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Sida Decentralised Evaluation

FCG Sweden

# Evaluation of “Strengthening Associations of Municipalities and Cities in Bosnia and Herzegovina” Project

Final Report

# Evaluation of “Strengthening Associations of Municipalities and Cities in Bosnia and Herzegovina” Project

**Final Report**  
**September 2021**

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The views and interpretations expressed in this report are the authors' and do not necessarily reflect those of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Sida.

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# Abbreviations and Acronyms

AMC	Association of Municipalities and Cities
BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
CoE	Council of Europe
DMS	Document Management System
EU	European Union
FBIH AMC	Association of Municipalities and Cities of the Federation of BiH
FBIH	Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (one entity in BiH)
GIZ	Deutschen Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
HRBA	Human-rights Based Approach
LG	Local Government
LGF	Local Government Financing
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MP	Member of Parliament
NALAS	Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South-East Europe
OECD-DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development - Development Assistance Committee
OHR	Office of High Representative
PIT	Project Implementation Team
PR	Public Relations
AMC RS	Association of Municipalities and Cities of the Republika Srpska
RS	Republika Srpska (one entity in BiH)
SALAR	Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions
SCTM	Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
Sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
ToC	Theory of Change
TTL	Technical Team Leader
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

# Preface

This evaluation was contracted by the Swedish Embassy in Sarajevo through the Sida Framework Agreement for Evaluation Services, and conducted by FCG Sweden.

The Evaluation Team consisted of Åsa Königson, Jamie Smith and Biljana Stanisić Dragoljić. The Final Report was quality assured by Susan Tamondong, whose work was independent of the Evaluation Team. Kajsa Österberg Åström provided project management support.

# Executive Summary

The subject of this evaluation is the project “Strengthening Associations of Municipalities and Cities in Bosnia and Herzegovina” implemented by (SALAR/SKL International, Association of Municipalities and Cities of the Federation of BiH - AMC FBiH - and the Association of Municipalities and Cities of the Republika Srpska – AMC RS). The project began in early 2017 with an inception phase during which the three implementing partners negotiated and agreed on a *Project Document* which was funded by the Swedish and Swiss Embassies in Sarajevo. The implementation phase of the project began in February 2018. The purpose of this evaluation is to help the Embassies of Sweden and Switzerland to understand progress of the project as it is coming to an end in early 2022. The evaluation assesses what has worked well and less well, and provides recommendations as input to a potential continuation of the project.

The Evaluation Team assessed relevance, effectiveness, impact, sustainability and the application of Sida’s cross-cutting issues by gathering data from the review of project and external documents and interviews with the AMCs’ members (local governments - LG), external experts, entity government representatives and the AMC secretariat staff. In total 67 individuals were interviewed.

## **The Project’s Impact**

The AMCs have become important stakeholders in establishing and reforming the legal frameworks in RS and FBiH. The secretariats are, as opposed prior to the start of the project, now consulted by the entity government representatives, asked to provide an opinion and to inform or gather information from their members. The AMCs are quick to respond to requests by the entity governments and the LGs.

The increased professionalisation of the AMCs has also made the entity governments’ work easier. The AMCs are seen as very important sources of information for the entity governments who also use them to pass information to the LGs. The AMCs work closely with the entity governments and provide evidence-based constructive input to legal reform-making. The evidence-based lobbying and advocacy efforts by both AMCs are increasingly considered more visible and credible to both their members and externally.

There are a number of policy areas where the AMCs successfully defended or advocated for LG interests possibly leading to enhanced service provision and a more conducive legal framework for LGs.

## **What worked well**

The overall approach to the project, as a partnership between the SALAR, AMC FBiH and AMC RS and strong emphasis on improving the internal functioning of the AMCs, has worked well. The AMCs have made progress in several key internal areas,



including improved planning and greater involvement of AMC members in their work. Both AMCs have also increased their competences in the two prioritised thematic areas (EU Accession and Local Government Finance - LGF), which has strengthened their positions. Cooperation between the two AMCs has also deepened, especially in the area of EU accession.

The AMCs have been more successful during this period at stopping unfavourable legislative changes rather than pro-actively initiating and securing more favourable legislative changes themselves. AMCs have been effective in ‘seizing opportunities’ initiated by others, rather than trying to initiate changes themselves. This has been a cost-effective manner of working.

The AMCs closer relationships with entity government and more systematic planning has allowed the AMCs time needed to plan work and resources for the preparation of well-considered policy positions. These policy positions have tended to focus on specific, concrete issues rather than broad sector-wide changes. Increased involvement of members in advocacy and policy engagement work has also increased AMC effectiveness.

When more intense lobbying has been required, a key success factor has been the relationship with the relevant parliamentary committee on local self-government (in the FBiH) and Ministry of Local Self Government (in the RS).

### **What worked less well**

The AMC have mainly been reactive in their advocacy work and have not managed to proactively push for reforms initiated by themselves. This would require a more focused agenda setting in both AMCs by the Presidencies and investment in a few unique competencies.

LGs would like to see more exchange of best practice among municipalities. There have been some examples, but the members demand more thematic meetings between mayors, finance departments, human resources departments, to share good practices and learn from each other.

The project began with strategic plans with too many vague goals already established for each AMC. However, during the project the AMCs have struggled to define, monitor and evaluate their strategies despite support in this area. The upcoming strategic planning processes within both AMCs will show if and to what extent the AMCs are able to develop visionary strategic goals that the AMCs are able to monitor and evaluate throughout the next strategy period.

With the project goal of services to LGs regarding EU accession there has been unclarity about what was to be achieved. As it is still important, the project outcome needs to be specified and narrowed down in order for the LGs and Secretariats to understand what type of support should be provided.

Implementation of the cross-cutting issues of gender equality, conflict management and environment has not been implemented to any extent and even the most basic elements (such as gathering and reporting gender-disaggregated project data) has not been done.

There has not been any progress on work to develop strategies for the AMCs to become more financially sustainable.

### **Recommendations**

The Evaluation Team has provided recommendations to the Swedish and Swiss Embassies, to the two AMCs and to SALAR, respectively.

- The Swedish and Swiss embassies are recommended to continue the project but to consider changes to the type of grants awarded to the AMCs and that external assessments of each AMCs' organisational capability are carried out.
- Recommendations to the AMCs focus on creating visionary strategies with a focused approach to building each AMC's uniqueness. AMCs are also recommended to build their expert capability and capacity in specific topics in order to remain and increase their value to members and to legal reforms in BiH.
- SALAR is recommended to support the AMCs in designing a visionary strategy and in their ability to monitor goals, and to help the AMCs develop specific competencies.

# 1 Introduction

The main purpose of this evaluation is to help the Embassies of Sweden and Switzerland to understand progress of the project “Strengthening Associations of Municipalities and Cities in Bosnia and Herzegovina” as it is coming to an end in early 2022. The evaluation is to assess what has worked well and less well, and to obtain input to a potential continuation of the project. The implementing partners (SALAR/SKL International, Association of Municipalities and Cities of the Federation of BiH - AMC FBIH - and the Association of Municipalities and Cities of the Republika Srpska –AMC RS) are additional important users of the evaluation, especially considering coming discussions regarding a possible new phase of the project.

## 1.1 BACKGROUND, PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

As this project is coming to an end in early 2022, the Swedish and Swiss Embassies in Sarajevo decided to carry out an independent evaluation of the relevance, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of the project. An *Internal Review*<sup>1</sup> was carried out in 2019 which summarised progress and focused on the progress achieved within the two Associations of Municipalities and Cities (AMCs) i.e. the bridging outcomes as established in the *Logical Framework* of the *Project Document*<sup>2</sup>. The *Internal Review* recommended that the implementing partners and donors should increase monitoring and focus on outcomes during the final stages of the project.

This aim of this evaluation is to provide the donors with an independent assessment of progress against the established outcomes of the project, to help the implementing partners understand what worked well and less well (and why) and to help both donors and implementing partners in their preparation for a possible continuation of the project.

## 1.2 EVALUATION OBJECT AND SCOPE

The ToR state that the “The evaluation shall summarise obtained and expected results in relation to the RAF and contain an analysis of any deviation there from”. The *Logical Framework* presented in the *Project Document* is the foundation against which actual results are assessed and is the basis against which effectiveness will be evaluated.

The subject to be evaluated is the project “Strengthening Associations of Municipalities and Cities in Bosnia and Herzegovina” implemented by SALAR, AMC FBIH and AMC RS. The project began in early 2017 with an inception phase, which resulted in a *Project Document* agreed between the three implementing partners and funded by the

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<sup>1</sup> Hedlund, Karlstedt. *Internal Review of the project “Strengthening AMCs in Bosnia and Herzegovina*. 2020.

<sup>2</sup> *Strengthening Associations of Municipalities and Cities in Bosnia and Herzegovina – Project Document*. 2018.

Swedish and Swiss Embassies in Sarajevo. The implementation phase of the project began in February 2018 when the two embassies approved the *Project Document*. The Swedish Embassy, as the lead donor, signed separate agreements with the three implementing partners thereby ensuring each implementing partner their own budget and contractual obligations.

The overall expected impact and three outcomes of the project were defined as:

- Impact: Strengthened AMCs enhance local governments' service provision to citizens and foster the creation of a conducive framework for local governance and EU accession.
- Outcome 1: AMCs introduce institutional and organisational changes in order to perform effectively, thereby gaining trust and credibility among their members.
- Outcome 2: LGs/members benefit from AMCs' improved and sustainable services in the areas of EU accession and Local Government Finance (LGF) in line with their mandate and EU accession requirements.
- Outcome 3: AMCs undertake proactive and evidence-based lobbying and advocacy in line with LGs interests and the EU accession process, thereby influencing policy, regulations and their implementation.

The project's Theory of Change (ToC) suggested that in order to achieve the impact and outcomes, the AMCs needed substantial strengthening e.g. upgrading of internal planning procedures, networking, lobbying capacities and organisational structuring as well as greater involvement of members. Goals for organisational strengthening, called "bridging outcomes", were agreed on between the three implementing partners. The focus during the first two years of the project, as described in annual reporting and in the *Internal Review*, was on the institutional strengthening of the AMCs, and the *Internal Review* Team recommended that the focus during the last two years of implementation should be on achieving and monitoring Outcomes 1-3.

### 1.3 EVALUATION CRITERIA AND QUESTIONS

The objective of this evaluation is to evaluate the *Impact* and the *Sustainability* as well as *cross-cutting issues* of the support to the AMCs. Furthermore, the evaluation should summarise progress and main achievements of the project so far and identify lessons in terms of development of the AMCs. One of the main objectives of the evaluation is to formulate recommendations as an input to upcoming discussions concerning the preparation of a new phase of the intervention.

As stated above, the progress toward achieving Outcomes 1, 2 and 3 (measured by specific indicators) is the focus of this evaluation. The project also defined and reported against bridging outcomes and indicators to measure these as well as outputs. These latter outcomes, indicators and outputs have not been assessed in detail as they were the subject of the *Internal Review*.

When evaluating impact, the Evaluation Team has defined two groups of beneficiaries of this project; the two AMCs; and the AMCs' members i.e. Local governments (LGs).

The impact and sustainability of the results of the project have been assessed for both groups of beneficiaries.

The Evaluation Team has also assessed to what extent the AMC's have understood and are applying the Human-rights Based Approach (HRBA) and the cross-cutting perspectives gender equality, conflict and environment.

The ToR established a set of evaluation questions and the *Inception Report*<sup>3</sup>, approved by the Swedish Embassy, showed how the Evaluation Team was to answer the evaluation questions.

### 1.4 STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

The next chapter of the report presents the methodology applied by the Evaluation Team in brief after which Chapter 3 provides a short presentation of the three implementing partners and the project itself. Chapter 4 presents the Evaluation Team's findings and is structured in accordance with the ToR where the relevance of the project, the effectiveness and impact and finally the sustainability of the project is analysed, and evidence presented. The final sub-chapter of Chapter 4 presents the Evaluation Team's findings regarding how the project has been able to address the cross-cutting issues.

Chapter 5 presents the conclusions and Chapter 6 the lessons learned regarding what worked well and less well. The final chapter presents recommendations to the donors of the project and to the three implementing partners.

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<sup>3</sup> Königson, Smith, Stanisic. *EVALUATION OF "STRENGTHENING ASSOCIATIONS OF MUNICIPALITIES AND CITIES IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA" – Final Inception Report*. June 15 2021

# 2 Methodology

## 2.1 OVERALL APPROACH

The evaluation assesses the implementation and relevance of the program and the outcomes to the two groups of beneficiaries identified in the Project Document: to the AMCs themselves and to the AMC' members i.e. the LGs. The OECD-DAC' definitions regarding relevance, effectiveness, impact and sustainability are used.

The “project outcomes” defined in the Logical Framework (part of the Project Document) establish the expected results that improved systems, competencies, capacities within the AMCs will lead to. With improved expertise, functions and capacity it is assumed that the AMCs will be able to deliver better services to, and advocate for, its members – the LGs. The thematic areas where the project aims to show results are regarding advocating for members' benefit in the area of EU accession and advocating for LGF. The evaluation focuses, in accordance with the results-based management approach, on Outcomes 1, 2 and 3 and the indicators established to measure these and not on outputs.

A distinction between the AMC and the Secretariat is made throughout the report. The AMC is defined as the entire association including the governance structure which implies that the member LGs also have important roles and responsibilities. The Secretariat is defined as the staff and leadership employed by the AMC to execute the AMC governing function's decisions.

## 2.2 METHODS AND TOOLS FOR DATA COLLECTION

The Evaluation Team has used several methods to collect data:

Document review – the implementing partners have provided documentation regarding the project itself (inception documents, monitoring reports, reporting to donors and outputs produced as part of the project. In addition to this, internal working documents have been provided by the Secretariats (minutes from meetings of governing bodies, thematic committees, and staff meetings, statistics, plans and internal reports). The Evaluation Team has also gathered additional information from external stakeholders for comparison purposes and to gain a deeper understanding of the context. These have been reviewed and used to verify project outputs and activities.

Interviews with the Project Implementation Team (PIT), additional AMC Secretariat staff, leadership and board. The list of persons interviewed can be found in Annex 1. In total the Evaluation Team has interviewed 67 individuals from SALAR, the two AMCs, donors, external experts and representatives of member LGs.

Organisation	Number of persons interviewed
AMC FBiH Secretariat	6
AMC RS Secretariat	7
SALAR/SKR	3
External Experts	21
Representatives of member LGs	14
Entity level government or authority	11
Swedish and Swiss Embassies	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>67</b>

Interviews with members of the AMCs. The Evaluation Team selected 23 LGs to be interviewed based on the following criteria:

- Equal number of rural and larger city LGs
- Equal number of small and large LG (in terms of citizens they represent)
- A mix of ‘high-touch’ LGs (LGs that have participated in AMC activities such as committees, networking meetings, capacity building, communication etc.) and ‘low-touch’ LGs (LGs not having interacted much with, or perhaps even sceptical towards, the AMCs.)

Of these we succeeded in interviewing<sup>4</sup> representatives from 14 LGs (see Annex 1 for a complete list). The LGs interviewed can be categorised as follows:

Category	Number of LGs interviewed
Rural LGs	9
Urban LGs <sup>5</sup>	5
Small LGs (less than 50 000 citizens <sup>6</sup> )	8
Large LGs (more than 50 000 citizens)	6
“High-touch” LGs	8
“Low-touch” LGs	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>

Specific efforts were made to interview representatives of LGs with a female mayor, but as these were only four this proved difficult.

## 2.3 PROCESS OF ANALYSIS AND DEVELOPING CONCLUSIONS

The Evaluation Team has gathered the information in a common repository, including interview notes and held frequent meetings to discuss findings, interviews and data analysed. Notes from the interviews with member LGs have been gathered in a data

<sup>4</sup> All 23 Mayors were contacted and repeated requests for interviews were made to some of the LGs without succeeding in getting an interview.

<sup>5</sup> A *population density* below 150 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup> were classified as *rural*.

<sup>6</sup> According to the latest census with data gathered in 2013: Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina. *Census of Population, Households and Dwellings in Bosnia and Herzegovina*. 2019

gathering tool in order to ease analysis and quantification of the answers. The logframe and outcomes and indicators established have guided the analysis of effectiveness and the evaluation questions the analysis of relevance, sustainability and impact.

Sida's policies and guidance material for how Sida's partners should implement the four cross-cutting perspectives have guided the analysis of if, and to what extent, the project has implemented the HRBA approach, implemented a gender responsive project, operationalised conflict sensitivity and ensured consideration for environmental and climate change aspects.

## 2.4 ETHICS AND PARTICIPATION

The Evaluation Team has carefully explained the purpose of each interview with interviewees, and how we will use the information provided. In cases when the interviewee has requested that information be "off the record" we have acquiesced with these wishes.

Comments on this Draft Report were provided by the users of the report. These were discussed with the users in a meeting where all evaluation users attended. After the meeting the Evaluation Team reviewed the written comments and made modifications to the report. If and how the Evaluation Team has address the comments by users is shown in Annex 4. The Draft Report was also quality reviewed by Susan Tamondong.

## 2.5 LIMITATIONS

The Evaluation Team has encountered the following issues during the process of the evaluation which have limited the amount of data gathered:

- The information provided by the Swedish Embassy during the inception phase was that there were recent member surveys available from both AMCs and the Evaluation Team was therefore asked by the Swedish Embassy to no carry out additional surveys as part of this evaluation. However, the member survey carried out by AMC FBiH only included part of the information needed and was not complete (due to technical issues not all answers were included) and there had not been any survey of members carried out for the AMC RS. This became an important limitation as several of the project outcomes relied on this data as indicators of progress.
- Since the Evaluation Team was led to believe that membership surveys existed, the approach was to interview a more limited sample of LGs (10 from each AMC). Great efforts were made to request interviews with the Mayors or their representatives. In the end the Evaluation Team succeeded in interviewing 14 LGs which is slightly less than 10 percent of all LGs that are members of AMCs in BiH.



### 3 STRENGTHENING ASSOCIATIONS OF MUNICIPALITIES AND CITIES IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

The project “Strengthening Associations of Municipalities and Cities in Bosnia and Herzegovina” is the subject of this evaluation. The full evaluation period from beginning of 2017 up until June 2021 is being evaluated. The following chapter briefly presents the project background, the partners and the activities.

#### 3.1 BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT

144 municipalities and cities in BiH (excluding Brcko District) are members of two independent AMCs (one in each Entity) with the status of Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs). The AMC FBiH has 80 LGs as members (74 municipalities and six cities); and the AMC RS, 64 members (57 municipalities and seven cities).

