship between civil society and government (which is where the recommendations tended to lie).** This is consistent with the project strategy, which was to promote concrete collaborations with positive results. The *Handbook* documenting these experiences in the form of case studies is only being finalised as of this writing.

Dissemination of these concrete experiences will depend on the web. While the decision to not emphasise web-based approaches is defensible, **the project would have benefitted from better use of the web.** This is especially true in the area of sustainability, where a more coherent web structure would help beneficiaries stay in touch, develop new partnerships, and seek support. Resources are clearly limited and tradeoffs are real, but with hindsight, more attention to web strategy would have improved the project.

(iv) Recommendations

Following from the conclusions, it is recommended that the local NGOs participating in the project **develop long-term relationships with local authorities; for example, permanent consultative status in an issue area or a multi-year arrangement to provide services.** This will enhance financial sustainability in the most convincing way and help to avoid the trap of being dependent on recurrent one-time projects.

It is also recommended that local NGOs **maintain the cross-border ties that were formed in this project through twinning arrangements.** This will require some effort since the project has not put in place an easy web-based system for doing this.

It is recommended that Euclid Network **give more emphasis to web-based dissemination / coordination** in implementing future projects of this type. The decision to keep web strategy simple is a sound one in view of tradeoffs, but in this case, the meagre web footprint of the project has not enhanced sustainability.

Closely related to this, it is recommended that UNDEF **consider putting in place a web-based inventory of all projects supported**, perhaps in the form of a simple spreadsheet with web links, in order to facilitate partnerships, the search for funding, etc. Finally, UNDEF should **continue to use regional approaches where the value added is clear**. In this series of evaluations, there have been examples of projects where the regional dimension was weak because national circumstances differed. In this case, although the political dynamic in the two beneficiary countries was very different, the potential for sharing lessons learned was nonetheless high.

II. Introduction and development context

(i) The project and evaluation objective

This report evaluates the project “Strengthening Civil Society Across Borders to Develop Democracy,” implemented by Euclid Network in Ukraine and Moldova from 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2011. The total grant was US\$ 300,000, of which the project budget was US\$ 275,000, and US\$ 25,000 was reserved by UNDEF for monitoring and evaluation. The project’s goals (according to the Project Document) were “to increase the capacity of NGOs in Moldova and Ukraine in advocacy and networking” and “to improve the functioning of existing mechanisms for engagement between civil society and government.” Project activities were targeted at civil society organization (CSO) representatives and government officials in the whole of Moldova (including the breakaway region of Transnistria and the autonomous region of Gagauzia), and four oblasts of Ukraine (Poltavska, Sumska, Luhanska and Khersonska).

UNDEF and Transtec have agreed on a framework governing the evaluation process, set out in the Operational Manual. According to the manual, the objective of the evaluation is to “undertake in-depth analysis of UNDEF-funded projects to gain a better understanding of what constitutes a successful project, which will in turn help UNDEF devise future project strategies. Evaluations also assist stakeholders to determine whether projects have been implemented in accordance with the project document and whether anticipated project outputs have been achieved.”

(ii) Evaluation methodology

The methodology for this evaluation, agreed upon by Transtec and UNDEF, was detailed in a *Launch Note*. The approach followed in this evaluation was slightly different than in previous evaluations, as the international expert, Mr. Landis MacKellar, was able to attend three major project events, (i) a session of the Brussels-London study visit, in February-March 2011, (ii) an international round table in Kiev, and (iii) (directly following the round table) the project final conference in Kiev in July 2011. Although formal interviews were held with a number of major stakeholders, most of the evidence for this evaluation, in addition to documentary evidence (see Annex 2), was gleaned from the expert’s participant observation in these events. The list of persons interviewed in Annex 3 must therefore be put in the context of a much larger group of persons with whom informal discussions were held.

The evaluation was organized around a series of Evaluation Questions (Annex 1) which cover the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability, plus the criterion of UNDEF value added. In addition, UNDEF requested that two issues be addressed:

- How did the international implementing partner (Euclid Network) compare to other implementing partners with whom UNDEF has worked?
- How effectively did the project empower national implementing NGO partners to compete in the international market for donor funding?

(iii) Development context

Moldova and Ukraine are post-Soviet states grappling with a legacy of authoritarian governance, unaffordable social protection systems that fail to protect against poverty, and large welfare gaps between highly developed capital cities and other regions, especially the countryside. Both are members of the European Neighbourhood with ambitions to eventually accede to the European Union. In the case of Ukraine, the political situation is complicated by the fact that Western Ukraine is highly European in orientation, whereas Eastern Ukraine

instinctively looks to Russia as its natural partner. No such fracture exists in Moldova, whose traditionally strong ties with Romania (and the fact that a substantial proportion of the population is entitled to a Romanian passport) have led to a strongly pro-European stance. Moldova suffers, however, from being the poorest country in Europe, heavily dependent on an inefficient agricultural sector. In addition, it must cope with the “frozen conflict” concerning the breakaway region of Transnistria, a conflict in which hostilities have ceased and where there is a limited degree of political, social, and economic contact, but there has been no political rapprochement.