The Swedish Embassy has supported the two AMCs directly since 2010 and both the Swedish and Swiss Embassies have supported the AMCs in-directly through projects implemented by the UNDP. An initial concept for a project to strengthen the two AMCs to be jointly funded by the Swedish and Swiss Embassies in BiH was developed by the Embassies. In early 2017 SALAR was selected by the Swedish Embassy to develop a project document, a results framework and a budget for the implementation phase of the project. SALAR and the two AMCs were awarded grants for the inception phase activities. These activities took about one year during which time SALAR and the two AMCs negotiated, agreed on and drafted the Project Document, logical framework and budget for the implementation of the project.

#### 3.2 THE PROJECT

The project is to be implemented by the AMCs of FBiH and RS and SALAR jointly. The three organisations have separate contracts for project grants with the Swedish Embassy. The Swiss and Swedish Embassies have a separate funding agreement. The project is managed by the Swedish Embassy (the lead donor) and the implementing partners report and fulfil the Swedish Embassy’s contractual obligations.

The final grant amounts were:

Implementing organisation	Grant period	Final amended grant (SEK)
AMC FBiH	Feb 1 2018-31 Jan 2022	6 467 937
AMC RS	Feb 1 2018-31 Jan 2022	6 426 078
SALAR	Jan 1 2017-31 Jan 2022	18 348 130
<b>Total</b>		<b>31 242 145</b>

*Source: SALAR and AMCs.*

The grant agreements with all three implementing partners are project grants against which the partners submit separate audited financial reports and the three partners submit a joint annual narrative report.

The project was initially planned to end in December 2020 with an option for an extension to mid-2021 but has since been extended with a no-cost extension until March 2022. The implementing partners are in the process of developing a concept note for a second phase of the project.

### 3.3 THE IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS

The roles of the three implementing partners were described in the *Inception phase Report*<sup>7</sup> prepared by SALAR. This established that SALAR would be the main implementer of the project and also have a facilitating role and the AMCs act both as implementers and beneficiaries.

#### 3.3.1 The AMC FBiH

The AMC FBiH secretariat is a small organisation with eight employees and 80 municipalities and cities as its members. The AMC FBiH's mandate<sup>8</sup> is to:

- act as a legal representative of its members before Entity-level authorities in the FBiH;
- prepare draft laws and amendments to draft laws in order to improve those governing the work of LGs;
- provide opinions and proposals regarding the distribution of public revenues related to the financing of LGs;
- establish contacts and cooperation with similar organisations in the country and abroad, and become a member of international associations.

The AMC FBiH was established in 2003 and has gradually grown in membership. The AMC's highest governing body is the General Assembly of all its members. The General Assembly elects a board (called the Presidency) consisting of 13 elected Mayors of member LGs. The Presidency's role is to propose modifications to the statutes (for approval by the General Assembly), approve the strategic plan and all "positions" regarding changes to laws or regulations before they are proposed to the relevant Entity-level government authority. The members of the Presidency and commission work on a voluntary basis and met once a month (prior to the COVID pandemic, and slightly less frequently since then).

In addition to these, the member LGs are called upon to send staff to participate as experts in standing commissions on various subjects and in more informal networks of LG staff on various subjects. The AMC FBiH has six standing commissions (with 10 representatives of members each) on topics such as "Development and Improvement of

<sup>7</sup> SALAR. *Strengthening Associations of Municipalities and Cities in Bosnia and Herzegovina - Inception Phase Report*. 2017

<sup>8</sup> According to the *Law on Principles of Local Self-Government in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina*, which entered into force on September 8, 2006.

Local Self-Government”; “Economic Development of Municipalities and Cities and Finance” etc.

The 73 persons on the AMC FBiH’s Presidency and standing commissions represent 49 members of the AMC. The AMC FBiH also has six networks on subject such as Public Relations (PR), “Integrated Local Development” and “Finance”. The networks of experts or practitioners from all member LGs are informal in the sense that they are not decision-making. They are used to float ideas, get specific expert advice or to get a quick response to a question on one of the subjects of the networks.

The AMC FBiH is mainly funded by external donors through project grants whereby the AMC FBiH implements donor-funded projects, or parts of projects. The AMC FBiH’s income in the past two years has mainly been from donor projects and in 2020 the contributions from Swiss and Swedish Embassy funded project represented 49 percent of the AMC FBiH’s total income as shown in the table below:

AMC FBiH Income (BAM)	2017	2018	2019	2020
Membership fees	304 370	232 830	255 095	245 320
Project income	129 190	338 215	441 559	404 907
<i>of which Swedish/Swiss project</i>		287 120	167 328	319 444
Paid services	1 662	8 625	17 300	-
Other		32 388	1 421	653
<b>Total income</b>	<b>435 222</b>	<b>612 058</b>	<b>715 375</b>	<b>650 880</b>

Source: AMC FBiH Audited Financial Statements for 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020.

The membership fees are between € 400 and € 6 000 depending on the size of the LG’s budget. The total amount collected in membership fees during 2020 was reduced by 3.8 percent. The LG’s interviewed stated as reasons for non-payment of fees that they were dissatisfied with the AMCs’ services (one LG), due to reduced municipal income (two LGs), that they pay once are reminded by the AMC (two LGs), because they are in debt could not afford to pay (one LG). According to the implementing partners’ *Annual Report* to the Swedish Embassy, the collection rate increased in 2020, however, this is not evidenced by the AMC FBiH’s financial statements.

### 3.3.2 The AMC RS

The AMC RS secretariat has nine employees and a membership of 64 LGs. Its goals are to<sup>9</sup>:

- develop, protect and improve LGs in accordance with the law and the principles of the *European Charter of Local Self-Government*;
- connect and help LGs cooperate in order to achieve their common goals, interests and help them improve their capacity to provide services to citizens;
- build and advocate for commonly agreed views of its members during the passing of laws and other regulations of importance for the protection and promotion of local government financing;

<sup>9</sup> AMC RS. *Statutes of the Association of Municipalities and Cities Republika Srpska*. 2020. (Google translated)

- establish and develop cooperation of LGs with foreign LGs as well as with national and international organisations, associations and local authorities.

The AMC RS is governed by its General Assembly that elects its 19 Presidency members from the elected Mayors. The AMC RS also has nine thematic commissions (permanent bodies) that were created seven or eight years ago to help the AMC secretariat to assess laws and regulations related to the LGs and propose “positions” regarding changes to laws or regulations to be approved by the Presidency before they are proposed to the relevant Entity-level government authority.

The AMC in RS is also mainly funded through project grants by donors. The Swiss/Swedish project represented 38 percent of total income in 2020 which decreased overall compared to 2019.

AMC RS Income (BAM)	2018	2019	2020
Membership fees	186 090	202 727	168 134
Project income	357 149	402 800	370 693
<i>of which Swe/Swiss project</i>	<i>178 981</i>	<i>223 822</i>	<i>208 607</i>
Paid services	0	0	0
Other	5 971	4 725	3 185
<b>Total income</b>	<b>549 210</b>	<b>610 252</b>	<b>542 012</b>

Source: AMC RS Audited Financial Statements for 2018, 2019 and 2020.

Income from membership fees represents 31 percent of total income and was collected from 67 percent of the members in 2020 according to the project *Annual Report*. In 2020 there was a significant drop in both collection rate, and the total income from membership fees. The annual membership fees ranged between € 255 and €18 000 for 2021 and is based on the size of the LG’s budget.

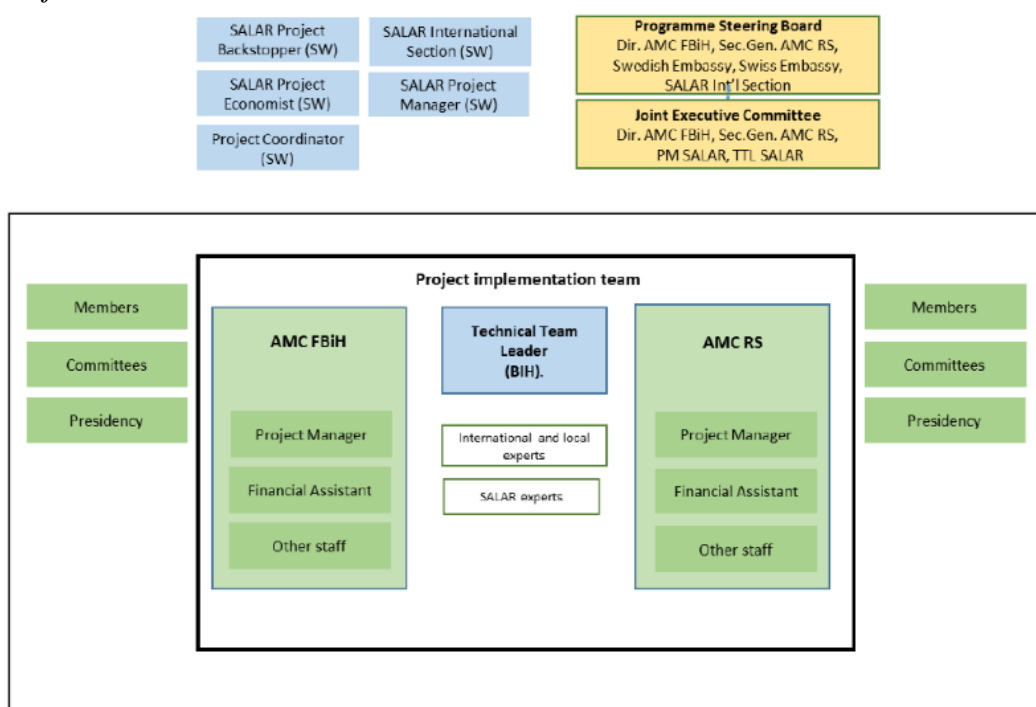
### 3.3.3 SALAR

The Swedish Association of Local Governments and Regions, SALAR, represents all of Sweden's 290 municipalities and 20 county councils/regions. SALAR works to promote and strengthen local self-government and the development of regional and local democracy in Sweden and in other countries. SALAR is governed by its Congress that elects a board of 21 members (and an additional 21 alternate members). The board establishes working groups on different subjects, all in all 250 individuals from SALAR’s members participate as experts and decision-makers. The Secretariat includes 440 staff members and experts on topics relevant to SALAR’s members.

SALAR manages international development cooperation projects through its subsidiary SKL International. The staff involved in this project are part of SKL International while thematic experts are from SALAR.

### 3.3.4 The Partnership Structure

The governing and operational bodies of the project were illustrated as follows in the *Project Document*:



Source: SALAR, AMC FBiH, AMC RS. *Strengthening Associations of Municipalities and Cities in Bosnia and Herzegovina – Project Document*. 2018.

SALAR has a close to full-time Technical Team Leader (TTL) from and working in BiH and a Project Manager supporting her and the PIT team. SALAR's TTL works very closely with the two AMC project managers. The PIT team members' salaries are almost fully covered by the project grants to the respective organisations.

## 3.4 PROJECT ACTIVITIES

The project began in early 2017 with an inception phase, during which the three implementing partners negotiated and jointly designed the *Project Document* which was then agreed to be funded by the Swedish and Swiss Embassies in Sarajevo. The implementation phase of the project began in February 2018 when the two embassies approved the *Project Document*. The Swedish Embassy signed separate agreements with the three implementing partners thereby ensuring each implementing partner their own budget and requirements.

The project has involved numerous activities such as:

- Training of the secretariat staff on various subjects (Results-based management, communication, planning, M&E among other),
- Training of elected officials and staff of member LGs,
- Coaching and mentoring to develop new methods for e.g. procurement of experts, advocacy efforts, electronic communication with members,

- Support to develop electronic tools e.g. new software, new websites, Document Management Systems (DMS),
- Study visits for secretariat staff and AMC governing members,
- Financial and technical support to carry out policy analysis and produce policy papers
- Transfer of tools, templates for e.g. communication plans, annual plans from either SALAR or from contracted consultants, and
- Project governance meetings and meetings of the PIT team.

Achieved results have been reported in *Annual Reports* where results for each outcome (Outcomes 1,2 and 3) are reported against in a narrative form and the logical framework is updated with results achieved at outcome, bridging outcome and output level. These reports are compiled by SALAR with input from the two AMCs who also submit their annual project reports as annexes to the *Annual Report*.

The two project donors have, from the inception period of this project, seen it as a multi-phase project. The Swiss Embassy has indicated that they would consider three phases of each, three- to four-year projects. The Swedish Embassy indicated that an additional project phase beginning 2022 of three to four years could be considered depending on the outcome of the evaluation. The *Project Document* states that the overall impact to which this project is to contribute to is “Strengthened AMCs enhance local governments service provision to citizens and foster the creation of a conducive framework for local governance and EU accession”. The *Project Document* establishes the budget and time frame for the project to be 2018 to end of 2020. However, discussions with the implementing partners during the evaluation revealed that they saw the aim of the project and the achievement of Outcomes 1, 2 and 3 to be goals to be achieved over a longer time period (unclear how long). As the agreement with donors is for the period 2018 to 2020 and with a specified budget, it is against the Project Document that effectiveness is assessed in this evaluation. For a future project period, the implementing partners need to clearly establish what is to be achieved within which time frame.

The project is set up as three separate contracts with each of the implementing partners, respectively. Although this puts an additional administrative burden on the lead donor (the Swedish Embassy) the Evaluation Team sees this as important from an accountability perspective, whereby the AMCs manage their budgets and are accountable directly to the Swedish Embassy. The current contracts with each of the implementing partners are, although formally project grants, in actual fact core funding for the implementation of the AMCs’ strategic plans and without detailing how the funding is to be used (to achieve which results). The donors should therefore consider establishing core support contracts with the AMCs. SALAR’s role is that of a facilitator and not beneficiary, and their grant should remain a project grant and the budget should therefore, be results-based i.e. with goals established and the budget structured in accordance with the goals/results to be met.

The project management and decision-making appears to have worked very well between the implementing partners, as well as between the donors and the implementing partners.

# Findings

## 3.5 RELEVANCE OF THE PROJECT TO THE AMCS AND TO MEMBER LGS

### 3.5.1 Relevance to the AMCs

The organisational strengthening component of the project has, according to the AMC secretariat staff and leadership interviewed, been highly relevant. The project was conceived after long, and sometimes difficult, negotiations between the three implementing partners as well as between the two donors but resulted in full ownership of the project by the implementing partners<sup>10</sup>. Staff of the three implementing partners and the representatives of the AMC FBiH's governing board interviewed all see this project as having been very important for the AMCs. The secretariat staff state that their work has become easier with improved structures for planning and follow-up, with better organisation of projects using advocacy plans and mini-action plans etc, and with the more systematic approach to communicating and tapping into the members' experience and efforts (with regard to advocacy efforts).

There has also been an effort made since the *Internal Review* to address some of its recommendations; continued work to involve and develop relationships with the members, installation and roll out of some IT structures (the Document Management System – DMS- and the new websites). The monitoring of outcomes is, still, activity-base as opposed to results-based and not carried out as the data needed is not readily available. No external evaluations<sup>11</sup> of the AMCs' competence and capacity have been carried out during the project period.

The project has also been relevant from the point of view of allowing the AMCs to fulfil their role towards the national (entity) authorities. The legal frameworks in both RS and FBiH<sup>12</sup> require entity governments to submit proposals to laws and other general acts to the AMCs if and when they relate to the “position, rights and obligations of local self-government”. In order to be able to comment and respond, the AMCs have needed to improve their competence (knowledge and expertise) and capacity (resources available – human and financial). Here, the use of the (in the case of RS newly formed) networks of member representatives on selected subjects, the standing/thematic committees and the Presidencies have been improved and engaging with the members on a regular and frequent basis has become usual practice. Also the AMCs have developed competence to

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<sup>10</sup> Karlstedt, Hedlund. *Internal Review of the project “Strengthening AMCs in Bosnia and Herzegovina”*. 2020

<sup>11</sup> Evaluations where external experts assess the ACMS' capacity, systems and competence.

<sup>12</sup> Republika Srpska: *Law on local self-government* (published in Official Gazette no 97 from 2006 and changes in 36 from 2013) and FBiH: *Law on Principles of Local Self-Government in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina* (entered into force on September 8, 2006).



contract external experts to provide evidence-based responses to entity-level consultations or to advocate for changes to already existing laws.

### 3.5.2 Relevance to the LGs

The Evaluation Team assesses Outcomes 2 and 3 to be relevant as the Outcome 2 (Service delivery in the areas of LGF and EU Accession) and Outcome 3 (lobbying and advocacy) represent the core functions of any local government association. The decision to divide the work into three outcomes, and in particular to have an outcome specifically focused on organisational/institutional development of the AMCs themselves, was sensible. It also helped reinforce the ToC that the AMCs must improve their own processes in order to improve the situation for their members. However, the Evaluation Team assesses that Outcome 2 “LGs/members benefit from AMCs’ improved services in the areas of EU accession and LGF in line with their mandate and EU accession requirements” was not as relevant to the AMCs for two main reasons:

- a) Unclear objectives under this outcome (i.e. what was meant by ‘improved services?’). The project logframe points to two types of services under outcome 2- ‘advisory services’ and ‘capacity building’, but subsequent project reports, SCALAR assessments and interviews with AMC staff showed that often the distinction between provision of training and advisory services in LGF and EU accession, on the one hand, and advocacy efforts towards higher levels of government to improve the conditions for LGs on the other, was blurred. Although the project contributed to developing the AMC capacities in the areas of LGF and EU accession, and these increased capacities to support both advocacy and service provision, our conclusion is that the lack of clarity over the term “services” had important implications for what was actually done under Outcome 2 and contributed to the AMCs focusing more on advocacy at the expense of developing the AMCs training and advisory services in LGF and EU accession as anticipated.<sup>13</sup> This is partly because the advocacy role of AMC is embedded in both entity-level laws regulating local self-government, and is seen by local governments and the higher level government for that matter as a primary role of the AMCs. No other organisations are tasked by law to relay the interests of LGs when it comes to legislative matters.

The focus on municipal training under Outcome 2 also suffers from further lack of clarity in both AMCs, as it is unclear who the target audience is. The responsibility for training municipal employees/civil servants lies with the Civil Service Agency (in FBiH) and with the Ministry of Administration and Local Self-Government (in RS). In both entities, it has been agreed that the AMCs will primarily be responsible for the training of elected officials (councillors and mayors- and usually only newly elected ones.) However, for several reasons, not least that the AMCs are often partners on international projects that include training of municipal employees, the AMCs sometimes play a role in training municipal employees too. This issue makes the relevance of the capacity development work under Outcome 2 unclear, and it seems

<sup>13</sup> We note that progress was made during the period in improving training and advisory services in other areas (e.g. water services) through other projects, but this evaluation focussed on services in LGF and EU accession.



that neither group received much training from the AMCs in these areas<sup>14</sup>, and not only because of COVID-19. It is the Evaluation Team's assessment that these unanswered questions have made progress harder to see under Outcome 2 compared to the other outcomes.

b) The choice of EU Accession as a main thematic area alongside LGF under Outcome 2 appears, in hindsight, less relevant to the LGs because of the slower than anticipated BiH progress in EU accession negotiations and the breadth of the subject. The evidence for this includes:

- the *EU accession and local governments in BiH Policy briefs* (EU impact reports) commissioned by the project in 2018-2019 were not used as much as hoped according to Secretariat staff, external experts and SALAR staff. Although the reports increased understanding of the impact of the EU accession process on LGs, the Evaluation Team has not seen any evidence that the reports have yet contributed to any significant changes at LG level in the five policy areas reviewed: Public procurement, employment/social policy, regional policy/structural instruments, rural development and environment/communal services;
- that project activities related to EU accession have progressed slowly and have required additional efforts by the PIT to drive progress;
- that most external experts interviewed agreed that this was not really something that Mayors are interested in talking about and not something the AMCs get requests for assistance on,
- that, according to many external experts interviewed, the LGs are most interested in accessing EU funds, rather than support to adapt to EU standards or participate in the accession process, and,
- that the topic was mentioned by only five of the 14 LGs interviewed as important to work on going forward.

Nonetheless there have been some advantages to the project's focus on EU accession; it has allowed the AMCs flexibility as the subject is so broad it allows the AMCs to work on almost any area under the umbrella of EU accession; it has opened up more channels of communication with the relevant higher level authorities responsible for EU accession and with the LGs, and also more possibilities for deeper cooperation between the AMCs themselves; and led to a better understanding in the Secretariats of municipal access to EU funding.<sup>15</sup> The project has also put the AMCs in a good position to act quickly if and when BiH achieves candidate status.

<sup>14</sup> It has not been possible for the evaluation team to definitively establish the number of trainings or participants on EU accession and LGF that the AMCs have organised over the project period as the AMC RS report trainings together with the RS Ministry of Local Government, and we have only received the 2019 training report for the FBiH AMC, which did not include any specific trainings on either EU accession or LGF.

<sup>15</sup> BiH participates with IPA support in the following EU programmes: Horizon 2020, Creative Europe, Fiscalis 2020, Customs 2020, Europe for Citizens, Erasmus+, Third Programme for the Union's action in the field of health, and the COSME programme. Whilst higher level government use up the majority of

It may be that the issue is one of framing and communication. The broad and non-specific subject of preparing for EU Accession has not generated sufficient interest amongst members, whereas going down a level to specify the technical areas e.g. water services, public procurement, accessing EU funding, state aid etc is easier to grasp and can still achieve the goal of helping LGs prepare for EU Accession. Indeed, we understand that the PIT has drawn similar conclusions in their discussions on the next phase and that, even during this project, the PIT team agreed with the donors to shift focus toward Local Government Financing (LGF) and to focus more efforts under EU Accession on advocating for the revolving fund. The well-attended recent training sessions for municipalities on EU funding possibilities in RS also points to a municipal interest in this aspect of EU accession.

In contrast, all external experts interviewed agreed that the project and the AMC's work on LGF is essential and should continue to be a key area of focus for the AMCs. This was also an important topic for LGs and a majority of the 14 LGs interviewed found that the AMCs' work on laws regulating VAT, LG budgets, access to emergency funds are important for the AMCs to work on.

To the member LGs, the work of the AMCs is seen as highly relevant. In a recent survey of the AMC FBiH's members where 40 of the 80 members' answers were assessed, 77.5 percent of the respondents found the AMC FBiH's advocacy initiatives to be very or highly relevant<sup>16</sup>. In the interviews with member LGs that the Evaluation Team has carried out, the AMCs' work to influence laws is seen as highly relevant (11 of 12 respondents that answered stated that the AMCs are "doing the right thing"). The issues that the members considered AMCs were, in their view correctly, working on were related to LG revenue collection and budgets, land, construction and forestry. As expected, there are some differences in the perception of the smaller municipalities and larger LGs in terms of relevance of the work and the assistance that the AMC can provide to them, particularly in offering training and advice. Whereas the smaller municipalities tend to rely more on the AMCs to relay their interests, and therefore find AMCs work on lobbying, advice and training more relevant, the larger LGs have more in-house competences and rely more on the AMCs for collective advocacy and sharing good practice between more developed LGs.

There is no shortage of other areas raised by external experts as possible areas of support that the AMCs could provide to its members, but broadly speaking, there was a general consensus that sharing good practice is amongst the most appreciated services the AMCs can offer and should be done even more. Areas mentioned by LGs interviewed where they would like to see more support include:

- Attracting foreign investments,
- water services,

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IPA funding aimed at bringing BiH legislation and their effective implementation closer to that of EU, there are funding opportunities for local government level should their absorption capacities improve. Furthermore, Bosnia and Herzegovina benefits from the IPA multi-country and regional programmes and participates in three cross-border cooperation programmes, from which LGs see most benefits, as well as in transnational cooperation programmes.

<sup>16</sup> AMC FBiH. *Survey results - Members' satisfaction with AMC performance*. 2021

- managing municipal utility companies,
- local economic development,
- urban planning,
- strategic planning,
- digitalisation of service delivery (e.g. unification of software solutions in e.g. e-construction permitting an exchange of data),
- solid waste management,
- financial transparency and
- inter-entity and inter-cantonal cooperation (e.g. joint services for fire services).

Finally, all external experts interviewed agreed that the efforts to strengthen the AMC's capacities in advocacy and lobbying for members' interests was highly important, particularly as both AMCs have become more prominent actors in policy dialogues in recent years. A key strength of the project is that it has allowed the AMC staff to respond to policy issues as they arise – either as a result of proposals from the LGs themselves or in response to proposals from higher levels. In practice, the project has financed deeper policy engagements in a smaller number of areas (in FBiH Local government finance, COVID law, Construction Land and Water Services, and in RS Law on Local Self Government, LGF – including property tax, the COVID law, health system reform) – through for example commissioning external experts to do analytical studies and developing advocacy plans. These deeper areas have been chosen by the AMCs in discussions with the governing bodies, and as such more relevant than if they had been pre-defined before the project started.

## Conclusion

The Outcome 1 component – focusing on strengthening the AMCs – was highly relevant at the start of the project and to initially focus on the AMCs' internal development during the project period appears to have been the correct choice. The AMCs have been able to respond to their members' needs and a significant majority of the LGs interviewed express that the AMCs are “doing the right thing” with regard to advocacy efforts. The AMCs, however, do need to put significant efforts into their strategic planning, results-based monitoring of both internal and external competence in order to continue to be relevant to their stakeholders (the members, to entity authorities, partners and donors) in the future.

The Evaluation Team considers the broadly worded Outcome 2 to have been less relevant to the AMCs and their members. This is partly because the objectives of this work were unclear, and partly because the extent of focus on EU accession may have been somewhat premature, and whilst important, not the highest priority of the members. The EU accession work has nonetheless put the AMCs in a stronger position to advocate for members' interests if and when the BiH accession process moves forward.

Outcome 3 (lobbying and advocacy) has remained very relevant during the period evaluated. The AMC's efforts are increasingly appreciated by member LGs and they consider that the AMC are “doing the right thing”. It is also one of the core functions of the two AMCs as established in their statutory documents and in both AMC's strategic plans.

## 3.6 EFFECTIVENESS: IS THE INTERVENTION ACHIEVING ITS OBJECTIVES?

This sub-chapter is structured in order to assess if Outcomes 1, 2 and 3 have been achieved for both beneficiary groups; the two AMCs and the respective AMC' members.

### 3.6.1 Achievement of Outcome 1: institutional and organisational changes in order to perform effectively

The logical framework in the *Project Document* established that the focus of the project<sup>17</sup> to achieve Outcome 1 should be on the secretariats' abilities to plan their work, to implement internal changes and to engage members in various fora. These three areas are analysed below.

The AMCs' strategic plans, to cover the period 2015-2022 for the AMC FBiH and 2015-2021 for the AMC RS, showed the members' and secretariats' difficulties in prioritising and establishing a visionary strategic plan with clear and easy-to-understand goals. The strategic plans include 37 (in the case of the AMC FBiH) and 42 (in the case of AMC RS) strategic goals. The secretariats were, furthermore, to prepare action plans based on the strategic plans and report to the Presidencies on progress. The strategic planning process was participatory, managed by a consultant engaged to support both AMCs.

The process of helping the AMCs plan and prioritise was one of the first items on the agenda for the implementing partners and training in Results-based Management (RBM) was provided to all secretariat staff jointly for the two AMCs. The resulting annual planning, monitoring and reporting processes within the two AMCs still leave room for improvement. Annual reports prior to 2020 from both organisations were highly activity based, listing meetings attended, trainings held etc. related to the numerous goals established in the strategic plans. From 2020 and onwards, the two AMCs have substantially improved and focused their annual plans by substantially revising and reformulating the strategic goals, reducing these to three main areas and fewer goals and breaking these down into activities. The AMC FBiH also uses the annual plan format for reporting which is good practice. The AMC RS does not, and it is therefore difficult to follow if activities planned have been carried out and the usefulness of the plan is therefore significantly reduced.

The annual reports do not, however, summarise results achieved against the goals which is the key concept of the RBM methodology. The secretariat staff state that the RBM training, planning and reporting templates etc. has helped them focus and made their work easier, and that individuals' mind set have been changed to help them ask "so what" when discussing both planned and finalised activities. The monitoring processes have still to be developed i.e. what data to gather in order to validate outcome results and the strategic and annual outcome goals need to be formulated as targets. There are a number of strategic goals that the AMCs are working toward that can be measured and, with many members putting demands on the secretariats, establishing measurable strategic and operational annual goals can help members to prioritise, rate the feasibility of a goal and to, ultimately, measure effectiveness. The AMC FBiH has started the process of

<sup>17</sup> As defined by the indicators 1.1., 1.2 and 1.3.

developing a new strategic plan and aims to carry this activity out internally, as opposed to the former strategic planning process which was managed by a consultant. However, the Evaluation Team assesses that the AMCs will need support in this process, in order to challenge the AMCs, to help them prioritise and to establish fewer, more visionary, measurable goals.

The two AMCs have self-assessed their **institutional and organisational changes and structures** using the *Common Assessment Framework* tool (CAF) developed by the European Public Administration Network<sup>18</sup>. The AMC secretariat staff assessed aspects such as leadership, people and processes resulting in action plans to address some 30+ recommendations. In accordance with the CAF methodology, the AMC RS has recently begun the process of re-evaluating themselves to ascertain if and to what extent they have addressed the recommendations from the previous self-assessment. The AMC FBiH are planning to do so this year.

The Evaluation Team's analysis of whether the CAF has led to any institutional and organisational changes is that some important changes have been made; related to annual planning (see above), improving communication (both in content and the channels<sup>19</sup>), introduction of new software and the DMS and, notably, involving the Presidency, networks of practitioners and the thematic committees in decision-making and communication to a larger extent. However, the CAF does not appear to be followed up regularly in either internal staff meetings, in *Annual Plans* or in the Secretariats' *Annual Reports*. It is key that also these recommendations be monitored closely and included in the *Annual Plans* and reported against – otherwise there is a risk that these are not implemented. Best practice is to also include the key recommendations in the new strategic plan, to ensure that these are acted upon. The Implementing Partners assess themselves using the SCALAR model, and the CAF but there has not been an external assessment of the AMC's organisational capacity since 2014. The Evaluation Team recommend that the AMCs go one step further, and be assessed by an external evaluator using the System-based audit methodology that Sida uses to assess many of its partners. An external systems-based audit would, in the experience of the Evaluation Team, help the AMC to plan their capacity building work better, allow them to draw on the expertise of the assessors and establish a baseline on internal development that is based on best practice. This would also give the Swedish and Swiss Embassies and the AMCs an objective and thorough review of the AMC's systems and procedures for all its processes and could also help assess the AMC's readiness for grants of the type "core support".

The **activity of AMC members** has increased significantly during the period as attested to by secretariat staff, members as well as evidence in minutes of meetings. The Secretariats communicate and use the expertise of their members in many ways:

- Providing information, invitations to trainings, seminars etc.
- Gathering opinions, knowledge, and expertise.

<sup>18</sup> A tool developed specifically for this project by SALAR (called SCALAR) has been used to assess project progress but as the CAF is what the AMCs use to measure their organisational development, and it was developed by experts external to the project, the focus of the analysis is on this tool.

<sup>19</sup> Increasing use of social media and the redesign of the website.

- Decision-making.

The AMCs have formally established committees on various subjects (AMC FBiH has six standing committees and the AMC RS has nine thematic committees). The committees consider legal reforms proposed by other parties or proposals by member LGs to change a law. Proposals are submitted to the Presidency for a decision.

In addition, the AMCs have established informal networks of practitioners (e.g. staff within LGs with specific expertise, external experts). These are relatively newly formed (during the past four years in the case of the AMC RS) are also thematic and have been mainly virtual during 2020 and 2021. These are used as sounding boards, to get quick responses to questions from the AMCs or to gather information. The networks do not have any formal decision-making authority or propose “positions”. The Presidency takes decisions proposed by the secretariat or by the thematic/standing committees.

Of the 14 LG interviewed as part of this evaluation, seven were currently involved in networks and six were part of standing/thematic committees. Seven LGs interviewed were also in the Presidency of the AMCs. The interviews with LGs show that nine of the 13 LGs that responded were aware of and had been sent the AMCs’ annual plans, three did not know about these. The interviews show that the secretariats are felt to communicate often with the LGs and many of them are involved in committee work, in project work and in trainings. The level of activity of the LG representatives interviewed is high when it comes to participating in committee meetings, assembly meetings and presidency meetings.

The data provided indicated that at least 58 LGs of the 64 participated in the most recent General Assembly meeting of the AMC RS, and examples of AMC RS committee meetings show that all attend committee meetings. At the May 2020 Presidency meeting of the AMC RS 17 of the 19 members attended in addition to representatives from four entity-level ministries.

The members’ attendance at the latest AMC FBiH’s General Assembly in 2019 and Presidency meetings is lower. At the most recent General Assembly meeting in 2019 only 37 of the 80 member LGs attended and only seven of the 13 members of the Presidency attended the May 2021 Presidency meeting. The AMC FBiH’s leadership and staff stated that members are more active in committee and presidency meetings.

This increase in member participation is believed to be a consequence of the AMCs’ advocacy wins on subjects and law reforms important to the LGs and is an indication of the increasing importance of the AMCs to their members.

There is evidence provided by external experts and the AMC staff that the LG members help with advocacy i.e. attend meetings with governmental authorities on behalf of the AMC, but this support is insufficient according to the AMC FBiH Secretary General and needs to increase.

## Conclusion



The secretariats show an increasing ability to plan their activities and tasks and to prioritise, however, the ability to establish visionary strategic goals for the AMCs has yet to be tested during the upcoming strategic planning process. Nor has the monitoring and evaluation procedures been implemented during the four-year project and need to be institutionalised. The strategic planning process will involve the members – increasing the risk that the prioritisation process does not result in fewer and more visionary goals. The AMC's ability to establish a limited list of visionary strategic goals that are measurable and monitorable is still assessed as low.

The secretariats have begun assessing their own performance using the SCALAR and CAF models. However, this process does not appear to have been followed up in a systematic manner. The Evaluation Team recommends that the AMCs be assessed by an external evaluator using the System-based audit methodology that Sida uses to assess many of its partners. This would give the Swedish and Swiss Embassies and the AMCs an objective and thorough review of the AMC's systems and procedures, a baseline for the next project phase and assess the AMC's readiness for grants of the type "core support".

There is sufficient evidence provided by LGs and the secretariats to show that member LGs are, to a significant extent, supporting, providing advice and "positions" and expert knowledge through the various channels available to the AMCs. The level of engagement at governance level (evidenced by members attending General Assembly and Presidency meetings) appears to be lower in the AMC FBiH than in the AMC RS but the improved engagement is likely to be a result of advocacy "wins" thereby increasing the AMCs' importance to the LGs.

### **3.6.2 Achievement of Outcome 2: improved and sustainable services in the areas of EU accession and Local Government Finance**

As discussed under the relevance section, Outcome 2 suffered somewhat from differing interpretations about what "services to members" in these two areas actually refers to. Project interviewees and reporting under this outcome focused on analysis, advocacy and other activities undertaken in order to engage in policy dialogue with higher levels of government, which in our view fits under Outcome 3. This section therefore focuses more on training and advisory services, rather than on lobbying and advocacy efforts which are covered under Outcome 3.

From the data collected the Evaluation Team notes the following regarding AMC members' **satisfaction with AMCs' performance in delivering services in area of EU approximation and LGF**:

- The recent survey carried out by the AMC FBiH had a higher response rate<sup>20</sup> and there seems to be a high general level of satisfaction with the services provided (not specific to LGF or EU Accession)<sup>21</sup>.
- The AMC RS has not carried out a member satisfaction survey since 2017.

<sup>20</sup> 18 respondents in 2017 vs. 40 in 2020.

<sup>21</sup> 35 of 39 respondents were either 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with the human and technical capacities of AMC in the area of service provision

- The design of the 2017 member survey was too complicated and cumbersome- leading to misleading results<sup>22</sup> and low response rates. The 2021 AMC FBiH survey design was simpler and easier to use but suffered from technical issues. We believe the SALAR team could have provided more support to the design and quality assurance of the member survey process to ensure that better quality data on member perceptions was available. Improving the quality of AMC surveying could therefore be an area of activity for the second phase.
- The LG interviews carried out by the Evaluation Team showed that LGs struggled to identify examples where the AMC's training or advice in LGF or EU Accession led to concrete improvements in services to citizens. In general, LGs interviewed encouraged the AMCs to focus on knowledge sharing between LG practitioners, and some interviewees gave examples of when this led to simplified service delivery (e.g. construction permitting).