At the time the project was proposed, the relationship between government and civil society in both countries was not a constructive one. Each was characterized by a State-oriented policy mindset, not a citizen-oriented one, and the relationship between civil society organizations and government authorities at all levels was one of mutual suspicion. This relationship, though it was seen to be slowly improving, remained weak. There had been progress on promoting engagement between government and civil society, but it was meagre. This situation completely changed mid-project in Moldova following the change of government, which brought into power many former civil society activists. The situation in Ukraine, by contrast, deteriorated as a result of elections.

Economic development and civil society in Ukraine

Ukraine is a country of 46 million people covering 232,200 square miles of territory. It is larger in terms of area than any other European country except Russia. Administratively, Ukraine is divided into 24 provinces or oblasts, two municipalities with oblast status (Kiev and Sevastopol), and one autonomous republic (Crimea).

After Russia, the Ukrainian republic was far and away the most important economic component of the former Soviet Union, producing about four times the output of the next-ranking republic. Today, according to the World Bank, Ukraine is a lower middle income country with US\$ 6,700 (2010 est.) annual per capita income. However, its dependence on Russia for energy supplies and the lack of significant structural reform have made the Ukrainian economy vulnerable to external shocks.

Although final independence for Ukraine was achieved in 1991 with the dissolution of the USSR, democracy has remained elusive as the legacy of state control and corruption stalled efforts at economic reform, privatization, and civil liberties. A peaceful mass protest "Orange Revolution" in the closing months of 2004 forced the authorities to overturn a rigged presidential election and to allow a new internationally monitored vote that swept into power a reformist slate under Viktor Yuschenko. Subsequent internal disputes in the Yuschenko camp allowed his rival Viktor Yanukovich to stage a comeback in parliamentary elections and become prime minister in August of 2006. An early legislative election, brought on by a political crisis in the spring of 2007, saw Yuliya Tymoshenko, as head of an "Orange" coalition, installed as a new prime minister in December 2007. Yanukovich was elected president in a February 2010 run-off election that observers assessed as meeting most international standards. The following month, the Rada approved a vote of no confidence prompting Tymoshenko to resign from her post as prime minister. She has recently been sentenced to 7 years in jail for corruption, relating to Russian gas following a judicial process criticized by her supporters as a show trial.

Civil society is weak in Ukraine. Despite the increasing total number of registered CSOs, the active participation of citizens in CSO activities is still low. Only about 6% of the population is engaged with CSOs. CSOs tend to be geographically limited and to pursue limited themes. There is insufficient networking and collaboration amongst NGOs, in part because insufficient resources and heavy donor dependence encourage them to see each other as competitors.

Despite these challenges, CSOs still play an important role in advancing the current reform process, not least at the central government level.

Economic development and civil society in Moldova

Moldova, in contrast to Ukraine, is small and poor. The country shares, however, the characteristic of being dependent on Russia for energy supplies. Economic reforms have been slow because of corruption and strong political forces backing government controls. Nevertheless, the government's primary goal of EU integration has resulted in some market-oriented progress.

Even before the political change in 2009-10, there were signs of progress. Bertelsmann Foundation 2008 reported that NGOs had become stronger and more powerful. For instance, the NGO network Anti-corruption Alliance (AAC), had signed a collaboration agreement with the government enabling the AAC to monitor the activities of public sector bodies and interact with government anti-corruption agencies when cases of corruption was detected. However, Global Integrity 2008 reported that this agreement existed merely "on paper" and that reports published by AAC were ignored by the state officials, who assessed them as "subjective and biased." Overall, government was unwilling to cooperate with NGOs. Freedom House 2009 reported that some NGOs complained of bureaucratic obstruction and police harassment.

The flawed elections of April 2009 and ensuing violent repression of protests triggered a change of government, with the previous Communist government being replaced by a more progressive one including many former civil society activists. In September 2009, the Communist government resigned following the opposition's gain of a narrow majority in July parliamentary elections and the Communist Party's subsequent inability to attract the three-fifths of parliamentary votes required to elect a president. Moldova's four opposition parties formed a new coalition, the Alliance for European Integration (AIE), which acted as Moldova's governing coalition until December 2010. Following the November 2010 parliamentary elections, a reconstituted AIE-coalition of three parties formed a government, but remains two votes short of the three-fifths majority required to elect a president.

The legal environment for CSOs in the Republic of Moldova has considerably improved. After the political change that followed the parliamentary elections of July 2009, the new government proved to be more open and consistent in carrying out a number of legal reforms contributing to an enabling environment for CSOs. At the same time the political and social events of 2009 resulted in stronger voices of CSOs being heard and recognized by the Government and the Parliament. Some 5,000 CSOs are currently included in the Ministry's registry of NGOs. The actual number is higher, around 8,000. However, only a minority are active.

III. Project strategy

(i) Project approach and strategy

The grantee /implementing partners. The project was implemented by one international NGO that was the direct grantee, working with five national NGOs.

Euclid Network, the international implementing NGO headquartered in London, is a network of over 300 civil society professionals in the European space broadly defined which seeks to empower its members to be agents for change in the public good. Funding comes from a core grant from the European Commission, DG Education and Culture, from projects financed by the European Commission and United Nations, and from membership dues.

In Ukraine, the two national implementing partners responsible for delivery of activities were CCC Creative Centre (founded 1993) and GURT Resource Centre (founded 1995). Both NGOs are devoted to providing support and capacity building to NGOs in Ukraine. GURT took the lead in implementing the project in Poltavaska and Sumska oblasts, and CCC in Luhanska and Khersonska oblasts



Representatives of implementing NGOs at the final project conference.