In addition to the views of the LGs on this, there is other evidence that shows the AMCs' improved competence in these two areas. The SCALAR self-assessments and interviews point to **increased technical capacities regarding EU Accession and Local Government Financing** in both AMCs. This has come from the *EU accession and local governments in BiH Policy briefs* assessments, EU working groups/committees and participation in discussions and trainings with higher levels of government. For LGF, the most notable improvement came in the AMC FBiH with the recruitment of a LGF officer, who brought technical expertise to the Secretariat that they had not previously had. Unfortunately, he left the AMC in June 2021, leaving a large void to be filled. That said, the analysis and policy discussions seem to have increased the technical capacities in LGF in both AMCs.

In the area of **training of municipal employees/ councillors** it has been difficult to gather evidence of what the AMCs have done as part of this project<sup>23</sup>, but it appears that training in the areas on EU Accession and LGF has been limited. In EU accession we are aware that in 2021 the AMC RS organised online training on EU funding for some 200 municipal staff with the RS Ministry of European Integration and International Cooperation, and in both RS and FBiH in 2020 a presentation of the *EU Progress Report*<sup>24</sup> was made as part of this project. The Secretariats are now forwarding EU-related trainings offered by other parts of government to their members (for instance, training opportunities from BiH Directorate of European Integration), where increased participation by municipalities in the recent period has been noted. In the area of LGF, an external speaker on municipal debt was invited to speak to the Public Finance Network of the AMC FBiH, and some e-courses in municipal finance were offered through NALAS. It is noteworthy, however,

<sup>22</sup> Respondents in the Federation, for example, reported very high satisfaction with AMC services in the area of EU accession, even though in the previous question none of the members said they had used AMC services in the area of EU Accession. This is probably a sign of survey fatigue.

<sup>23</sup> The AMC RS jointly reports their training of LGs with the Ministry of Local Self Government, making it difficult to see what the Secretariat did. We have only seen the 2019 training report for the AMC FBiH which does not include any training on LGF or EU Accession specifically.

<sup>24</sup> European Commission. *Commission Staff Working Document Bosnia and Herzegovina 2020 Report*. 2020.



that the training officers in both AMC's have hardly been involved in this project, which again points to confusion about the objective of this work.

Outside of LGF and EU Accession, the AMC's have provided other trainings to their members over the project period<sup>25</sup>, but typically through other donor-funded projects. Interviewees with experience of other AMC's in the region consider the two BiH AMC's as more advanced than other AMC's at managing training programmes, which implies that training has not been a prioritised activity in this project.

One area where the Evaluation Team cannot see much progress is regarding the **development of “services-oriented sustainable finance model”**, as we understand was intended in the *Project Document*. For the AMC RS, a new membership policy has been developed for approval, but it simply makes some services available only to members who have paid their membership fees in full, with other services available to ‘all members’. In the FBiH changes to the current membership policy has been discussed but has not reached the stage where a proposal for a new policy is available for discussion in the Presidency.

To measure the **effectiveness of the AMC's' advisory services**, the logical framework includes the indicators “rate of satisfaction with AMC services” and “the number of municipal request vs. number of advice given per year”. Even here the data is missing or confusing. For advisory services, according to one interviewee, only written requests for support are recorded - although the Evaluation Team has not seen any record of this. In the 2019 and 2020 annexes to the *Annual Reports* on the project (Logframe updates), the AMC's reported responding to all 19 (FBiH) and 25 (RS) written requests/initiatives from members, but these are initiatives (i.e. proposals) for changes to laws or regulations from the LGs that they send to the AMC's to analyse and lobby for. Anecdotally, the Evaluation Team understands that both AMC's have received many requests for advice in LGF (especially in FBiH) and none in the areas of EU Accession, but this is not recorded. The problem with not recording requests is that there is no way for the Secretariats to know which municipalities are requesting support and in what areas. Recording requests, and actions taken is also important from a transparency and accountability aspect, to ensure that members can trace their requests and that motivation for acting upon (and more importantly not acting on) a request is visible to members. The new IT software installed (the planning tool in the AMC RS and the DMS) will hopefully allow the recording of service requests from members which is an important investment to ensure transparency and accountability, and to demonstrate the value of the AMC's to their members.

**Cooperation between the two AMC's** has further deepened and developed as part of this project, with good communication and joint planning of activities. In this project, the

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<sup>25</sup> Online workshops were held with the PR network (RS and FBiH) on communication (part of the ILDP project), 3 cycles of trainings on municipal finance, gender equality and property management (in cooperation with NALAS), 2 trainings for 15 water companies in setting data on Danubis platform (in cooperation with the Association of Employers of Communal Economy of FBiH), trainings related to effective management of utilities for local self-government and utilities (within RCDN project). During 2019, FBiH AMC held 14 training in 7 thematic areas with around 250 participants (including elected officials and utilities companies' representatives) – all through other projects.

cooperation has been most visible in the area of EU accession, where the two EU working groups have cooperating extensively and the AMCs have produced joint materials and press releases. The two groups for LG communication/PR officers have also seen good cooperation, but cooperation on Local Government Finance has been more limited.

### Conclusion

The Evaluation Team finds that the AMCs have made less progress improving training and advisory services to municipalities in the areas of LGF and EU accession than hoped, with the possible exception of advisory services on LGF. The lack of progress can be explained by several factors, including reduced interest in EU issues, COVID-19, somewhat unrealistic project objectives and poor data collection on services provided by the AMCs. There was an obvious lack of clarity about the type of training and advisory services the AMCs intended to provide to the municipalities in these two areas. That said, anecdotal evidence suggests that municipalities are contacting the AMCs for advice on LGF issues, and the two AMCs' EU working groups have led to exchange of information between municipalities and good cooperation between the entities.

#### 3.6.3 Achievement of Outcome 3: lobbying and advocacy in line with LGs interests and the EU accession process

The focus of the project under Outcome 3 has been to develop a more robust methodology for influencing policy decisions in both entities- including early involvement in policy and legislative discussions (indicator 1); more contacts with higher level of government (indicator 2) and broadened fora for advocacy efforts (indicator 3).

The AMCs have been able to capitalise on an **increased recognition** that the AMCs must by law be consulted on all issues related to local governance. In the FBiH, successive lawsuits brought by the AMC against the government for failure to consult have now led to this consultation role being taken much more seriously, as well as a PR win for the AMCs. Overall, after many years of struggle, the AMCs are taking their place in policy discussions about local government issues in BiH. This increased recognition has led to the AMCs successfully representing their members in over 40 working groups during the project period, ranging from property tax collection to strategic planning. The two AMCs are now asked to coordinate LG feedback on all legislative and policy developments affecting them and have become important fora for the entity governments to introduce policy changes to local governments. Both AMCs are also now active members in the local government parliamentary committees, another sign of their increasing importance.

The AMCs have successfully **diversified advocacy** by increasingly engaging with the international community (e.g. joint advocacy with the UNDP on grants to LGs) and even successfully lobbying the Office of the High Representative (OHR) to extend the mayoral mandates after local election delays.

Arguably the most important area of progress during the project period, however, has been the increasing **use of expert analysis and evidence in AMC advocacy efforts**. This change was noted by multiple stakeholders, who saw the AMCs as more credible, realistic

and professional advocates than other advocacy organisations as a result of this. 64 percent of the LGs interviewed considered that the reputation of both AMCs was better than four or five years back, as perceived through their core function of relaying the interests of LGs towards higher levels of government.

This shift has been most visible in the area of LGF, where both AMCs have become producers of respected analysis that brought attention to key LGF issues. The AMCs' analysis of the financial impact of the COVID-19 crisis is another excellent example of using high quality analysis to draw attention to local government issues.

The evidence and analysis-driven approach has also been applied to other areas e.g. analysis of municipal employee numbers, arguing for the establishment of a revolving fund, exploring the possibility of LGs taking over property taxation and the implications of various changes to the health system, regarding the *Law on Construction Land* and water services.

A more advanced approach to advocacy has also been introduced by this project, including the development of specific advocacy plans identifying key messages, possible allies, advocacy targets and coordinating the involvement of mayors. This approach has only been applied to a small number of areas to date, and it is probably too early to judge its success, but initial signs are promising and this work should be built on in the next phase.

The enabling factors have been: a combination of training, support and encouragement by the SALAR team, the selection of a limited number of clear and pressing policy issues, budget lines to be able to engage external experts to carry out analysis, the use of thematic committees and networks to establish positions, and the freedom for the Secretariats to identify areas of analysis based on the needs of their members or in response to policy initiatives from higher levels of government.

It is worth noting that the AMC FBiH and AMC RS appear to adopt different approaches to policy influencing and advocacy. In the RS, the policy influencing work seems to have been more of a cooperative and advisory nature, with rare disagreements between the AMC position and the position of the Ministry of Administration and Local Self Government. In the Federation, whilst there are also examples of cooperative policy influencing work (e.g. participating in working groups, collecting input on legal changes) there is more evidence of confrontational advocacy, through for example lawsuits against the government or cantons and direct advocacy to MPs. Both types of advocacy can be appropriate and effective in different contexts, and the important thing is that both AMCs are able to apply different approaches as and when appropriate.

Another key difference is that the AMC FBiH is sometimes called upon to conduct or support advocacy initiatives towards individual canton governments or assemblies. In some ways this makes the AMC FBiH advocacy work more complicated, but it also creates opportunities for the AMC to support LGs to advocate for changes at cantonal level, using data and comparisons from LGs in other cantons. And indeed it is at cantonal level that many of the problems facing LGs can be addressed, for example through clarifying the division of competences, or improving the allocation of tax revenues to

match competences. It may also be sensible to focus advocacy efforts on changes at the cantonal level when issues are not moving at the entity level.

### Conclusion

In the area of lobbying and advocacy, both AMCs have made impressive strides towards more proactive and evidence-based lobbying. This shift has coincided with increasing recognition by the governments and parliaments in both entities that the AMCs must be consulted on all local government issues, a result of long-term AMC advocacy efforts. The progress is most notable in the area of LGF, and was particularly visible during the COVID-19 crisis, but the shift is also visible in other policy areas. This has resulted in the AMCs increasingly recognised as professional, credible and essential dialogue partners in local government policy issues. Using networks of local expertise from LGs had proved effective and is seen as a particular strength that can partly compensate limited in-house expert resources of AMCs.

## 3.7 IMPACT: WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES THE INTERVENTION MAKE?

The changes in the AMCs, testified to by the secretariat staff, external stakeholders, by entity government representatives and by the member LG interviewed is that the AMCs have become **important stakeholders in establishing and reforming the legal frameworks**. The secretariat staff and leadership state that they are, to a significant extent, now consulted by the entity government representatives, asked to provide an opinion and to inform or gather information from their members. The AMCs are seen as able to relatively quickly respond to requests by the entity governments and the AMCs are to an increasing extent being consulted by entity governments. This is, according to both the secretariats as well as entity governments, an expression of the AMCs ability to respond which has improved during the period through the more systematic and frequent use of networks, thematic/standing committees and the Presidencies.

The AMCs focus much of their efforts on the LGs in order to ensure that the secretariat staff work on what is important for the members, but an impact that appears less obvious, and possibly unintended, is that the **increased professionalisation of the AMCs** has also made the entity governments' work easier. The Evaluation Team has found that the AMCs are seen as very important conduits for information to the LGs as well as conveyors of information from the LGs to the entity governments. The RS Deputy Minister for the Ministry of Local Self Government stated that without the AMCs there would be "chaos" – with the explanation that otherwise the ministry would need to contact all the LGs directly. The AMCs work closely with the entity governments in some cases, but should also consider their value to the entity governments as their stakeholders. When interacting with the entity ministries and policy-setting working groups, win-win situations should be sought whereby the AMCs' propose constructive solutions that ensure that not only the LG as institutions benefit, but that practical solutions that improve life of the rights holders (citizens) are implemented.

A majority of AMC FBiH members consider the AMCs to have a high impact on the legal and financial framework for LGs (according to the recent member survey). Of the LG interviewed by the Evaluation Team, nine of the LGs mentioned specific outcomes of instances when the AMC had helped them with concrete issues mainly to do with legal framework. The external stakeholders interviewed as part of the scope of this evaluation perceived that the evidence-based lobbying and advocacy efforts by both AMCs are increasingly considered more visible and credible to both their members and externally. 64 percent of LG interviewees perceived AMCs reputation to be better now than four years back, which is significant. Other responses were ‘the same’ and not a single LG responded that the reputation was ‘worse.’

The Evaluation Team has identified a number of specific policy areas where the **AMCs successfully defended or advocated for LG interests** during the project period, possibly leading to enhanced service provision and a more conducive legal framework for LGs. The following list is not exhaustive, but shows some of the main contributions by the AMCs that have been especially noted by member LGs, external experts and AMC staff:

- 1) In 2020 both AMCs successfully lobbied for BAM 30 million per entity in current and capital grants to municipalities to reduce the impact of COVID-19, and for a more equal and transparent distribution of these. This same funding level and transparent model has also been continued in 2021.
- 2) The AMC RS successfully intervened several times to delay the application of the *Law on Local Self Government* that required municipalities to reduce the number of municipal employees by specific dates, reducing the need for abrupt disruptions in staff numbers, especially in smaller municipalities.<sup>26</sup> The AMC is also involved in longer term discussions to improve human resource management in the LGs.
- 3) The AMC RS successfully intervened to stop a proposal in a draft *Law on Forests* that would have reduced local government incomes on the sale of forest products and lobbied for more flexibility in how these incomes could be used. The AMC RS has similarly lobbied for more flexibility in the use of concession fees in the *Law on Concessions*.
- 4) The AMC RS has brought LG perspectives to the Ministry of Finance working group to increase the revenues from property taxes, a key source of income for the municipalities. The AMC has also analysed the possibility of property tax collection being taken over by the municipalities.
- 5) The AMC RS has also successfully advocated for the financial interests of the extremely underdeveloped municipalities, including increasing co-funding for projects, more flexibility in the use of funds and funds for local offices in areas far away from the municipal centre.
- 6) The AMC FBiH successfully advocated for a change in the *Law on Default Interest Rates*, so that municipal interest rate payments could not be larger than principal debt- thereby reducing interest rate payments for local governments.
- 7) The AMC FBiH has advocated extensively on the new *Law on Construction Land* (currently in parliamentary procedures) which, if passed, will allow municipalities to make use of currently unowned construction land.

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<sup>26</sup> For example, according to one interviewee, in Visegrad the law would have implied an immediate reduction of staff from 75 to 30 people.



- 8) The AMC FBiH successfully stopped an initiative to abolish dedicated civil protection funds at the municipal level.
- 9) The AMC FBiH participated in bringing the local government views to the work to improve the delivery of water services and the management of public utility companies, including the sensitive issue of water pricing. This regulation is currently being processed by the government.
- 10) Although no major progress can be seen on long-term/structural changes in LGF (e.g. Allocation of public revenues Law in FBiH), in part due to the COVID crisis absorbing policy attention, we understand that in FBiH the review to the *Allocation of Public Revenues Law* was included in the *new Federation Public Finance Reform Strategy* for 2021-2025 at the AMC FBiH initiative. This law currently dictates the allocation of indirect taxes and direct taxes between the different levels of government, and its review will increase the chances of increased funding to the local government level.

When assessing **what has worked well and less well** there are certain ‘ingredients’ seem to be present in the more successful examples:

- The AMCs have tended to be more successful during this period at stopping unfavourable legislative changes rather than pro-actively initiating and securing more favourable legislative changes themselves. This is not surprising, since the number of legislative changes affecting local government in each entity (anecdotally 20-40 per year) takes up a lot of resources and the possibilities for the AMCs initiating new legislative changes themselves is limited, especially in FBiH. Often it may also be more effective to ‘seize opportunities’ through working groups and public consultations initiated by others, rather than trying to initiate changes themselves. That said, the work on LGF is a clear example of more proactive agenda setting, and were it not for COVID, would possibly have probably yielded more results.
- The AMCs have become aware of planned or requested changes to laws in good time, in order to think through and prepare sensible AMC positions in their own expert committees. This has allowed the AMCs the time and resources to prepare well-considered policy positions, often with the assistance of external expertise (consultants, LG staff or academics). These policy positions have tended to focus on specific, concrete issues rather than broad sector-wide changes. The thematic committees and networks were identified as critical and the right way forward by several LG interviewees.
- When more intense lobbying has been required, a key success ingredient in the FBiH in particular has been the relationship with the parliamentary committee on local self-government, who have distributed the AMC’s position papers on the issue to all MPs (e.g. on the COVID-19 funding issue). Using Mayors to lobby MPs from their own party seems to also have been effective in some instances, and should be further built on.
- For the AMC RS, the relationship with the Ministry of Local Self Government seems to be a critical enabling factor.
- The AMC FBiH’s use of lawsuits has served to draw attention to local governance issues, even if the outcomes or implementation of court decisions have not always been positive.

It is likely that some of the policy areas listed above have or will indirectly contribute to **enhanced service provision to citizens**. Aside from policy influencing, there is some evidence that the AMCs have also contributed to better LG service delivery through sharing good practices and providing advice or mediation services. In the RS, for example, Visegrad introduced new software for utility bill payments inspired by a presentation by Gradiska at an AMC event, and in the Federation an AMC event on construction permitting led to process simplifications in Sanski Most. In Mostar, a new rulebook on financial control came as a result of AMC training delivered to their finance officer. AMCs offer their assistance in developing LG strategic documents and statutes, especially for smaller municipalities and this is highly appreciated by LGs. There may be many more examples of good practice sharing and advice leading to service delivery improvement but these are difficult to track. There are also examples where the AMCs have provided mediation services between the municipalities and the government, and these are more prominent and appreciated among smaller municipalities.

In general, the interviewed LGs would like to see the AMCs organising more frequent exchanging of best practice among municipalities. For instance, to organise more thematic meetings between mayors, finance departments, human resources departments, to share good practices and learn from each other.

### Conclusion

Significant high-level improvements achieved by the AMCs as part of this project are that the AMCs are frequently and regularly consulted by the entity governments and are increasingly recognised by both members, external experts and entity governments as important contributors to legal reforms that affect local governments. They contribute with evidence-based arguments and have successfully managed to hinder initiatives that would have negatively impacted their members. The AMCs have had most success so far in stalling or hindering laws or changes initiated by others, and on shorter-term local government financing issues, but the long-term advocacy on local government finance, although promising, has yet to bear fruit. A more visionary approach is needed for the future in order for the AMCs to establish their own expertise on selected topics.

## 3.8 SUSTAINABILITY: WILL THE BENEFITS LAST?

The most noticeable **changes in the AMCs institutional practices**, and those that are likely to be sustainable are the new and improved annual planning processes and the structures and procedures for interacting with members (see Chapter 4.3 above).