World Window supported CReDO and CONTACT in all activities concerning Transnistria. World Window carries out activities ranging from a summer school to offering free legal advice, all with an emphasis on youth and a pan-European perspective.

In Moldova, the local implementing partners were CONTACT (Centre for National Assistance and Information of NGOs from Moldova), CReDO (Resource Center of Moldovan Non-governmental Organisations for Human Rights) and (representing Transnistria) International Youth Centre World Window. CONTACT (founded in 1995) provides information, consulting, training, facilitation services, grants and technical assistance to NGOs. CReDO directly undertakes activities promoting human rights and offers capacity building services to other NGOs. CReDO took the

The original project document also included two European NGOs, European Exchange in Germany and FDSC in Romania. Their foreseen role was to participate in monthly meetings of a project management committee to support strategic implementation. In the event, the contribution of these NGOs was limited.

Targeted beneficiaries. The project's targeted direct beneficiaries were senior CSO representatives and government officials in Ukraine and Moldova (including Transnistria). In Ukraine, the project beneficiaries were all outside the capital Kiev. In Moldova, some were Chisinau-based and some were in the regions. In Transnistria, all were Tiraspol-based. The project document does not contain information on how beneficiary CSOs were chosen, or the extent to which there was self-nomination.

Project structure. The overall goal, and impact, of the project, was to move from a dynamic of opposition between civil society and government authorities to a dynamic of constructive cooperation. The basic principle was that local government and CSOs should be represented equally in dialogue. The project was to help CSOs understand the challenges of being in government and to help government officials understand the challenges of representing civil society. It was important to identify overlapping interests; to identify and strengthen existing means of cooperation, and develop new ones. The project sought to overcome the prevailing discourse of complaint and to mobilize CSOs as a source of expertise and solutions for local government, as well as to serve their function in



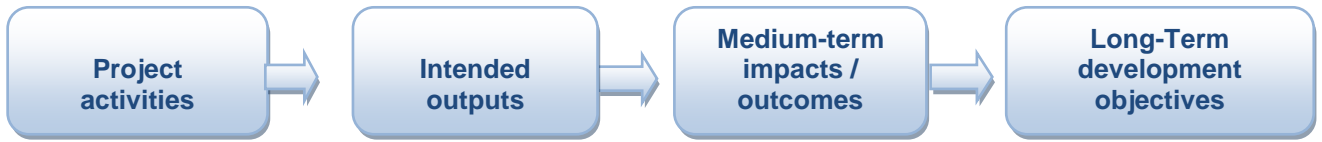
A meeting during the study visit

implementing legislation and local government decisions. The goal was not to create something radically new, it was to transform existing relations into something more constructive. The project started by recognising that there were structures for dialogue, e.g. Civic Councils in Ukraine, but that these were non-functional.

The project structure was event-based and hierarchical. By “event-based,” it is meant that the project was structured around a series of major events – master classes, round tables, steering committee meetings, the study visit, the final conference. These events were meant to articulate an on-going stream of activities consisting of the identification and implementation of collaborative projects as the result of dialogue between local CSOs and local authorities. By “hierarchical,” it is meant that there was a cascade of capacity building from top to bottom. Euclid International, the international implementing partner, has long involvement in encouraging and supporting European NGO networks. The major national implementing partners, GURT, CCC, CReDO, and CONTACT, all had experience in implementing international projects. World Window was in a special position due to the unique situation in Transnistria and was, in effect, a junior partner of CReDO and CONTACT.

(ii) Logical framework

An approximation of the project logical framework, drawn from the project document, is given below. The figure maps the logical path from activities/outputs through intended outcomes/objectives to anticipated impacts. The mapping of activities and intended outcomes to medium and long-term impacts is not one-to-one: an individual intended outcome may give rise to various impacts through the influence of particular activities, and multiple intended outcomes are likely to have similar impacts.



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Project management group plan trainings. - Project steering groups meet to develop trainings. - Local experts hired to write curricula - Conduct the trainings in Chisinau and Kiev. - Additional learning from study visit - Evaluation 	<p>100 CSO leaders and senior practitioners receive a one-day masterclass in advocacy and a one-day masterclass in networking</p> <p>The training resources for these trainings made available online free of charge</p> <p>At least 50 of the CSOs involved in the trainings increase their effectiveness in advocacy and networking within one year of the training</p>	<p>CSO practitioners more able to advocate government in an effective and pro-active manner</p> <p>CSOs and their staff able to develop their own networks to engage in collaborative action</p>	<p>To increase the capacity of NGOs in Moldova and Ukraine in advocacy and networking</p> <p>To improve the functioning of existing mechanisms for engagement between civil society and government</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Project management group develop strategy - Project steering groups meet to implement strategy - Plan roundtables National roundtables held - International roundtables held - Study visits - Conference planned - Conference held - Research report written - Research report published - Evaluation 	<p>15 government officials and 16 CSO practitioners will have built trust through regular roundtable meetings</p> <p>A study visit will have shown 29 government officials and 16 CSO practitioners concrete examples of positive CSO/government relations in the UK</p> <p>A conference will have publicized examples of good practice and shown how they can be scaled up across both countries</p>	<p>The formal mechanisms for government-civil society relations work effectively and transparently.</p>	

IV. Evaluation findings

(i) Relevance

As has been typically found in this series of UNDEF project evaluations, the project was relevant both to country and beneficiary needs and to the UNDEF mandate. As a regional project, it was also relevant to the regional need to share lessons learned as countries in the European Neighbourhood accumulate experience in civil society development. The European dimension, as highlighted by the Brussels-London study visit, was highly appropriate for these two countries. While the EU dimension was fully developed, it might have increased relevance to have built more on the countries' engagement in the Council of Europe, an engagement that includes a commitment to more autonomous, responsible, and democratic local governance as well as developing a robust civil society. The focus of the project on NGOs outside the capital and local governance is to be praised. De-concentration and the development of local democracy is a key component of Council of Europe commitments.

It might be argued that, political developments during the project life cycle made it more needed in Ukraine, less needed in Moldova. It is regrettable, but not entirely surprising, that Belarus withdrew, a timely reminder that UNDEF is ultimately constrained to work with the acceptance of governments. However, the success of the project in strengthening civil society in Transnistria, a difficult territory in which to work, underscores that part of UNDEF value added is its ability to do needed work in challenging environments. The project provided an invaluable window on the outside world for otherwise isolated Transnistrian civil society. In a context of strained relations, promoting NGO-to-NGO exchange between Moldova and Transnistria is an important contribution to resolving this frozen conflict. The project was also of special importance to beneficiaries in the autonomous region of Gagauzia.

The withdrawal of Belarus was a double-edged sword. It led to a budget reduction disproportionate to the amount of planned activity in that country, putting some financial stress on the project (a fact that enhances the efficiency of project implementation) . However, it could be argued that it also increased the credibility of the project. Given the crackdown on democratic forces in Belarus, it is possible that activities in that country might have been considered a complete failure.

(ii) Effectiveness

The project, although cut from three countries to two, essentially delivered the outputs it was expected to deliver, with the expected results. Round Tables, Steering Group meetings, the study visit, and the end-of-project conference were all successfully implemented. There were some changes in the project schedule due to the elections in both countries, unforeseeable events such as the Iceland volcano, and availability of government officials, but these were well within the range to be expected.

All documents consulted, as well as the participant observation of the project evaluator in one study visit session, one Round Table, and the end-of-project conference, confirm the effectiveness of the project. To take some observations from the last two,

- Chairing was effective
- Facilities, beamers, PowerPoint, and logistics were of medium, and adequate quality.
- The verbal quality of presentations by participants was good, and language arrangements were adequate.

- Presentations by Euclid Network and national implementing partners were of high quality and contributed to keeping the Round Table and conference on track and on target.
- Social events were effective in stimulating discussion.

The study visit session attended by the evaluator in Brussels was less effective, for three reasons. The room was too small and the Brussels-based host organisation allocated too much time to its own presentation, which was particularly unfortunate since, as an EU network, its work was not particularly relevant to the visiting Moldovan and Ukrainian NGOs (who had no possibility to join the network being presented). However, while the evaluator identified this problem, none of the beneficiaries did so in their comments on the study visit. Beyond implementing promised activities and delivering outputs, the project was able to achieve concrete results along the line of those that were foreseen. In the accompanying text boxes, we excerpt, from the project final narrative report, results that were achieved in the areas of advocacy and networking.

Substantial achievements were registered. It is clear that, in Ukraine, results were at the local level; in Moldova, results were at the national, parliamentary level. The differing political dynamics in the two countries had a great deal to do with this. In both countries, it was difficult and a bit artificial to distinguish between results in advocacy and results in networking. While the distinction may have been important from the standpoint of reporting, in substantive terms, the two were one and the same.

Outcome 1 (advocacy): some results

Ukraine. CSOs in Sumy city advocated the local authority on how to allocate the budget for the city's youth program, members of local project steering group in Poltava focused on the implementing mechanism of social ordering within Poltava city, and in Svatove district the local civic council advocated for increased regulation of local business, promoting new mechanisms of involving funding for local development. In Luhansk oblast, local CSOs advocated on apartment privatization. In Kherson, two public expert reviews of local policy in gender and children's rights were provided and the CSOs' recommendations are currently being considered by local government. Also in Kherson, in 2011, public recommendations on local housing tax policy were advocated.

Moldova: CSO advocacy led to significant improvements in civil society's engagement with Parliament. CSO representatives are now active in lobbying and are involved in the decision-making process. Civil society advocacy led to a more user-friendly, transparent Parliament website and a new government website. www.particip.gov.md reflects CSOs participation in the decision making process.

Source: Project narrative final report

(iii) Efficiency

There was a reasonable relationship between budget allocated and results achieved. As said, the withdrawal of Belarus led to a loss of resources greater than the level of planned expenditure in that country, so the project operated under some financial stress. The efficiency of study visits is often questioned, but enthusiastic comments by beneficiaries were convincing. The fact that the project brought together a multi-country, multi-functional (i.e., government, civil society) group and the fact that meetings in Brussels and London were all at relatively high level increased the efficiency of the study visit. The international implementing partner Euclid Network delivered high quality management and backstopping; the frequently heard complaint that too much budget was siphoned off internationally was nowhere to be heard among persons interviewed.

At the time of the project, OSCE and USAID were also active in civil society development in Ukraine. However, while the OSCE was concentrating on developing theory, this project concentrated entirely on concrete local experiences. In the end, the two approaches were complementary.