The AMCs are assessed to still **lack competence in project management and monitoring of projects** by external stakeholders and experts, nor do the Secretariats yet have sufficient in-house expertise to be the “go-to” organisation on topics that are relevant to the members or to external stakeholders. The AMCs have significantly improved their ability to advocate based on evidence, research or the compilation of research, and have been able to do so by contracting external experts. In order to continue to be relevant to both members and entity government institutions, the AMCs should investigate what in-house expertise is needed and aim to build such expertise. Regarding some services offered by the AMCs, there are other providers (of e.g. training) where the AMCs may be

better placed to contract these, while some services e.g. legal reform in a sector, may be an area that the AMCs are better placed to build up unique in-house competence. The AMCs should, to remain relevant and sustainable, consider carrying out a “market study” in order to ascertain where-in the uniqueness lies and, in the new strategic plans, establish how to build competence and expertise in this “uniqueness”.

The AMCs are **not financially sustainable** i.e. able to carry out their current activities with income generated by their members or by projects initiated by the AMCs. Membership fees account for 31 percent of total income in AMC RS and 38 percent in AMC FBiH. The AMCs have relatively high collection rates (above 60 percent) compared to other similar associations in the South East Europe countries<sup>27</sup>. Both AMCs are reliant on donor grants, which are exclusively project grants requiring the secretariats to complete activities, implement tasks and report on progress to the grantor(s). More worrying is that this project has provided the AMC FBiH with almost 50 percent of their income, and the AMC RS with 38 percent of its income. The grants have funded 4.55 Full-time Equivalent (FTE) positions (of the eight staff members) within the AMC RS and 4.05 FTE in the AMC FBiH and a substantial part of the salaries of seven of the nine employees thus enabling the AMCs to dedicate substantial time to implementation of the project. But relying to such a degree on one grant is very risky. The AMCs will need to consider how to increase their financial sustainability. To do this, the AMCs need to understand how they are unique to different stakeholders (members, entity level governments, donors etc.) and develop unique offerings to the different stakeholders. This may mean increasing membership fees and/or charging members for services, developing project ideas that donors are willing to fund and charging entity governments for information gathering services, training courses etc. The donor portfolio needs to be diversified in order not to be so reliant on only the Swedish and Swiss grant. Even if this project continues for another four years, the AMCs need to have a plan for how to ensure a continued service level after this project has ended. This is a first step to being able to develop a strategic plan that has the chance of bringing financial sustainability to the AMCs.

The members of the AMC FBiH pay memberships fees depending on the size of the LG's budget and there is no distinction regarding services or right to vote etc. – all members are treated equally. In the AMC RS all members receive certain services irrespective of if you pay membership fees or not and certain services offered to paying members (seminars and roundtables, participation in networks and provision of expert assistance and tailor-made training). Income from membership fees decreased in 2020, and for the AMC FBiH membership fee income has decreased since 2017.

The opinion of LGs interviewed regarding the financial sustainability of AMCs is that AMCs should take a more proactive role in attracting more funds through projects for themselves, positioning themselves to assist more LGs to attract EU- and other donor funding. Over 70 percent of the LGs interviewed thought that the AMCs should not try to survive on membership fees alone and that attracting project funding should be the way forward to financial sustainability.

The grants that the two AMCs are provided are, in practice, core grants as there is no possibility to monitor which activities have been implemented using the grant. The budgets list the type of costs to be funded (salaries, travel costs etc.) but are not results-based nor activity based. Sida usually requires core funding grants to be preceded

<sup>27</sup> SDC. *Support to the Association of Kosovo Municipalities (AKM) – Outcome of DEMOS Phase II for the period from 1 January 2018 to 31 December 2021*. 2021



by a systems-based audit where external experts analyse all the systems and procedures in the organisation, from the governance functions to how payments are made. This should also be done in the case of the two AMCs since they are, in practice, receiving core funding.

The budget for this project (2017-2021) is not results-based i.e. structured in accordance with the outcomes. This is good practice and will allow the Swedish Embassy to see for what and how the grant is spent.

The Swedish and Swiss donors need to carefully consider the impact this grant has on the AMCs. To fund up to 50 percent of costs is very risky and a suggestion is that the embassies consider an “incentive-linked grant”. These type of grants can be designed in many manners e.g. by offering a grant equal to the amount collected in fees and charges from members. This creates an incentive for the AMCs (and members) to increase income from the members (either fees or service charges).

In the area of lobbying and advocacy, the Evaluation Team is confident that the position that the AMCs have established as **key dialogue partners on local government issues will be maintained** after this project finishes, provided that the AMCs have sufficient resources and staff. Since the staff at the Secretariats consider the new advocacy approaches effective, the Evaluation Team sees good chances that these will continue, but they are also more resource-intensive and will probably require continued financial and other assistance to apply.

For both advocacy and advisory services, a central sustainability dilemma relates to the depth of **technical expertise that the AMCs are able to maintain ‘in house’**. A number of external stakeholders expressed a wish to see more technical expertise in the AMCs, but as the AMC FBiH finance expert leaving the position shows, it may be difficult to retain technical experts in some areas of high demand, unless the AMCs can match the salaries and development opportunities they will get elsewhere. Here, the Evaluation Team recommends the AMCs to prioritise a small number of technical areas where the AMCs intend to recruit or develop deeper ‘in-house’ expertise, and other areas where it will suffice to have generalists who know how to call upon deeper expertise externally.

### Conclusion

The AMCs have developed internal procedures and practices that the AMCs will be able to sustain as long as the AMCs have funding to allow them to maintain the current staffing levels. However, The AMCs are highly dependent on the project grant from the Swedish and Swiss Embassies to ensure staffing levels. The AMCs will need to consider how to increase financial sustainability. To do this, the AMCs need to understand how they are unique to different stakeholders (members, entity level governments, donors etc.) and develop unique offerings to the different stakeholders. The AMCs also need to consider what type of services that the members are willing to pay for and how the secretariats can build competence in these areas.

### 3.9 CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

Sida and the Swedish Embassy places great importance on the four perspectives, which are also called cross-cutting issues, of gender, environment, conflict sensitivity and HRBA. All projects and programs funded need to consider to what extent these issues are understood and addressed.

Under HRBA, the project has improved the member LGs accountability toward the AMCs i.e. their documented involvement in governance issues (the Presidency and committees), in developing advocacy positions and providing the secretariat with support and expertise in order to advocate in an evidence-based manner. The Secretariats' accountability and transparency towards its members has also improved significantly through structured processes to inform and engage members in networks, committees, governing functions and directly with advocacy efforts.

The Evaluation Team can also observe that the project has succeeded in ensuring that both AMCs are equally included in project activities, that ownership of the project is strong with both AMCs and that the two AMCs cooperated extremely well.

The *Project Document* does not explain how the cross-cutting aspects will be addressed by strengthening the capacities of the AMCs, instead it appears as if this will automatically happen. The lack of progress in addressing the cross-cutting issues shows that this is an erroneous assumption. The Evaluation Team cannot find evidence of progress toward creating gender-sensitive AMCs and member LGs that help to develop environmentally friendly policies and laws in a non-conflict manner that ensure rights-holders rights. There has been a GAP analysis<sup>28</sup> carried out as part of the project that analysed the context in BiH, the *Project Document*, included a stakeholder analysis and proposed activities going forward. The GAP analysis concluded that “the project impact and outcomes of the project proposal do not make any reference to gender equality; outputs do not foresee gender-specific activities.” The GAP analysis was discussed with the AMC Secretariats and resulted in a prioritised action plan. There is, however, little evidence from annual plans that the actions identified have been initiated or addressed. The GAP analysis and action plan will serve as a good baseline for the next project phase, and the implementing partners should ensure that the weaknesses identified in the former *Project Document* are not repeated and that the prioritised actions are included in the Logframe for the next project phase.

There are a number of issues to address in the project which the Evaluation Team has not seen evidence that these have been considered:

- Lack of gender- and diversity- disaggregated data at the project level or at activity level (also including activities that are not part of the project but completed by the Secretariats). There is no reporting at all on the number of women, men, young, impaired, or other groups in the annual reports on training events, *AMC Annual Reports* or project reporting to the Swedish Embassy. This is a minimum level and

<sup>28</sup> Author not named. Gender Action Plan (GAP): Strengthening AMCs in Bosnia and Herzegovina. June 2020

usually the first step to beginning to consider gender equality, and diversity but this is not done by either implementing partner. There is no evidence to support that women and men are equally included in project activities or that considerations of vulnerable minorities are considered (as stated in the *Project Document*).

- The Presidency of the AMC FBiH is all male, while the AMC RS's Presidency has one female member. The Secretariats have limited influence on who is elected to the Presidency (and considering that there are now only four female mayors after the 2021 election the choice is slim), but a discussion about improving the gender balance in the Presidency is important to have. At the committee level (where representatives from the LGs and not only Mayors are members), 27 percent of the members of the AMC FBiH's committees and 20 percent of the members of AMC RS's committees are female. This is also a very low ratio and needs to be increased.
- The implementing partners do not appear to have obliged the member LGs to discuss if, and to what extent, legal reforms proposed will impact on gender balances or marginalised groups. There is no evidence from meeting minutes of the Presidency or committees that the AMCs have asked the members to consider this.
- Gender training as part of the project was implemented beginning in late 2020. This involved staff also from the Secretariats and 17 LGs. There has also been some gender training provided through NALAS to the AMC FBiH, but this appears to be the first gender training the AMCs participated in as no other training reports or similar have been provided. One important conclusion from the gender training<sup>29</sup> was that the participants overwhelmingly considered a lack of gender awareness the main obstacle of gender equality. This would suggest that there is a need to do more in this area.
- The AMCs have been working on a number of legal reform projects and projects with international institutions that relate to environmental aspects and climate change (wastewater, pricing of water, forestry law and law on construction land to name a few). However, there is little mention of why the AMCs are engaged in these projects, if and to what extent these projects will improve biodiversity, reduce environmental degradation and climate change etc. Nor do the Secretariats appear to consider environmental aspects or assess environmental risks when engaging in advocacy – although a number of proposed legal reforms may have an impact on the environment. Sida has a tool<sup>30</sup> that the AMCs should use to establish their position on environmental opportunities and risks when considering getting involved with a project, in legal reform or in advocacy efforts.
- None of the goals established in the AMCs' *Annual Plans* (which have been developed during the project) pertain to either gender or environment.
- The project *Annual Reports* state that transparency has been improved with the project as communication means have improved (new websites) and become more frequent. However, any impact analysis of if these changes as to who uses the websites has not been carried out.
- The AMCs have not been able to record, collate to transparently show its members how many or which requests for support have been acted upon. The new IT systems

<sup>29</sup> *Brief report\_gender workshops BiH*. No date.

<sup>30</sup> <https://cdn.sida.se/publications/files/sida62064en-guidelines-for-a-simplified-environmental-assessment.pdf>

being implemented are expected to remedy this which is key for the AMCs to be able to show and motivate which requests they act on and which not.

#### Conclusion

The Evaluation Team assesses the implementing partners' efforts to incorporate Sida's four perspectives in the project to be insufficient. A conscious effort by the implementing partners to focus on gender, inclusion of marginalised groups, HRBA and environment is needed. It is the Secretariats that need to educate, firstly, its staff, secondly, its governance structures and ultimately its members on these issues and require that Sida and Swiss funds are used in a manner that ensure that all the perspectives are addressed.

## 4 Conclusions

The Evaluation Team finds that the project had a significant impact on both the AMCs as institutions and on the LGs and their ability to, through the AMCs, advocate for issues important to the LGs. The AMCs increased professionalisation and use and engagement of its members in networks and committees has allowed important legal reforms to be hindered or changed to the benefit of the AMCs' members.

### 4.1 RELEVANCE

The organisation-building component of the project (Outcome 1) is seen by the Evaluation Team as being highly relevant at the start and throughout the project. The AMCs' have been able to respond to their members' needs to a large extent, work in a more effective manner with improved planning and IT tools and structure their processes for engaging with members which has increased engagement. This has improved the reputation of the AMCs among its members and among external stakeholders.

The Evaluation Team considers the selection of the broadly worded EU accession topic to have been somewhat premature, and whilst important, not the highest priority of the members. The aim of the AMCs' EU accession work is unclear, and there is little evidence to show results or activities under this specific topic. Members currently see their role in EU accession related matters as a limited one and are above all interested in EU funding opportunities.

### 4.2 EFFECTIVENESS

The secretariats show an increasing ability to plan their activities and tasks and to prioritise, however, monitoring and evaluation procedures have not been implemented during the four-year project and need to be institutionalised. The AMC' ability to establish a limited list of visionary strategic goals that are measurable and monitorable is still assessed as low.

Member LGs are, to a significant extent, supporting, providing advice, "position statements" and expert knowledge through the various channels available to the AMCs. The level of engagement at governance level appears to be lower in the AMC FBiH than in the AMC RS but the improved engagement is likely to be a result of advocacy "wins" thereby increasing the AMCs' importance to the LGs.

The Evaluation Team finds that the AMCs have made less progress improving training and advisory services to municipalities LGF and EU accession than hoped. There was an obvious lack of clarity about the type of training and advisory services the AMCs intended to provide to the municipalities in these two areas.

In the area of lobbying and advocacy, both AMCs have made impressive strides towards more proactive and evidence-based lobbying. This shift has resulted in increasing recognition by the governments and parliaments in both entities and the AMCs are being consulted much more than in the past. The AMCs are now recognised as professional, credible and essential dialogue partners in local government policy issues.

Significant high-level impacts achieved by the AMCs as part of this project are that

- the AMCs are frequently and regularly consulted by the entity governments
- recognised by both members, external experts and entity governments as important contributors to legal reforms that affect local governments.
- the AMCs provide evidence-based arguments
- the AMCs have successfully managed to hinder initiatives that would have negatively impacted their members.

The AMCs have had most success so far in stalling or hindering laws or changes initiated by others, and on shorter-term local government financing issues, but the long-term advocacy on local government finance, although promising, has yet to bear fruit. A more visionary approach is needed for the future in order for the AMCs to establish their own expertise on selected topics.

### 4.3 SUSTAINABILITY

The AMCs have developed internal procedures and practices that the AMCs will be able to sustain as long as the AMCs have funding to allow them to maintain the current staffing levels. The conclusion of the Evaluation Team is that to improve long-term sustainability the AMCs need to understand and further develop their uniqueness. This will involve 1) an assessment of what their value added is to the AMCs various stakeholders and 2) to develop unique offerings to the various stakeholders. Examples may be to develop into a knowledge hub on topics important to the member LGs, to design visionary projects with which to approach donors for funding and to develop service offerings to members and entity governments.

### 4.4 CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

The implementing partners' efforts to incorporate Sida's four perspectives in the project have been insufficient. The AMCs' accountability and transparency towards its members has improved as has the members accountability toward the secretariats, but there is no evidence that the implementing partners have attempted to ensure gender balanced participation in project activities or that environmental considerations have been taken into account when planning or advocacy efforts.

## 5 Lessons Learned

This section presents the Evaluation Team's findings on what has worked well and less well. The following important aspects of project design and implementation have worked well:

- The division of the grant into three separate grants for each of the implementing partners has meant that the implementing partners are on “equal” terms each making decisions about their own budgets and with responsibility and accountability to the donors. While this has meant an administrative burden on the Swedish Embassy, this is a more egalitarian manner of administering the funds than if say, SALAR, or the AMC RS was to manage the entire budget.
- The facilitating role of SALAR has meant that a number of activities have been coordinated so that both AMCs have received the same offering.
- SALAR having a local technical project manager in Sarajevo almost full-time has been important. The PIT team meets regularly and frequently and share insights, activities, decisions etc.
- The evidence-based advocacy introduced as part of this project has meant greater recognition among all of the AMCs' stakeholders.

The structured approach to planning and executing advocacy initiatives by engaging members has increased the quality of the advocacy work, and the involvement of LGs.

What has worked less well in the project is:

- Helping the AMCs to define, monitor and evaluate their strategies. The upcoming strategic planning process will show if and to what extent the AMCs are able to develop visionary strategic goals that the AMCs are able to monitor and evaluate throughout the next strategy period.
- The focus on services to LGs regarding EU accession. There is unclarity about what was to be achieved and continues not to be a priority of the member LGs. While important, it needs to be specified and narrowed down in order for the LGs and Secretariats to understand what type of support should be provided.
- Implementation of the cross-cutting issues has not been implemented to any extent and even the most basic elements (such as gathering and reporting gender-disaggregated project data) has not been done.
- Supporting the AMCs in developing strategies to become more financially sustainable.



# 6 Recommendations

## 6.1 RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE SWEDISH AND SWISS EMBASSIES

- 1) The Swedish and Swiss Embassies are recommended to consider a continuation of the project using a similar contractual structure i.e. separate contracts with each implementing partner.
- 2) The Swedish and Swiss Embassies should insist on clearer, time-bound, and more measurable goals for the project during the next phase.
- 3) The Swedish and Swiss Embassies are recommended to have an external assessment of the two AMCs' organisational capabilities using Sida's systems-based audit methodology prior to entering into a new project period with the aim of 1) creating a baseline for the ensuing project period, 2) providing input to establishing capacity strengthening strategic goals and 3) assessing the AMCs' readiness to be able to receive core support grants.
- 4) The Swedish and Swiss Embassies should require the SALAR project grant and budget for the next phase of the project to be results-based allowing an understanding of what expenditure is to be spent achieving which outcome.
- 5) The Swedish and Swiss donors are recommended to not fund more than 40 percent of the AMCs' total income through this project.
- 6) The Swedish and Swiss donors could consider an "incentive-linked grant" linking the size of the grant to other factors that the AMCs can control e.g. fees and charges from members.

## 6.2 RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE AMCS

### **AMC institutional and organisational development**

- 1) The AMCs need to significantly strengthen their results-based monitoring and evaluation of the strategic and operational plans to focus on the monitoring and evaluation of results (outcomes) as opposed to activities (outputs).
- 2) The AMCs should establish strategic plans that provide a vision for the future, with a few clearly defined strategic goals that can be measured.
- 3) The AMCs should include institutional strengthening goals (e.g. from the recommendations in the CAF or systems-based audit) in the next strategic plan.
- 4) The AMCs need to develop unique expert knowledge to become the "go-to" organisation for its members. More broadly, recruiting and retaining more people with the combination of drive, service orientation and technical competence (or ability to develop technical competences) should be a top priority for the AMCs.
- 5) The AMCs need to ensure that they use the new IT systems to record and track all support requests from municipalities, including advisory service requests and initiatives (proposals) for advocacy by members.