Outcome 2 (networking): some results

Ukraine: CSOs involved in the project became members of the Partnership of Civil Society Institutes to Support Civic Councils and the Coalition to Defend the Ownership Rights, two all-Ukrainian CSO networks. In Luhansk oblast the Network of Local Civic Councils and CSOs was formed to share innovative advocacy practices among remote areas. In Kherson city, the Network of Local CSOs defended the green zones of the town in 2010, and prevented them from being cut down.

The Sumy-based youth organization “Sumy Student Brotherhood” created the coalition of youth CSOs within Sumy oblast. Protesting against the results of a non-transparent contest for youth NGOs, the network caused the local authority to re-open the contest, with a high degree of local media coverage.

Moldova: A coalition on non-discrimination was created which focused on mainstreaming non-discrimination. The coalition elaborated the strategy and action plan to act on the promotion of the adoption of the non-discrimination policies in March 2011. An effective division of labor was agreed upon among more than 20 participating actors and the process of the implementation started. There was highly active participation in all of the debates held, including the first one at the Parliament’s Human Rights Commission.

Five CSO meetings were held with the parliamentary commissions on human rights to discuss various chapters of the Human Rights Action Plan, and the project coordinated three working sessions and public debates: one on freedom of expression and assembly; one on non-discrimination and national minorities, and; one on human rights in Transnistria. Over 50 amendments were proposed to the Human Rights Action Plan.

Source: Project narrative final report

(iv) Impact

Keeping in mind the point made that the project in Ukraine worked essentially at the local level and in Moldova essentially at the national level, the project had significant impact. Specifically,

- In Ukraine, the project fostered a number of collaborations between local authorities and CSOs. Concrete examples were recognized on both sides as having made a tangible difference in citizens’ lives, having changed points of view, and laid a foundation for further work. Shared goals and common ground as well as differences were identified. There was also impact at national level in Ukraine as beneficiary CSOs were able to participate in public meetings related to the Law on Organizations.
- Impact was arguably lower in Moldova because exogenous factors, namely the change of Government, brought in a very CSO-friendly regime. However, the project raised the quality of policy dialogue between beneficiary CSOs and the government. The project had direct input into a historic dialogue between government and civil society, with tangible results in the Human Rights Action Plan.
- In Transnistria, the project provided credibility and encouragement to a civil society working under difficult conditions.
- The project led to a sharing of international experience, with significant impact on beneficiaries; in the case of national implementing NGOs, there was a transfer of capacities from the international partner Euclid Network.

- While the amount of money involved was not large, the ample length of the project (2 years) was impact-friendly.

The project sought to identify practical examples of small-scale, local-level effective cooperation between government and CSOs which could be replicated and scaled up.

- One successful point of engagement by a beneficiary NGO with local government in Ukraine was in the domain of social services. Local and regional governments were still adhering to Communist-era attitudes and modes of working. However, they realized the political importance of providing adequate social services (the disabled, the elderly, etc.) Gradually, they accepted to replace traditional delivery mechanisms with an approach based on NGOs performing actual delivery while the public authority covered salaries and premises. In another town, the public authority provided support for a residential center for young persons 16-20 from families that had disintegrated, providing life training, psychological support, and help in search for a job and housing. For its part, the municipality also provides needed documents to youths.
- A concrete impact of the project was observed in Tiraspol when a Deputy Minister for Health issued a tender to NGOs to design, create, and operate a youth center.
- An example of concrete impact in Moldova was that a national CSO tackled the problem of assisting blind persons to vote. They studied European good practice. Equipment was installed and, for the first time, in Chisinau blind persons were able to vote in the November 2010 elections. Another initiative saw a website developed where community members could post photos of illegal dumping sites in conjunction with an interactive map. Using this information, authorities mobilized volunteers for clean up and cracked down on culprits where identified.
- A significant impact of the project in Ukraine was that when the new Law on Civic Councils was passed in November 2010, Round Tables developed recommendations that were submitted to the Ministry of Justice. Project beneficiaries were the only non-Kiev based NGOs that were invited to comment during the drafting stage. They succeeded in inserting a clause that Civic Councils should be entitled to comment on draft legislation.
- The Moldovan partners have confirmed that, as a result of the project, the degree of CSOs' participation into the relevant decision-making process has increased

Impact of the Study visit in Transnistria

One of the NGOs participating in the Brussels-London study visit was the NGO Institute for Law and Civil Society in Transnistria. One of the NGOs presenting in London was Standing Northern Ireland Peacebuilding Process (SNIPP), a group working to promote peace and understanding in Northern Ireland. SNIPP contains both loyalist and republican elements, representatives of the Belfast, Dublin, and London governments, journalists, community workers, and church representatives, all working to bridge the divide and promote peace.

The challenge of working for peace in a divided land was instantly appreciated by the Transnistrian NGO, which formed the idea of arranging its own visit to Northern Ireland after the study visit was over. As a result, from 14-21 May, four Transnistrian musicians and two politicians representing both the left and right bank sides of the frozen conflict visited Belfast.

Two themes ran through the visit. One was panel discussions and discussions comparing the conflicts in Northern Ireland and Moldova (especially lessons to be learned from Northern Ireland). The second was cultural exchange and education, with a full program of Moldovan music performance and presentations in schools. In primary schools, the program was limited to music; in integrated schools where there were students up to 18 years of age, there were presentations and group discussions about conflicts and their resolution.

The visit promoted understanding, the sharing of lessons learned, and cross-cultural dialogue. It would not have occurred without the UNDEF project.

Source: Denis Focsa, Independent Institute for Law and Civil Society, Tiraspol

substantially, along with the participation with the commentaries and proper amendments. In 2010 the National Participation Council was created to assist the Cabinet with the drafting of laws and policies discussions. Relevant CSOs have participated in a number of draft laws and draft policies, including the Human Rights Action Plan, Non-discrimination and Prevention Law, and the discussion of Moldova's submissions to various international specialized UN agencies.

- The study visit to Brussels and London had tangible impact on the participants and, indirectly, on the relationship between civil society and government in their countries of origin. It exposed beneficiaries to the more developed and constructive relationship between civil society and governments in Europe. Participants were struck by the fact that in London, they saw how deeply dependent Parliamentarians were on NGOs for specialized expertise, a role previously unknown in Ukraine and Moldova and a potential point for constructive engagement. They learned more about the model in which local councils provide resources to NGOs, who then take the lead in providing services. A concrete impact was that, after the London meetings, one Ukrainian NGO held discussions with local authorities which resulted in the NGO being allocated funds to create a center to support released prisoners. More generally, participants learned about the CSO compact concluded under the Blair government and were impressed by the fact that it remained effective after the Conservatives took



power; indicative of a structural, not a transitory, relationship between government and civil society. One participant reported that the most important aspect of the study visit was that participants came to appreciate the difference between the citizen-based approach to public policy and the state-based one. Meetings with members of the European Parliament allowed discussion of how civil society relates to European integration in the context of the European Neighborhood Policy. The experience of the study tour forged lasting friendships within the two countries and across the border. It is clear that Euclid network's European Commission links contributed significantly to raising the level of the visit in Brussels and, in London, presentations from both civil society representatives and Members of Parliament were similarly at high level. The 14-page study visit report, posted on the project website, leaves no doubt that the money expended on the study visit offered good value.

A concrete impact, which could be called a multiplier effect, of the study tour on Transnistrian civil society is described in the accompanying text box.

Some cautions must, however, be expressed regarding capacity building. One of the disappointments of the project was that the joint recommendations for local NGOs and local authorities that emerged from the final project conference were uninspiring. This may be because the level at which they were pitched – the overall relationship between civil society and local government – was so high. The final Handbook emerging from the project is on the verge of being completed, and it is possible that the lead NGO, Euclid Network, has used its editorial discretion to put some teeth in the recommendations.

(v) Sustainability

GURT has obtained UNDEF funding subsequent to the project, and EC funding, as well. CCC has obtained USAID funding to evaluate governance interventions. No information is available as yet from Moldovan partners. However, all national implementing partners appear to have benefited from the project in terms of capacity and credibility in the international support market.

In contrast, the fragility of sub-national beneficiary NGOs remains evident. Given the lack of effective tax incentives, mobilizing domestic private sector support remains a distant dream (in fairness, it remains a distant dream in Western Europe as well, for the same reason). The project's greatest contribution to sustainability at the beneficiary level has been establishing successful collaborations with local government, which will continue to provide support so long as NGOs continue to deliver useful results. Most local beneficiary NGOs are not well equipped, even after capacity building, to compete in the international funding market and international funders are still attracted to "sure bets" in the form of well-connected, established NGOs. Obtaining the financial support of Government for mutually beneficial activities is the obvious, and in many cases, the only strategy for achieving financial sustainability.

While the Ukrainian election of 2010 was in some senses a reverse, CSOs had laid enough groundwork that they were able to continue to make progress. The project provides an example of how political developments, whether positive or negative, do not necessarily dictate the success or failure of a well-designed project. A challenge to the project in Ukraine was that, while the approach was based on long-term relationships, due to local elections, governments kept changing. Yet, local NGOs had demonstrated their worth and work continued.

The project intentionally kept its web strategy simple but, with hindsight, this has had negative effects on sustainability. The project web site on Euclid Network is, somewhat confusingly, entitled "Eastern Network Partnership NGO Leaders," because the UNDEF project has been merged with other Euclid Network projects. The most visually prominent link is to the Study Visit report, not an unimportant document, but not one that should be the focus of attention. "Resources" yielded a link to project training materials (reports of master classes, etc.) as well as videos of presentations. However, the website fails to provide links to the two most important resources for sustainability: the handbook of concrete case study examples (this will be completed soon) and a list of all participating NGOs (not just the five national implementing partners). It is possible to find, on the GURT website, a list of participants in the final conference, but this includes no web coordinates). Other national NGO implementing partners have included basic project information but deleted specific documents, reports, etc. Overall, opportunities for promoting sustainable impact by a sound web dissemination design have been missed.

V. Conclusions

The conclusions presented here represent a synthesis of the answers to the Evaluation Questions presented in the previous section.

(i) This project showed that promoting cooperation between government and NGOs can have as much impact on strengthening the role of civil society as promoting NGOs in their “watchdog” role. The more pro-actively CSOs engage with government, the faster solutions will be found. The more NGO expertise is provided to government, the more tangible will be improvements in the quality of public policy and the accountability / transparency of public institutions. This conclusion is based mainly on Finding (iv).