- 6) The focus of the next phase of the project for the AMCs should be to develop a sustainable finance model reflecting the AMCs' "uniqueness" and value to its various stakeholders.
- 7) The AMCs should, to remain relevant and sustainable, consider research (a market study) in order to ascertain where-in the AMCs' uniqueness lies and, in the new strategic plans, establish how to build competence and expertise in this "uniqueness".
- 8) Both AMC Secretariats are recommended to carry out the following:
  - a) collect, analyse and report disaggregated gender- and minority data for all its activities.
  - b) require gender balanced participation from member LGs in committees, networks, training and other activities. Training and other activities funded by Sida/the Swedish Embassy, should be fully gender balanced.
  - c) establish a strategy for what type of environmental projects and legal reform efforts the AMCs should work on. Such a strategy needs to be based on research as to either needs in preparation for EU accession or regarding achievement of the SDGs. The research should help the AMCs define the type of projects/advocacy initiatives/other activities that the AMCs should get involved in – establishing criteria?
  - d) train its staff in how to carry out a simplified environmental assessments in order to understand if and when proposed advocacy and legal reform proposals/projects need to be assessed regarding negative environmental and climate change impacts.
  - e) establish a strategy for what type of projects and legal reform efforts the AMCs should work on to ensure the rights of marginalised groups. Such a strategy needs to be based on research to help the AMCs define the type of projects/advocacy initiatives/other activities that the AMCs should get involved in – establishing criteria?
  - f) Use the GAP analysis and action plan as a baseline for the next project phase, and that the prioritised actions are included in the Logframe for the next project phase.

### **AMC service delivery**

- 9) The AMCs need to develop a clearer description of their membership training services to include the AMCs' desired role(s), their target groups, sources of funding, how they will cooperate with other institutions and how success will be measured.
- 10) The AMCs should focus the EU accession work on a smaller number of concrete sub-issues that matter to municipalities. These sub-areas could be continuously reviewed and updated over the project period. LG access to EU funding should remain a priority, and the AMCs are recommended to deepen their work in this area, including increasing contacts with the Joint Technical Secretariat, Directorate for European Integration, RS Ministry of EU Integration and Regional Cooperation and EUD in advocating for access to EU funding for LGs and furthering plans for the revolving funds.

- 11) The AMCs could organise efforts in line with the thematic priorities and actions identified under 2021-2027 IPA III for the Enlargement region.<sup>31</sup>

### AMC advocacy for member LG

- 12) The AMCs should continue to bring in analysis and evidence to support policy positions, and to apply the new advocacy approach to more areas
- 13) The AMCs should expand the use of mayors to lobby Members of Parliament (MPs) from their own parties as many stakeholders believe this is one of the most effective advocacy tools as the mayors have powerful positions inside their parties.
- 14) The AMC FBiH should continue to build upon the good progress in LGF, including recruiting a replacement finance officer in the AMC FBiH.
- 15) The AMC RS should develop a municipal Public Finance Network similar to the FBiH model, which has been effective and appreciated.

## 6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS TO SALAR

- 16) SALAR should support the AMCs to establish a limited and focused strategic plan, establishing the AMCs' uniqueness, and visionary, time-bound and measurable strategic goals.
- 17) SALAR should support the AMCs to develop their ability to monitor results using the RBM approach.
- 18) SALAR should support the AMCs to better define their roles and objectives in all areas of service delivery to their members (including training, advisory services, professional networks, how to measure success etc). Learning from other AMCs in the region and beyond is an effective tool.
- 19) SALAR should support the AMCs to improve capacities in member surveying, and consider setting member satisfaction targets in defined areas.
- 20) SALAR needs to provide disaggregated data on gender and minorities in all project reporting.
- 21) SALAR needs to step up its support to the secretariats and help train them in the application of the four cross cutting perspectives e.g. simplified environmental assessment, gender analysis etc.

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<sup>31</sup> Amongst the thematic priorities, there are 15 actions prioritised, among which the most relevant to explore could be:

- Promoting smart, sustainable, inclusive, safe transport and removing bottlenecks in key network infrastructures;
- Improving access to digital technologies and services and strengthening research, technological development and innovation;
- Protecting and improving the quality of the environment
- Fostering quality employment and access to the labour market;
- Promoting social protection and inclusion and combating poverty;

# Annex 1 – List of persons interviewed

Name of interviewee	Organisation/role
<b>Project donors</b>	
Mario Vignjevic	Swedish Embassy
Snezana Kantonsrevac-Cvijetic	Swiss Embassy
Dimka Stantchev	Swiss Embassy
Maja Zaric	Swiss Embassy
Alma Zukorlic	Swiss Embassy
<b>AMC RS Secretariat</b>	
Vladana P.Đorđić	AMC RS PR officer
Sanja Krunic	AMC RS training and networks
Branislav Mišović	AMC RS EU Integration officer
Predrag Pajić	AMC RS Project Manager
Aco Pantić	AMC RS Secretary General
Goran Rakić	AMC RS finance officer
Slavica Rokvic	AMC RS project manager advocacy/ Legal
<b>AMC FBiH Secretariat</b>	
Edin Demirovic	AMC FBiH trainings for members, trainings for municipal councilors
Sejla Hasić	AMC FBiH, Project manager
Selma Fisek	AMC FBiH legal advisor
Gregor Jurisić	Former AMC FBiH Financial Advisor
Amir Kupusija	AMC FBiH environment, water management, advocacy, EU related issues and activities.
Vesna Travljanin	Director, AMC FBiH
<b>SALAR</b>	
Charlotte Booth	SALAR project manager
Annakarin Lindberg	SALAR project manager
Denisa Sarajilic	SALAR Technical Team Leader
<b>Representatives of member LGs</b>	
Drazen Boskovic	Trebinje, Deputy Mayor
Hamdo Ejubovic	Hadzici, Mayor, and vice president of AMC FBiH Presidency
Faris Hasanbegovic	Sanski Most, Mayor/ President of the AMS FBiH Assembly
Edin Hozan	Jajce, Mayor
Dragana Ilic	Gradiska, Deputy Mayor
Josip Juričić	Prozor-Rama, Head of Finance department, Head of AMCFBIH Public Finance Network
Dejan Krsmanović	Visegrad, Expert for Urbanism and Utilities Services - delegated by Mayor of Visegrad, Formerly Adviser to the Mayor (from 2017 to 2019)

Name of interviewee	Organisation/role
Djordje Milićević	Šamac, Mayor and Member of AMC RS Presidency
Mediha Nuhbegovic	City of Tuzla, Head of the City Council Secretariat
Bozana Sljivar	City of Banja Luka, Head of Finance Banja Luka & consultant for RS COVID Impact study
Dragana Solakovic	City of Sarajevo, Assistant to the Mayor
Danica Pelemis Subotic	Zvornik, Expert for Project Planning and Promotion of the City/ Mayor's Office
Predrag Šupljeglav	City of Mostar, Head of the Department of Organisation, Legal Affairs, General Administration, Civil Protection and Fire
Ivan Vukadin	Tomislavgrad (old Mayor); FBiH President of Presidency, currently Cantonal Prime Minister
<b>Entity government representatives</b>	
Alija Aljovic	FBiH MoF, Assistant Minister in Sector for Budget and Public Expenditures
Maja Rimac - Bjelobrk	Directorate for European Integration (state level) / Head of Training Department
Irfan Cengic	President of the FBiH LG Parliamentary Committee, maintaining relations with AMC
Amer Husremovic	FBiH Ministry of Agriculture, Water Management and Forestry
Alma Imamovic	FBiH Ministry of Agriculture, Water Management and Forestry
Enver Iseric	Director Institute of Public Administration, FBiH Ministry of Justice
Snjezana Kelecevic	RS MoF, Assistant to Minister
Samra Ljuca	FBiH Civil Service Agency, Deputy Director for Vocational Education and Civil Service Development
Slavica Lukic	RS Ministry for LG, assistant minister for LG
Goran Mirascic	FBiH Advisor to FBiH PM on economic issues
Darko Telić	RS Ministry for European Integration and Regional Cooperation / Head of Division for Funds and Developmental Assistance – EU Integration Unit
<b>International organisations and external experts</b>	
Selma Osmanagic-Agovic	UNDP - ReLOaD2 (EU funded)
Sanja Bokun	UNDP - ReLOaD2 (EU funded)
Enes Drjevic	NERDA
Adela Pozder-Cengic	UNDP, sector lead
Mersiha Curcic	UNDP – Mjesne Zajednice project (Sida and SDC funded)
Alma Hasic	Joint Technical Secretariat IPA CBC BiH MNE, Project Officer / Communication and Information
Anders Hedlund	Consultant - mid-term review
Aida Lakovic-Hoso	UNDP – ILDP Project (SDC funded)
Adnan Huskić	Policy Analyst, Friedrich Naumann Foundation
Jasmina Islambegovic	UNDP – Mjesne Zajednice project (Sida and SDC funded)

Name of interviewee	Organisation/role
Boran Ivanoski	NALAS
Vladimir Ivanovic	Deputy Secretary General SCTM
Vesna Jovic	Former SG of SALAR
Miodrag Kolic	GiZ – RCDN
Marko Martic	Revenue consultant RS
Samir Omerefendic	UNDP - ReLOaD2 (EU funded)
Niall Sheerin	Council of Europe
Đorđe Staničić	Secretary General of SCTM
Sanja Stanojević	EUSR
David Young	EU Expert
Kelmend Zajazi	NALAS

## Annex 2 – Evaluation Matrix

The agreed evaluation matrix is presented below, showing how the Evaluation Team has assessed each of the evaluation questions as they pertain to the project's two groups of beneficiaries: the AMCs and the AMCs' members.

Evaluation questions	Evaluation criteria: AMCs as beneficiaries	Data to be collected: AMCs as beneficiaries	Evaluation criteria: LGs as beneficiaries	Data to be collected: LGs as beneficiaries
<b>Relevance: Is the intervention doing the right thing?</b>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To what extent has the intervention objectives and design responded to beneficiaries', and partner needs, policies, and priorities, and have they continued to do so if/when circumstances have changed?</li> <li>To what extent have lessons learned from what works well and less well, as documented in the Internal Review of 2019/2020, been used to improve and adjust intervention implementation?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Level of transparency and participation of AMCs when designing the project.</li> <li>Level of AMC participation in monitoring and reporting of the project and in determining work plans etc.</li> <li>Identification of significant changes occurring in the context and the level of which the AMCs and SALAR have understood and addressed these.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Desk review of project reporting</li> <li>Interviews with the AMCs' staff</li> <li>Interviews with the Project Managers in the AMCs and SALAR</li> <li>Interview key experts (external to the project) to help identify significant changes in the local government reform context, and the AMCs' visibility and contribution to the outcomes 2 and 3 on behalf of their members. The potential experts to</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Level of participation of LGs when designing the project.</li> <li>Level of LG participation in establishing AMC annual plans, priorities and strategies.</li> <li>LGs' perception of if the AMCs are focusing on the "right" things in the implementation of their strategic plans.</li> <li>Assessment of information provided by AMCs to LG and the LGs' understanding of the AMCs' priorities, achievements.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Survey data from AMCs' surveys of members</li> <li>Individual interviews with LGs</li> <li>Desk review of selected regular information material sent to member LGs</li> <li>Desk review of key information material sent to member LGs</li> <li>Interviews with other donors/actors involved with LG</li> </ul>

Evaluation questions	Evaluation criteria: AMCs as beneficiaries	Data to be collected: AMCs as beneficiaries	Evaluation criteria: LGs as beneficiaries	Data to be collected: LGs as beneficiaries
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Level to which the implementing partners have addressed the recommendation from the Internal Review.</li> </ul>	interview are listed in section 3.2 above.		
<b>Impact: What difference does the intervention make?</b> <b>Effectiveness: Is the intervention achieving its objectives?</b>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To what extent has the intervention achieved, or is expected to achieve, its objectives, and its results? What have been factors which have enabled or hindered results achievement and what are the implications for strategies in the next phase?</li> <li>What have been the higher-level changes that the project has contributed to?</li> <li>What is recommended to enhance those contributions in the next phase?</li> <li>Added by the Evaluation Team: To what extent have the AMCs applied the HRBA?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The level to which the indicators Outcomes 1 have been achieved.</li> <li>Assessment of the current capacity of the AMC to implement the current strategy and respond to member LGs' requests.</li> <li>Triangulation of information gained from key external experts, LGs and the three implementing partners to lead to an understanding of the level to which the AMCs have been successful in helping its members develop capacities in areas relevant to delivering services to citizens.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interviews with AMC governance structure</li> <li>Interviews with member LGs</li> <li>Desk review of project and AMC documentation to verify gender-disaggregated data and assess cross-cutting issues.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The level to which the indicators to the Impact and Outcomes 2 and 3 have been achieved.</li> <li>Extent to which the member LGs have endeavoured to identify and include socially marginalised groups' and women's' issues in advocacy and other initiatives.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interviews with key experts in Local Government Financing and the specific parts of EU accession that the AMCs have focused on</li> <li>Interviews with LGs</li> <li>Interviews with government officials and parliamentarians related to advocacy work of AMCs on legal and policy framework</li> </ul>

Evaluation questions	Evaluation criteria: AMCs as beneficiaries	Data to be collected: AMCs as beneficiaries	Evaluation criteria: LGs as beneficiaries	Data to be collected: LGs as beneficiaries
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Added by the Evaluation Team: what have been the unintended (positive and negative) results reported.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identification of less progress and identification of potential reason for the lack of progress against some indicators.</li> <li>Extent to which member LG are involved in relevant decision-making within the AMC and are informed about the AMCs' activities and results.</li> <li>Activities targeted at including women in decision-making within the AMCs and in AMC-initiated activities.</li> <li>Presentation of unintended results and the implications for a potential next phase of the project.</li> </ul>			
<b>Sustainability: Will the benefits last?</b>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What has contributed to institutionalisation of changes in practices in the AMCs?</li> <li>In which areas does it still need to be improved and how?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The level to which changes in some of the following areas have occurred will be assessed:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>internal and external communication,</li> <li>documentation and archiving;</li> </ol> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Desk review of project reporting</li> <li>Interviews with the AMCs' staff</li> <li>Interviews with the Project Managers in the AMCs and SALAR</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The level to which members experience AMC procedures to have changed and if these changes are better or not.</li> <li>The level of learning that has resulted in AMC</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Survey data</li> <li>Interviews with LGs</li> <li>Interviews with external experts and higher-level policy actors (government officials, parliamentarians)</li> </ul>



Evaluation questions	Evaluation criteria: AMCs as beneficiaries	Data to be collected: AMCs as beneficiaries	Evaluation criteria: LGs as beneficiaries	Data to be collected: LGs as beneficiaries
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To what extent are the Project results sustainable?</li> <li>How could Project results be further sustainably projected and expanded, having in mind the potential future contribution for a second phase?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3) service delivery;</li> <li>4) annual planning;</li> <li>5) management of internal and external resources; and</li> <li>6) lobbying and advocacy.</li> <li>The level of permanent (institutionalised) change will be analysed by considering               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>if policies, documented procedures exist</li> <li>if staff are aware of and carry out the changed manner of working</li> <li>if staff turnover is high or low</li> </ul> </li> </ul>		members changing their practices with regard to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Networking</li> <li>Lobbying</li> <li>Access to decision-makers related to Outcome areas 2 and 3</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project monitoring and contractual structures: How have the internal stakeholders of the project (the two donors, SALAR, RS AMC and AMC FBiH) experienced the project monitoring process and the three separate contracts established for the project.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Positive and negative experiences from the project monitoring process identified and assessed.</li> <li>Positive and negative experiences from the structuring of the contracts identified and assessed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interviews with the project partners</li> <li>Interviews with the Swedish and Swiss Embassies.</li> </ul>		

# Annex 3 – Data Collection Tools

Draft Interview guides for the following groups of interviewees that were used are presented below:

- 1) LGs
- 2) External experts

## Questions for LGs (Mayors/senior municipal staff)

### 1. General

- Tell us about your municipality's current level of interaction with the AMC?
- *Follow-ups:*
  - Do you participate in any of the governing structures? If yes, what, if not, why?
  - Do your staff participate in any of the networks or working groups? If yes, what, if not, why?
  - Do you receive training from the AMCs? If yes, what, if not, why?
  - Do you receive advisory support from the AMCs? If yes, what, if not, why?
  - Do you pay the membership fee to the AMCs? If not, why not?

### 2. Relevance

- Have you been involved in the AMC's annual planning?
- How are the topics that the AMCs work on decided (e.g. Local government financing, EU integration, other topics)?
- What activities that the AMC currently carries out are most useful and relevant to your municipality?
- *Follow-ups:*
  - How relevant do you consider the services they provide members (especially in the area of LGF and EU accession)? Do they focus on the right things and is there something you would like to see them focus on?
  - How relevant do you consider the lobbying and advocacy that they do on behalf of members? Do they focus on the right things and is there something you would like to see them focus on?
- What would you like the AMCs to work more on in the future?

### 3. Effectiveness

- In your view, to what extent are the AMCs effective in providing:
  - a) support to members
  - b) advocacy on behalf of members

- Which organisations/institutions do you consider best at supporting your municipality/city in the area of Local government financing and EU integration?

#### **4. Impact**

- Can you provide examples of when the AMC' work has led to significant changes for your municipality/city?
- What, if any, difference have the AMCs made in helping you deliver better services to citizens?
- *Follow-ups:*
  - Ask for concrete and specific examples, and try to understand how the change happened
  - Consider if the effects were intended or unintended
  - What about socially marginalised groups and women – what are their issues and what has been done to address these?
- What recommendations do you have for the leadership of the AMCs to enhance the impact of the work the AMCs do?

#### **5. Sustainability**

- What is your view on the AMC's sustainability, do you consider that they can be entirely financed by membership fees and services in the future? If not, why not?

#### **6. Wrap-up**

- Overall, how do you perceive the reputation of the AMCs today compared to five years ago?
- Are there any other important aspects or reflections you have about the AMCs that we have not covered?

## Annex 4 – Comments by Users on Draft Report

The following table shows the users' comments on the Draft Report, changes to the report and responses by the Evaluation Team.

#	Page	Comment by User	Comment by Evaluation Team	Change to Report
		Comments by Swiss Embassy		
1	7	This should be checked! The number is incorrect - there is 145 LGs, including Brcko District. However, it is not clear if all municipalities and cities are automatically members of AMCs. How is their membership regulated and registered by AMCs?		Changed.
2	8	Please, explain the management and steering structures of both AMCs, role of the presidency and general assembly, type of the decisions they make, etc. Standing/thematic committees – are members paid for their work?		Information added.
3	8	What is the role of the Presidency, how often do they meet and what kind of decisions do they make?		Information added.
4	8	Are they paid or volunteers?		Information added.
5	9	Please, provide information on percentage of the membership fees collection (over the last five	Information about membership fees over 5 years not available. The AMCs would be better placed to answer that question.	Information about why they do not pay fees added.

# ANNEX 4 – COMMENTS BY USERS ON DRAFT REPORT

#	Page	Comment by User	Comment by Evaluation Team	Change to Report
		years, if possible) and the reasons for not paying the fee by some members.		
6	9	Please, explain the role of the Presidency.		Information added.
7	9	Please, provide information what was the previous collection percentage (for the last five years, if possible).		See comment 5 above.
8	9	Please explain how the fee amount is determined for the municipalities and cities.		Information added.
9	11	Please include information regarding end-of-project vision and total duration (4+4+3 years), as originally envisaged.		Information added
10	12	This way it looks like AMCs provide services to EU.		Changed to “(Service delivery in the areas of LGF and EU Accession”)
11	15	The conclusion regarding relevance for Outcome 3 is missing.		Brief conclusion added.
12	16	If the strategic planning was supported by the project, why the strategies are from 2015? The project started in 2018.	The decision to support the AMCs’ already existing strategic plans taken by the Swiss and Swedish Embassies at the contracting stage and based on the Project Document.	No change
13	18	We are not convinced that external audit of this type is necessary (if not a requirement by Sida). It seem to us that it would be more important to fully integrate CAF and its follow up in organisational planning, monitoring and reporting processes so that it would become a tool for continuous performance management?		Argument further elaborated.

#	Page	Comment by User	Comment by Evaluation Team	Change to Report
14	18	This is not clear. What it meant by governance level?		Clarified (by adding the Presidency and General Assembly)
15	20	Other projects need to be strategically chosen in order to be in a accordance with the strategic plans. This project is designed for strengthening the AMCs and therefore the integral approach in defining priorities should be applied.	Our point here is simply that the AMCs provide training funded by other donors.	No change
16	31	Although efficiency is not in the focus of the review, it would be useful to get some comments related to project set-up (role of SALAR and AMCs), project strategic steering and decision-making mechanisms, and communication with donors. Is it optimal? Any improvements required?		Commentary added in section 3.4.
17	33	What should be the end-of-project vision and when could we expect to reach it? What is your assessment on how long will the AMCs need support? When can we expect that they will be able to sustainably continue by themselves? Please provide your recommendation about total project duration from the point of view of project effectiveness and sustainability.		Section in Chapter 1.3 added
18	33	We are not convinced that external audit of this type is necessary (if not a requirement by Sida). It seem to us that it would be more important to fully integrate CAF and its follow up in organisational planning, monitoring and		See comment 13 above.

#	Page	Comment by User	Comment by Evaluation Team	Change to Report
		reporting processes so that it would become a tool for continuous performance management?		
19	email	It would be good to know why some municipalities are not so much involved in AMCs and what should be/ could be done to improve this situation.	Given the relatively small sample size (14 LGs, mostly active ones), we have not been able to draw any strong conclusions about why some LGs are more active in the AMCs than others- there seem to be many different reasons including LG leadership or staff interest in the AMCs, political affiliation and time/resources to engage with the AMCs. In general, as discussed in the report, smaller municipalities tend to see more benefits from the overall AMC work and support, rather than the larger ones who have more capacities themselves. Our suggestion is that this could be something for the AMCs to include in future surveys to inactive members.	No change.
Comments by SALAR, AMC FBiH, AMC RS				
20	7	This data is not taking account the cost extension and should be corrected to: AMC RS 6 426 078,00 AMC FBiH 6 467 937,00 SALAR 18 348 130,00 TOTAL: 31 242 145,00		Report changed.
21	7	There are 144 LSGs in BiH, plus Breko District.		Report changed
22	8	AMC FBiH founded in 2003 is a legal successor of the Association established in 1972.		49 members clarified



# ANNEX 4 – COMMENTS BY USERS ON DRAFT REPORT

#	Page	Comment by User	Comment by Evaluation Team	Change to Report
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- AMC FBiH also has a Supervisory Board consisting of three elected members as well as a number of ad hoc working groups.</li> <li>- For clarification: What does 49 refer to? 49% or 49 actual members?</li> </ul>		
23	9	<p>It is correct that the financial statements do not show the increase; this is because some late membership fees collected in 2020 were accounted to the previous year. From our perspective it is still important to note that there is indication of increased commitment of members to pay fees.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- We prefer to not refer to “PIT team’s Annual report” – it is the project’s annual report, prepared by members of PIT; discussed and approved by JEC.</li> </ul>		<p>No change.</p> <p>Report changed</p>
24	10	Staff of the project are SKL International while thematic experts are also from SALAR. ICLD is not a subsidiary of SALAR but a non-profit organisation with SALAR as "huvudman", financed by Sida.		Report changed
25	10	The SALAR TTL is covered about 80%. SALAR reported ca. 75 days/year in 2020 for the Project Manager, meaning about 30% of the Project Manager salary were covered through the project. The members of PIT from AMC RS and AMC FBiH are almost fully covered (90%).		Report changed.

#	Page	Comment by User	Comment by Evaluation Team	Change to Report
26	12	This paragraphs seems to put too much weight on the difficulty of negotiations between the three parties which does not align with the three associations' perception of the inception phase. It was only a few issues which were challenging during project design, but they were dealt with immediately through dialogue, mutual understanding, and in good faith. The preparation period was extended due to need for negotiations between the Swedish Embassy and the Embassy of Switzerland and then between the donors and SALAR.		No change.
27	12	This is inaccurate. Sida commissioned a Pre-Award audit for both associations in 2014 which analysed organisational systems in depth. Further, the CDMA project funded by Sida was externally evaluated in 2014. - We would also like to emphasise that the evaluation team could have looked into more detail into the practice of self-assessment through the Common Assessment Framework CAF. A self-assessment has a different purpose than an external assessment of course, but the practice of self-assessment and self-improvement, repeated every two years, is a critical ingredient for institutional change and the CAF reports go into considerable depth. Also, most areas covered by the 2014 external	Re the CAF, 1) these are internal self-assessment and 2) see section 3.6.1. for the Evaluation Team's analysis of the CAF practice.	Information added "during the project period under evaluation".

#	Page	Comment by User	Comment by Evaluation Team	Change to Report
		evaluation are encompassed by CAF, thus making it possible to monitor progress in a structured and sustainable way. The bi-annual CAF assessment has been completed as planned and we attach the draft reports produced by Lucid Linx based on internal discussions in each AMC, and approved by AMCs for your reference.		
28	13	In principle, the government should carry out consultations with LGs “to the highest degree possible through AMCs”. This provision in entity legislation has been in place for a long time. However, the increased interaction between entity (and cantonal) governments and AMCs cannot be contributed solely or mainly to this provision. In the past, governments tended to sideline AMCs and LGs in spite having this provision in Law. In some cases, the AMC FBIH had to resort to filing cases before the Constitutional Court in order to enforce application of this legal provision. Both AMCs have invested time and effort (including targeted interventions through this project) to increase their credibility and relevance, to position themselves as an important actor and partner to entity governments and parliaments, and also to the international community. Only a few years ago it was difficult for AMCs to even get a seat	The evaluation does not suggest that it is solely due to change in the Law, but also thanks to a more evidence-based and structured advocacy efforts, including internal strengthening, which is thanks to the project and SALAR, as elaborated on page 21 and 22.	No change.

#	Page	Comment by User	Comment by Evaluation Team	Change to Report
		at the table with higher level authorities, whereas now they are regularly invited by government to discussions on key reforms. This has become more prominent during this project, and can be attributed to deliberate efforts to increase AMC's credibility through evidence-based approaches, structured advocacy efforts, and greater visibility and interaction with members and government representatives.		
29	16	During the project both associations jointly developed formats for planning, monitoring and reporting. AMC RS also invested in designing and started using IT solutions for managing documents (Document Management System) and planning, monitoring and reporting. This solution gives possibility to import all activities and linking them with the AMC RS Annual Plan. As a result AMC RS can monitor its Annual Plan on level on annual goal, main or individual activities (e.g. monitoring the advocacy plan for establishing the revolving fund).	But it has not been done yet, as explained by the AMC staff. The tool is not yet used as shown to the team. Nor has the AMC RS been able to show if planned activities have been implemented during the period 2018 until now.	No change
30	17	This is not correct. Both AMCs have institutionalised CAF as a tool for guiding their organisational development, and they have conducted, as foreseen, two rounds of CAF self-assessments during the project implementation period. Activities listed in CAF action plans	There is no evidence of this, as elaborated upon in the report.	No change.

#	Page	Comment by User	Comment by Evaluation Team	Change to Report
		<p>have been built into annual plans and are reported on. Each AMC discusses progress against CAF action plans regularly in staff meetings. For both AMCs, CAF has become an ‘inbuilt philosophy’ in their work. A range of project activities have also been designed to implement activities from CAF actions plans, and experts have been hired to help that process (websites, HRM, communication, social media, crisis management, gender, etc.).</p> <p>- The CAF practice was discussed in interviews during the evaluation process and both AMCs provided additional documents. The second CAF assessment reports have also been finalised in the meantime, and we are attaching them for reference. They provide information on progress and in which areas more progress is needed.</p>		
31	18	The General Assembly meeting was held physically in Banja Luka.		Report changed.
32	19	(presentation of EU progress report) - This was done jointly by both AMCs.		Report changed.
33	12-13	Regarding comments on relevance of Outcome 2 (there was clear distinction between Outcomes 2 and 3, there was equal focus on advocacy and services but less progress in services, phase 1 was focused on developing internal structure and mechanisms).	In our interviews and review of project documentation we found considerable confusion about the term ‘service delivery to members in the areas of LGF and EU Accession.’ We believe that this lack of common understanding about objectives	Paragraph on page 13 adjusted for clarification.

# ANNEX 4 – COMMENTS BY USERS ON DRAFT REPORT

#	Page	Comment by User	Comment by Evaluation Team	Change to Report
			contributed to Outcome 2 being more challenging.	
34	13	Comments on clarity of objectives and reporting under training (Training delivery was not part of the Theory of Change, the AMCs deliver training through other projects.)	There was no information collected related to indicator 2.1.2.1: “Number of municipal employees/ councillors trained per year” (segregated data for men and women trainees.) nor were the people in charge of training in each AMC barely involved in this project.	No change
35	13,15	Comments on the timing of EU Accession focus (focus was not premature; report does not recognise the interest in EU Accession and the advantages of focussing on it)	We agree that the EU Accession process is both relevant and important for the LSGs with implications and opportunities for service delivery. Our point is just about timing - in 2017/2018 the prospects for BiH becoming a candidate country in the nearer future looked better. We think this helps to explain why it was difficult to build and sustain momentum for work that focussed on getting LSGs ready for a distant EU Accession possibility. And why it was easier to get interest in the possibilities of EU funding in the short/medium term.	Paragraphs on page 13 and 14 further clarified and section conclusion updated.
36		Comments on effectiveness of Outcome 1 (re:report does not cover all important project activities)	As stated in the approved Inception Report, the focus of the evaluation was on the outcomes and the indicators related to these. All outputs have not been analysed as this was beyond the scope.	Focus of report and on outcomes and the outcome indicators added in section 1.3.

#	Page	Comment by User	Comment by Evaluation Team	Change to Report
37	19	Comments on effectiveness of outcome 2 (re: that the AMCs sent information about training)	See comment 34 above.	No change.
38	20	Comments on cooperation between the AMCs under Outcome 2 (understated)	We agree that there is good cooperation between the AMCs in this project and other projects and should be commended.	Paragraph on page 21 further expanded to emphasise the cooperation
39	20	Comments on paid services (not envisaged during phase 1)		Change to reflect the aim of the <i>Project Document</i> .
40	22	Comments on effectiveness of Outcome 3 (cantonal level advocacy)	It seems we are broadly in agreement, our point here is simply that cantonal level advocacy has been and can be pursued when entity-level advocacy is not progressing.	No change
41	25	Comments on impact (other services provided by AMCs not included in the report)	<p>We recognise these other service-delivery contributions of the AMCs through other projects. Our point is about tracking these.</p> <p>The suggested additions refer to activities and outputs, and the team could not find evidence whether these activities and outputs have led to outcomes and impact. This is an impact section.</p>	No change.
42	25	Comments on impact ('low hanging fruit')	We recognise that the term 'low hanging fruit' may be too strong and have changed this. By this term we meant that AMCs have had more success responding to already initiated legislative changes (as there are many), and rarely initiate by themselves. It is not to be interpreted as poor performance, it is just a	Paragraph in conclusion changed to reflect this



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			reflection of limited resources and time on AMC's hands, and can also be seen as efficient.	
43	26-27	Comments on sustainability (don't agree on how to improve sustainability of AMCs)	Recommendation by the Evaluation team that the users are free to reject or not.	No change.
44	27	Comments on nature of grants & AMC Assessments		Motivation for core support and systems-based audits added in section 3.4.
45	27	Comments on budget (advantage of not reporting the budget by outcome)	Recommendation by the Evaluation team that the users are free to reject or not.	No change.
46	28	Comments on cross-cutting issues		Additional information added, conclusion not changed.

# Annex 5 – Terms of Reference

## Terms of Reference for the Evaluation of “Strengthening Associations of Municipalities and Cities in Bosnia and Herzegovina” Project

Date: /April 2021

### 1. General information

#### 1.1 Introduction

The governments of Sweden and Switzerland (through their respective Embassies in Sarajevo) decided to finance the implementation of the project “Strengthening Associations of Municipalities and Cities in Bosnia and Herzegovina” (hereinafter “the project”). The project is being implemented in partnership of the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR) through its subsidiary SKR International, the Association of Municipalities and Cities of Republika Srpska (RS AMC) and the Association of Municipalities and Cities of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH AMC). SKL International takes on a facilitative and coordinative role. The project is jointly implemented through a grant during the period February 2018 – January 2022. SALAR delivers the programme through its subsidiary SKL International. Agreed budget is 31 242 145 SEK out of which Sida undertakes to finance 14 142 145 SEK. The project is co-financed by Government of Switzerland in the amount of 17 100 000 SEK. The Embassies (Sweden and Switzerland) now wish to evaluate this project as it is on its last year of implementation.

The Project is complementary to the Results strategy for **Sweden’s reform cooperation with Eastern Europe, the Western Balkans and Turkey 2014 – 2020**, result 2 “Strengthened democracy, greater respect for human rights and a more fully developed state under the rule of law”, with sound contribution to the gender equality efforts.

Further support to community governance and accountable municipal performance is a priority within the Democratic Governance, Municipal Services, and Justice Domain of the **Swiss Cooperation Strategy 2017-2020** to Bosnia and Herzegovina, as part of a mutually reinforcing portfolio of local governance interventions.

The Project also contributes to realization of the **Agenda 2030 and to localization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, primarily SDGs 5, 6, 11, 16, that are all related to specific aspects of the community governance – gender equality, equitable service provision.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is an upper middle-income country that achieved evident progress in recovery more than two decades after the end of the war, especially in terms of reconstruction and infrastructure. The country has been undergoing a slow transition from a **post-conflict society toward membership in the European Union (EU)** for nearly a quarter of a century. However, it is still struggling through post-war democratic transition and economic (re)development. Bosnia and Herzegovina has been a **potential candidate country for EU accession** since 2003. Political deadlocks impeded smooth EU accession process for years. Formal application for membership to the EU was submitted in 2016 and in May 2019 the [European Commission issued its Opinion on Bosnia and Herzegovina's EU membership application](#) which outlines the key challenges for the country on its way toward membership and provides a set of priorities to be addressed before the country receives candidacy status. The current local governance system in BiH is predetermined by the political and administrative organization of the country defined by the Dayton Peace Agreement in 1995. The country consists of two entities – the Federation BiH (FBiH) and the Republika Srpska (RS), and Brčko District as a separate unit of local self-government under state sovereignty. In FBiH there are 10 cantons and 80 local self-government units (municipalities and cities). The RS consist of 64 local self-government units (municipalities and cities) and the autonomous Brčko District. According to the BiH Constitution, the entities – not the state – are responsible for local government matters. In FBiH, this responsibility is shared between entity and cantons. The Republika Srpska has no intermediate level between the Entity and the local level. Local government matters are differently regulated by the Law on local self-governance in the RS, the Law on the principles of local self-governance in FBiH and cantonal laws on local self-governance, which are harmonized with the European Charter on Local Self-Governance. Besides administrative services, local governments are responsible for communal services, including water supply, wastewater management, local roads, pre-school infrastructure, disaster risk reduction, heating, public transport, solid waste management, street cleaning and management of public surfaces, sports and culture, public lighting, green markets, etc.

Main donors in the Local Governance area are Governments of Sweden and Switzerland (through their respective Embassies in Sarajevo).

## 1.2 Evaluation object: Intervention to be evaluated

The evaluation object is the project “Strengthening Associations of Municipalities and Cities in Bosnia and Herzegovina”.

The project supports the two municipal associations in Bosnia and Hercegovina (BiH), the Association of Municipalities and Cities of Republika Srpska (RS AMC) and the Association of Municipalities and Cities of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH AMC). In order to reach the long-term objectives of the AMC strategic plans, the project's theory of change (ToC) is that AMCs need to improve their capacities and practices across a range of functions so that results can be seen at all levels, including governing structures, statutory provisions, membership participation, and in contacts with higher-level authorities.

Responsibility for Project implementation is shared by three parties – FBiH AMC, RS AMC and the Project Facilitation Team (SALAR). The two AMCs implement part of their Strategic Plans, which is why some institutional costs are covered by earmarked project funds. The Project Implementation Team provides expertise for institutional support and organisational development which helps the AMC staff to effectively implement this Project and their Strategic Plans.

The overall impact to which this project contributes is “Strengthened AMCs enhance local governments service provision to citizens and foster the creation of a conducive framework for local governance and EU accession”.