(ii) The success of this project demonstrated again the crucial importance of high-quality implementing partners, whether international or national. Here, the partnership between an experienced international partner and relatively experienced Moldovan and Ukrainian NGOs was important to project success. The evaluator was impressed by the professionalism, dedication, and savoir-faire of the national implementing partners. Did they need the support of an international partner? In view of the regional nature of the project, the answer is “Yes.” However, with the capacity and credibility gained in this project, it is likely that, given international funding, they would not need an international partner in order to implement a project successfully. Some of that *capacity and credibility was gained through implementing this UNDEF project.* This conclusion is based on Findings (ii) and (v).

(iii) The project provides a good example of the value added of regional approaches when there is an appropriate group of countries and / or NGOs involved. The sharing of problems, approaches, and experiences leveraged many times the capacity building provided to individual NGOs. The local dimension; *the fact that participants from different local settings were sharing experiences, bolstered impact, as did the fact that local government authorities and NGOs worked together.* It was striking that the Ukrainian beneficiaries candidly stated that, while at the beginning they expected that they would be transmitting lessons and new approaches to the Moldovans, as the project advanced, it became clear that information flow was often in the other direction. This conclusion is based on Findings (i) and (iv)

(iv) Conclusions on sustainability highlight the difference between the five national implementing NGOs, who in some cases rose to the level of being able to successfully apply for international funding, and local beneficiary NGOs, whose capacity to obtain international funding remains low. Most of the local beneficiary NGOs remain shoestring operations. *Some beneficiaries suggested that the project would have benefited from a more explicit exit strategy,* where beneficiaries were coached through identifying and pursuing funding sources. However, as stated above, the key result is that local NGOs were empowered to present themselves as a credible claimant on local fiscal resources, a key for long-term sustainability. This conclusion is based on Finding (v).

(v) The project highlights the fact that significant gains can be made even in difficult environments, such as Transnistria.

(vi) As evidenced by the lacklustre recommendations that emerged from the conference, the value added of this project was at the concrete level of collaborations formed to address mutually recognised problems; it was not at the broader level of re-defining the relationship between civil society and government.

(vii) Despite the high level of capacity of the international and national implementing partners, ***the use of the web for disseminating results and enhancing sustainability was disappointing.*** Much material was presented – videos, reports, etc. – but not in a systematic, easy-to-follow way. No master list of participating NGOs with their web coordinates was anywhere to be found, there was not a single, dedicated project website to which all partners provided a clear link.

VI. Recommendations

- ***For participating local NGOs and local authorities***

(i) ***Try to develop long-term relationships with local authorities; for example, permanent consultative status in an issue area or a multi-year arrangement to provide services.*** One-off partnerships and projects are valuable, not least for building confidence, but both local NGOs and their partners in local government need to adopt a long-term perspective if they are to prove sustainable. This recommendation is based on Conclusion (iv).

(ii) ***Maintain the cross-border ties that were formed in this project through twinning arrangements.*** The sharing of experiences need not to end with project funding. Unfortunately, it appears that no web-based master list has been established. This recommendation is based in Conclusion (iv).

For Euclid Network

(iii) ***Give more emphasis to web-based dissemination / coordination.*** Project implementation was superb, but three months after project close, the flagship output – the handbook consisting of case studies of successful concrete project examples was still not accessible on the web by someone with reasonable search skills (as of this writing, mid-December, it is nearly finished). Nor is there a master list of participating NGOs with contact details, a risk for project impact and sustainability. Key to this recommendation is an understanding that, while the web is a great self-organizing system – the evaluator was able to find a wealth of reports, videos, etc. – if the web is going to disseminate information effectively, this must be organized from the top of the hierarchy. Perhaps some division of web responsibilities among the national implementing NGOs could have improved the situation, but the evaluator doubts it. The “merging” of the UNDEF project with similar initiatives on the Euclid website did not result in a web structure that this evaluator found easy to follow.

For national implementing NGOs

(iv) ***Don't forget the project that is finishing while working on the project that is starting. Wrap-up and consolidation are as important as development.*** Among the national implementing NGOs, only GURT has continued to post detailed information (Round Table reports, etc.). To some extent, the weak presentation of the project on websites is the result of the overall weak web strategy described above, for which Euclid

Network must ultimately bear responsibility. However, national implementing NGOs, especially capitol-based and internationally-linked NGOs devoted to strengthening the role of less well-developed ones, should do all possible to disseminate information. This is especially important now that the Handbook, a major resource with considerable potential for impact in the form of multiplier effects, is now being finalized.

For UNDEF

(v) Continue to implement regional approaches where beneficiaries face similar challenges across borders. This series of evaluations has identified instances where country partners in regional projects faced very different circumstances, but in this case, and despite differing political dynamics, the regional approach worked well.

(vi) Consider an “alumni” database. UNDEF has now financed a large number of projects in the same overall field involving a large number of partner NGOs. Yet, there is no centralized database that would permit an NGO in Country A from searching and finding an NGO with similar interests in Country B. Even a simple spreadsheet with web links on the UNDEF website would be sufficient to provide a working tool for NGOs looking for partners or information. In a more ambitious approach (which would require additional resources), UNDEF could consider becoming a “one-stop shop” for NGOs looking to develop their activities, with a website bringing together potential funders, other NGOs, relevant literature, and so on. This would clearly require a significant strategic decision, but it is an option at least worth considering.