The project ToC set out to achieve results in three main outcome areas covering AMCs organisational capacities, service-delivery to members and their capacities to lobby and advocate in two key thematic areas: EU integration and local government finance. The three outcome areas are the following:

- **Outcome 1:** AMCs introduce institutional and organizational changes in order to perform effectively, thereby gaining trust and credibility among their members
- **Outcome 2:** LGs/members benefit from AMCs’ improved services in the areas of EU accession and Local Government Finance in line with their mandate and EU accession requirements.
- **Outcome 3:** AMCs undertake proactive and evidence based lobbying and advocacy in line with LGs interests and the EU accession process, thereby influencing policy, regulations and their implementation.

The project operates within five areas of intervention: internal and external communication, documentation and archiving; service delivery; annual planning; management of internal and external resources; and lobbying and advocacy.

The Project employs a rights-based approach by strengthening the AMCs as inclusive and representative member-based organizations. The Project seeks to increase the AMCs’ knowledge of rights principles and assist them in operationalising these in a gradual manner. Good governance is addressed as a major transversal theme, by focusing on principles of participation, transparency and accountability, equal treatment and non-discrimination. Furthermore, gender is addressed as a key perspective when designing and implementing project activities. Considering the political sensitivity and the post-conflict context in the country, the project pays attention to conflict-sensitive project management. This is addressed through monitoring of the overall political and socio-economic situation and early recognition of risks and design of measures to mitigate their possible negative effect over the project work.

For further information, the intervention proposal is attached as Annex D.

This Evaluation should cover project Phase 1, which started in February 2018 until May 2021.

### 1.3 Evaluation rationale

The Embassies (Sweden and Switzerland) now wish to evaluate this project as it is in its last year of implementation.

The Agreement on “Strengthening Associations of Municipalities and Cities in Bosnia and Herzegovina” between the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Sida, represented by the Embassy of Sweden in Sarajevo, and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR) in the *Article 6 - Review and evaluation* stipulates that:

*6.6. Final external evaluation will be carried out no later than 31 August 2021. The Evaluation shall summarize obtained and expected results in relation to the RAF and contain an analysis of any deviation there from. The parties shall agree on the terms of reference and the procedures for its implementation during the preceding annual review meeting. Procurement*

*of evaluator(s) will be commissioned by Sida. The cost of the evaluation shall be borne by Donors. For this purpose, Sida will allocate additional funds.*

## **2. The assignment**

### **2.1 Evaluation purpose: Intended use and intended users**

The purpose or intended use of the evaluation is to help Sida and its partner Embassy of Switzerland to assess progress of the on-going intervention towards achievement of the set outcomes. Furthermore the evaluation should indicate what works well and less well but also to inform on how project implementation may be adjusted and improved in a continued cooperation. The evaluation is expected to provide Sida and its partners with a strategic input to upcoming discussions concerning the preparation of a new phase of intervention. The focus of the evaluation is therefore on learning – to draw conclusions on conditions of progress and change, with recommendations being geared towards what pathways and change processes are to be prioritised in the next phase.

The primary intended users of the evaluation are:

- the Embassies of Sweden and Switzerland
- the project implementation team of “Strengthening Associations of Municipalities and Cities in Bosnia and Herzegovina” project

During the inception phase, the evaluator and the users will agree on who will be responsible for keeping the various stakeholders informed about the evaluation.

### **2.2 Evaluation scope**

The evaluation scope is limited mainly to the time frame of the conducted “Strengthening Associations of Municipalities and Cities in Bosnia and Herzegovina” project implementation, 2018-2022, and should where relevant build on previous Internal Review carried out in 2019/2020.

The assignment will be executed mainly in Sarajevo and Bijeljina but field trips around the country are expected if possible.

If needed, the scope of the evaluation may be further elaborated by the evaluator in the inception report.

### **2.3 Evaluation objective: Criteria and questions**

The objective/objectives of this evaluation are to evaluate the *Impact* and the *Sustainability* as well as *cross-cutting issues* of the support to the Associations of Municipalities and Cities in BiH (AMCs). Furthermore, the evaluation should summarize progress and main achievements of the project so far and identify lessons in terms of development of the AMCs. One of the main objectives of the evaluation is to formulate recommendations as an input to upcoming discussions concerning the preparation of a new phase of the intervention.

The evaluation questions are:

**Relevance: Is the intervention doing the right thing?**

- To what extent has the intervention objectives and design responded to beneficiaries', and partner needs, policies, and priorities, and have they continued to do so if/when circumstances have changed?
- To what extent have lessons learned from what works well and less well, as documented in the Internal Review of 2019/2020, been used to improve and adjust intervention implementation?

**Effectiveness: Is the intervention achieving its objectives?**

- To what extent has the intervention achieved, or is expected to achieve, its objectives, and its results? What have been factors which have enabled or hindered results achievement and what are the implications for strategies in the next phase?

**Impact: What difference does the intervention make?**

- What have been the higher-level changes that the project has contributed to? What is recommended to enhance those contributions in the next phase?

**Sustainability: Will the benefits last?**

- What has contributed to institutionalisation of changes in practices in the AMCs? In which areas does it still need to be improved and how?
- To what extent are the Project results sustainable? How could Project results be further sustainably projected and expanded, having in mind the potential future contribution for a second phase?

Questions are expected to be developed in the tender by the tenderer and further refined during the inception phase of the evaluation.

**2.4 Evaluation approach and methods**

It is foreseen that the activities undertaken by the Evaluation team will include a desk review of relevant project documentation, follow-up meetings with SALAR, RS AMC and FBiH AMC as well as interviews (individual or FGDs) with selected key informants in BiH (particularly from members of both AMCs) and finally with the Embassy of Sweden and the Embassy of Switzerland. Suggested documents and persons to interview will be provided by the SALAR/SKR and both AMCs.

It is expected that the evaluator describes and justifies an appropriate evaluation approach/methodology and methods for data collection in the tender. A mixed method design is recommended. The evaluation design, methodology and methods for data collection and analysis are expected to be fully developed and presented in the inception report. Given the situation with Covid-19, innovative and flexible approaches/methodologies and methods for remote data collection should be suggested when appropriate and the risk of doing harm managed.

The evaluator is to suggest an approach/methodology that provides triangulated findings and credible answers (evidence) to the evaluation questions. Limitations to the chosen approach/methodology and methods shall be made explicit by the evaluator and the consequences of these limitations discussed in the tender. The evaluator shall to the extent

possible, present mitigation measures to address them. A clear distinction is to be made between evaluation approach/methodology and methods.

A *gender-responsive* approach/methodology, methods, tools and data analysis techniques should be used<sup>32</sup>.

Sida's approach to evaluation is *utilization-focused*, which means the evaluator should facilitate the *entire evaluation process* with careful consideration of how everything that is done will affect the use of the evaluation. It is therefore expected that the evaluators, in their tender, present i) how intended users are to participate in and contribute to the evaluation process and ii) methodology and methods for data collection that create space for reflection, discussion and learning between the intended users of the evaluation.

In cases where sensitive or confidential issues are to be addressed in the evaluation, evaluators should ensure an evaluation design that do not put informants and stakeholders at risk during the data collection phase or the dissemination phase.

## 2.5 Organisation of evaluation management

This evaluation is commissioned by the Embassy of Sweden. The intended users are the Embassy of Sweden, the Embassy of Switzerland, SALAR/SKR, and both entity AMCs whom all have contributed to and agreed on the ToR for this evaluation. The Embassy of Sweden together with the Embassy of Switzerland will approve the inception report and the final report of the evaluation and evaluate the tenders. All intended users: Embassy of Sweden, Embassy of Switzerland, SALAR/SKR and both entity AMCs will participate in the start-up meeting of the evaluation, as well as in the debriefing/validation workshop where preliminary findings and conclusions are discussed. There will be two start-up meetings, one with the Swedish Embassy only and one together with the Embassy of Switzerland.

## 2.6 Evaluation quality

All Sida's evaluations shall conform to OECD/DAC's Quality Standards for Development Evaluation<sup>33</sup>. The evaluators shall use the Sida OECD/DAC Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation<sup>34</sup>. The evaluators shall specify how quality assurance will be handled by them during the evaluation process. The supplier shall ensure that any of its employees, agents and subcontractors, as well as any informant to an evaluation, whose personal data are transferred to Sida, promptly receive and take note of the information provided in Sida's Privacy Policy: <https://www.sida.se/English/About-us/about-the-website/privacy-notice/>. The supplier shall promptly inform any of its informants if their names and organisational affiliation will be included and published in the final report of an evaluation, which will be made available in

<sup>32</sup> See for example UNEG United Nations Evaluation Group (2014) Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluations <http://uneval.org/document/detail/1616>

<sup>33</sup> DAC Quality Standards for development Evaluation, OECD, 2010.

<sup>34</sup> Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management, Sida in cooperation with OECD/DAC, 2014.



Sida's publication database and in Open Aid, a web-based information service about Swedish international development cooperation.

## 2.7 Time schedule and deliverables

It is expected that a time and work plan is presented in the tender and further detailed in the inception report. Given the situation with Covid-19, the time and work plan must allow flexibility in implementation. The evaluation shall be carried out **between May-August 2021**. The timing of any field visits, surveys and interviews need to be settled by the evaluator in dialogue with the main stakeholders during the inception phase.

The table below lists key deliverables for the evaluation process. Alternative deadlines for deliverables may be suggested by the consultant and negotiated during the inception phase.

Deliverables	Participants	Tentative Deadlines
1. Start-up meeting, zoom, Skype	Embassy of Sweden Sarajevo	Upon signing call off contract, estimated 01.05.2021
2. In-depth project introduction and Theory of Change review (zoom)	SALAR, AMC FBiH and AMC RS, Evaluators	TBD
3. Draft methodology and workplan for evaluation report (inception report)	Evaluators	17.05.2021
4. Comments from intended users to evaluators and finalisation of inception report (including through a joint meeting with users)	Embassy of Sweden Sarajevo, Embassy of Switzerland, SALAR/SKR, AMCs	21.05.2021
5. Data collection, analysis and report writing including for intermediary debriefings with users where necessary	Evaluators	22.05-30.06.2021
6. Debriefing/validation workshop (meeting)	Embassy of Sweden Sarajevo, Embassy of Switzerland, SALAR/SKR, AMCs via Zoom,.....	Week 05-09.07.2021
7. Draft evaluation report	Evaluators	31.07.2021
8. Comments from intended users to evaluators	Embassy Sarajevo, Embassy of Switzerland, SALAR/SKR, AMCs.	13.08.2021

9. Final evaluation report	Evaluators	31.08.2021
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**The inception report** will form the basis for the continued evaluation process and shall be approved by Sida before the evaluation proceeds to implementation. The inception report should be written in English and cover evaluability issues and interpretations of evaluation questions, include the evaluation team's understanding of the theory of change, specific hypothesis to test during the process, and present the evaluation approach/methodology *including how a utilization-focused and gender-responsive approach will be ensured*, methods for data collection and analysis as well as the full evaluation design, including an *evaluation matrix* and a *stakeholder mapping/analysis*. A clear distinction between the evaluation approach/methodology and methods for data collection shall be made. All limitations to the methodology and methods shall be made explicit and the consequences of these limitations discussed.

A specific time and work plan, including number of hours/working days for each team member, for the remainder of the evaluation should be presented. The time plan shall allow space for reflection and learning between the intended users of the evaluation.

**The final report** shall be written in English and be professionally proof read. The final report should have clear structure and follow the layout format of Sida's template for decentralised evaluations (see Annex C). The executive summary should be maximum 3 pages.

The report shall clearly and in detail describe the evaluation approach/methodology and methods for data collection and analysis and make a clear distinction between the two. The report shall describe how the utilization-focused approach has been implemented i.e. how intended users have participated in and contributed to the evaluation process and how methodology and methods for data collection have created space for reflection, discussion and learning between the intended users. Furthermore, the gender-responsive approach shall be described and reflected in the findings, conclusions and recommendations along with other identified and relevant cross-cutting issues. Limitations to the methodology and methods and the consequences of these limitations for findings and conclusions shall be described.

Evaluation findings shall flow logically from the data, showing a clear line of evidence to support the conclusions. Conclusions should be substantiated by findings and analysis. Evaluation questions shall be clearly stated and answered in the executive summary and in the conclusions. Recommendations and lessons learned should flow logically from conclusions and be specific, directed to relevant intended users and categorised as a short-term, medium-term and long-term.

The report should be no more than 35 pages excluding annexes. If the methods section is extensive, it could be placed in an annex to the report. Annexes shall always include the Terms of Reference, the Inception Report, the stakeholder mapping/analysis and the Evaluation Matrix. Lists of key informants/interviewees shall only include personal data if deemed relevant (i.e. when it is contributing to the credibility of the evaluation) based on a case based assessment by the evaluator and the commissioning unit/embassy. The inclusion of personal data in the report must always be based on a written consent.

The evaluator shall adhere to the Sida OECD/DAC Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation<sup>35</sup>.

The evaluator shall, upon being informed about approval of the final report by Sida/Embassy, insert the report into Sida's template for decentralised evaluations (see Annex C) and submit it to Nordic Morning (in pdf-format) for publication and release in the Sida publication database. The order is placed by sending the approved report to Nordic Morning ([sida@atta45.se](mailto:sida@atta45.se)), with a copy to the responsible Sida Programme Officer as well as Sida's Evaluation Unit ([evaluation@sida.se](mailto:evaluation@sida.se)). Write "Sida decentralised evaluations" in the email subject field. The following information must always be included in the order to Nordic Morning:

1. The name of the consulting company,
2. The full evaluation title,
3. The invoice reference "ZZ980601".
4. Type of allocation: "sakanslag",
5. Type of order: "digital publicering/publikationsdatabas.

## 2.8 Evaluation team qualification

The team as a whole should have work experience from the area of local governance and local development and EU-integration experience of working and/or reviewing of donor projects from the Western Balkans region and experience of having conducted similar assignments. At least one in the team needs to speak the Bosnian/Serbian/Croatian language. The evaluation team may comprise of international and local consultants.

A CV of maximum 3 pages for each team member shall be included in the call-off response. It should contain a full description of relevant qualifications and professional work experience.

It is important that the competencies of the individual team members are complimentary. It is highly recommended that local evaluation consultants are included in the team, as they often have contextual knowledge that is of great value to the evaluation. In addition, and in a situation with Covid-19, the inclusion of local evaluators may also enhance the understanding of feasible ways to conduct the evaluation.

The evaluators must be independent from the evaluation object and evaluated activities, and have no stake in the outcome of the evaluation.

Please note that in the tender, the tenderers must propose a team leader that takes part in the evaluation by at least 30% of the total evaluation team time including core team members, specialists and all support functions, but excluding time for the quality assurance expert. The proposed Team leader, apart from conditions set out in the framework agreement, should have university degree in social sciences, political sciences, public administration or other relevant area, at least 7 years of extensive project/programme evaluation expertise and experience, with evaluations in the area of local governance and local development; sound knowledge of results-based management systems, and gender-sensitive monitoring and evaluation methodologies; knowledge and experience in the area of local government, public administration and local development-related projects; general understanding and knowledge of the political and administrative context in Bosnia and Herzegovina; proven analytical skills and ability to conceptualize and write concisely and clearly and proven communication skills, and ability to

<sup>35</sup> Sida OECD/DAC (2014) Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management.

interact with multiple actors including government representatives, donors and other stakeholders.

## 2.9 Financial and human resources

The cost of the evaluation shall be equally shared by Donors.

The contact person at Sida/Swedish Embassy is Mario Vignjevic, Programme Officer for Public Administration Reform & Local Governance Reform & Anticorruption & Public Finance Management at the Embassy of Sweden in Sarajevo. The contact person should be consulted if any problems arise during the evaluation process.

Relevant Sida documentation will be provided by Mario Vignjevic, Programme Officer for Public Administration Reform & Local Governance Reform & Anticorruption & Public Finance Management at the Embassy of Sweden in Sarajevo. Contact details to intended users (cooperation partners, Swedish and Swiss Embassies, other donors etc.) will be provided by Mario Vignjevic, Programme Officer for Public Administration Reform & Local Governance Reform & Anticorruption & Public Finance Management at the Embassy of Sweden in Sarajevo.

The evaluator will be required to arrange the logistics such as booking interviews, organising focus groups, preparing field visits, etc., including any necessary security arrangements – in consultation with the partners.

## Annex A: List of key documentation

### PROJECT DOCUMENT WITH ANNEXES

### ANNUAL NARRATIVE/PROGRESS AND FINANCIAL REPORTS

## Annex B: Data sheet on the evaluation object

Information on the evaluation object (i.e. intervention)	
Title of the evaluation object	“Strengthening Associations of Municipalities and Cities in Bosnia and Herzegovina” Project
ID no. in PLANIt	ID 55060033
Dox no./Archive case no.	UF 2015/ 22636
Activity period (if applicable)	1st February 2018 to 31st January 2022
Agreed budget (if applicable)	31 242 145 SEK out of which Sida undertakes to finance 14 142 145. The project is co-financed by Government of Switzerland in the amount of 17 100 000 SEK.

Main sector	Democracy; Public sector institutions; pooled funds; Local self government ;
Name and type of implementing organisation	SALAR / SKR
Aid type	Project type
Swedish strategy	Sweden's reform cooperation with Eastern Europe, the Western Balkans and Turkey 2014 – 2020, 2021-2027

Information on the evaluation assignment	
Commissioning unit/Swedish Embassy	Bosnia and Herzegovina
Contact person at unit/Swedish Embassy	Mario Vignjevic, PO
Timing of evaluation (mid-term, , ex-post, or other)	Final Evaluation; end-of-programme
ID no. in PLANIt (if other than above).	55060033



## Evaluation of “Strengthening Associations of Municipalities and Cities in Bosnia and Herzegovina” Project

The *Strengthening Associations of Municipalities and Cities in Bosnia and Herzegovina* project (2017-2021) aims to strengthen the two associations ability to support their members’ rights. The project was jointly financed by the Governments of Sweden and Switzerland and implemented by SALAR/SKL International, the Association of Municipalities and Cities of Republika Srpska (RS AMC) and the Association of Municipalities and Cities of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH AMC). The purpose of this evaluation is to assess the project’s success, sustainability, and implementation of cross-cutting issues; contribute to learning and serve as an input to a potential continuation of the project. The evaluation found that the AMCs have increased their competencies in several key and prioritised thematic areas and are increasingly part of the national political dialogue and advocating for their members’ rights. They have however struggled to define, monitor and evaluate their strategies, not developed a plan to become more financially sustainable or been able to ensure that the implementation of the project has taken into account the cross-cutting issues.

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