VII. Overall assessment and closing thoughts

The project was very competently implemented by an international NGO working in partnership with national NGOs whose good capacity is indicated by the fact that several have established track records in attracting international funding. The regional approach was appropriate and added value. Effectiveness and impact were good, sustainability a bit less so, in part because web dissemination was not particularly good (also involving loss of potential impact through multiplier effects). This presents a dilemma. There are plenty of projects with dazzling web presentations of what are, in fact, rather mediocre results. Web presence is costly, and it is clear from discussions that a decision was made to keep the web dimension extremely simple. This is defensible, but it comes at a cost. Perhaps the lesson is that there is a need for simple, low cost web solutions (like spreadsheets with web links).

VIII. Annexes

Annex 1: Evaluation questions

DAC criterion	Evaluation Question	Related sub-questions
Relevance	To what extent was the project, as designed and implemented, suited to context and needs at the beneficiary, local, and national levels?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Were the objectives of the project in line with the needs and priorities for democratic development, given the context? ▪ Should another project strategy have been preferred rather than the one implemented to better reflect those needs, priorities, and context? Why? ▪ Were risks appropriately identified by the projects? How appropriate are/were the strategies developed to deal with identified risks? Was the project overly risk-averse?
Effectiveness	To what extent was the project, as implemented, able to achieve objectives and goals?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To what extent have the project's objectives been reached? ▪ To what extent was the project implemented as envisaged by the project document? If not, why not? ▪ Were the project activities adequate to make progress towards the project objectives? ▪ What has the project achieved? Where it failed to meet the outputs identified in the project document, why was this?
Efficiency	To what extent was there a reasonable relationship between resources expended and project impacts?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Was there a reasonable relationship between project inputs and project outputs? ▪ Did institutional arrangements promote cost-effectiveness and accountability? ▪ Was the budget designed, and then implemented, in a way that enabled the project to meet its objectives?
Impact	To what extent has the project put in place processes and procedures supporting the role of civil society in contributing to democratization, or to direct promotion of democracy?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To what extent has/have the realization of the project objective(s) and project outcomes had an impact on the specific problem the project aimed to address? ▪ Have the targeted beneficiaries experienced tangible impacts? Which were positive; which were negative? ▪ To what extent has the project caused changes and effects, positive and negative, foreseen and unforeseen, on democratization? ▪ Is the project likely to have a catalytic effect? How? Why? Examples?
Sustainability	To what extent has the project, as designed and implemented, created what is likely to be a continuing impetus towards democratic development?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To what extent has the project established processes and systems that are likely to support continued impact? ▪ Are the involved parties willing and able to continue the project activities on their own (where applicable)?
UNDEF value added	To what extent was UNDEF able to take advantage of its unique position and comparative advantage to achieve results that could not have been achieved had support come from other donors?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What was UNDEF able to accomplish, through the project that could not as well have been achieved by alternative projects, other donors, or other stakeholders (Government, NGOs, etc). ▪ Did project design and implementing modalities exploit UNDEF's comparative advantage in the form of an explicit mandate to focus on democratization issues?

Annex 2: Documents reviewed

Project Document

Final narrative report

Study visit report

Case study 1: Cancelling a corrupt competition

Case study 2: Opening up a new budget line

Case study 3: Supporting people with HIV and AIDS

Case study 4: Building the structures for long-term engagement

What needs to be done for CSOs and government cooperation to be effective? Summary of final conference recommendations.

Annex 3: People interviewed

1. Ms. Juliana Abramova	Center for Support and Development of Civic Initiatives “Resonance” (Moldova)
2. Mr. Filippo Addarii	Euclid Network
3. Ms. Aliona Badiur	CReDO (Moldova)
4. Mr. Taras Boyarchuk	GURT Resource Centre (Ukraine)
5. Mr. Constantin Cojocaru	Congress of Local Authorities from Moldova, Mayor of Edinet
6. Mr. Lucas Fülling	Euclid Network
7. Mr. Maksym Ieligulashvili	Youth Center of Regional Development (Ukraine)
8. Ms. Victoria Kravchuk	UNDP (Ukraine)
9. Mr. Vlada Lisenco	OSCE Mission in Moldova
10. Ms. Daria Mandziuc	CONTACT (Moldova)
11. Ms. Tatiana Mihailova	Automobile Club of Moldova
12. Ms. Svitlana Mytryayeva	National Institute for Strategic Studies Regional Branch in Uzhgorod (Ukraine)
13. Ms. Olga Ozernaya	OSCE Mission in Ukraine
14. Mr. Ben Rattenbury	Euclid Network
15. Mr. Roman Shutov	CCC Creative Center (Ukraine)
16. Mr. Andriy Spivak	EU Delegation, Ukraine
17. Ms. Antonina Vacarciuc	Voluntary Center M-Liga (Moldova)
18. Ms. Diana Zubko	International Renaissance Foundation

Annex 4: Acronyms

AAC	Anti Corruption Alliance
AIE	Alliance for European Integration
CCC	Creative Center (Ukraine)
CONTACT	Centre for National Assistance and Information of NGOs from Moldova
CReDO	Resource Centre of Moldova Non-governmental Organisations for Human Rights
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
EU	European Union
NGO	Non-government Organization
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
UN	United Nations