

Outcome Mapping Evaluation of Six Civil Society Projects in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Summary Report

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Sida Evaluation 2008:17

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Abbreviations

BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
GO	Governmental Organisation
KtK	Kvinna till Kvinna
LFA	Logical Framework Approach
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OM	Outcome Mapping
OPIC	The Olof Palme International Center
RBM	Results-Based Management
RS	Republika Srpska (one of the two Entities which make up Bosnia and Herzegovina)
SHC	The Swedish Helsinki Committee for Human Rights
Sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees

1 Executive Summary

The present report is an evaluation of six civil society projects in Bosnia and Herzegovina funded by Sida via three framework partners. Sida funds these kinds of projects because it sees civil society as having the potential to empower poor people, promote democracy, promote peace and security and develop a global arena.

The evaluation objectives are to explore the individual projects and the overall program of support to civil society in terms of outcomes, relevance and sustainability, as well as to investigate the potential of a new method, Outcome Mapping (OM), for project and program evaluation.

Outcome Mapping (Carden, Smutylo, & Earl, 2002) was chosen as the evaluation method for this evaluation because Sida's intention was to focus particularly on an exploration of immediate outcomes and it was believed that OM is well suited to deliver this kind of information. Moreover Sida and the implementing partners were interested to explore whether OM could mitigate some of the perceived weaknesses of existing planning and monitoring methods and potentially be used more widely in future.

The timeframe of the present evaluation was calendar year 2007, i.e., conclusions are about how projects were implemented during that year. The evaluation benefited from using a prospective design, i.e. both a baseline and final assessment were conducted. However as the baseline was conducted in May 2007 and the final assessment around November 2007, only a slice of activities for 2007 could be covered. In some cases only a fraction of the planned project activities for 2007 were actually carried out during the evaluation timeframe. Moreover most of the projects had already been running since before 2007 and will continue into 2008 and possibly beyond.

Each of the six projects were able to identify one or at most two groups of boundary partners with whom they work directly. Each project involved between 10 and 100 persons as boundary partners. These numbers are quite a lot smaller than the numbers typically given as "beneficiaries" of civil society projects.

Boundary partner groups can be divided into "less powerful", "potentially powerful" and "powerful".

Projects with less powerful boundary partners tended to aim at stimulating changes in these boundary partners per se, whereas projects with more powerful boundary partners tended to aim at changes in domains which these partners could influence rather than at changes within the partners themselves.

Overall the projects are quite well designed in terms of how activities should contribute to outcomes, but there is a lack of specifically collective or systemic strategies and also of supportive strategies.

All the projects can demonstrate that their chosen boundary partners think, act or network differently because of the project.

The projects with rural boundary partners who have less education are less successful at demonstrating change.

On the other hand there is indeed evidence in the rural projects that a small number of individuals moved a couple of steps "up the progress marker ladder" due to the project – for example a woman in an isolated rural area starts to challenge power relationships at home. One can argue that this kind of change is much harder to achieve than with, for example, young students and should therefore be seen as more valuable. However, the Outcome Challenge does not always fit well with the motivation and world-view of these boundary partners. For example in the case of one project (MV), some rural women see the weaker position of women in society as normal and logical and are not motivated to change it.

For nearly all of the projects, customised questionnaires based around the projects' progress markers were developed. Results from around 100 baseline and 100 final assessment questionnaires were compared on a per-project basis.

For two projects, baseline questionnaire scores were compared with final assessment scores. In both cases, there was a small but significant improvement.

There is some evidence that the projects are more successful when they target younger and better-educated boundary partners. In both projects for which analysis was possible, there was a tendency for women to benefit more than men.

In order to assess project and program relevance, an extensive series of in-depth interviews was carried out with boundary and implementing partners. 44 interviews additional to the OM interviews were carried out at baseline exploring stakeholder views of how poverty, gender and civil society are related, and another 37 were carried out at final assessment to explore how stakeholders view project and program relevance in retrospect. These two waves of interviews were transcribed and analysed using specialised software.

The respondents had strong opinions about gender equality, with nearly all the respondents saying that there is no real gender equality.

Respondents tended to see women as capable of taking a leading role in society but as not very motivated to do so. Highly educated respondents are much more likely to blame "tradition" for gender inequality.

There is a radical split between implementing partners and boundary partners in terms of how optimistic they are about the possibility for individuals being able to contribute to change, with implementing partners being much more optimistic. They are also more optimistic about the possibility of change overall.

The projects can overall not be considered to be mass movements but are relatively small groups of people centred around a handful of courageous and charismatic individuals. Paradoxically, these individuals (often educated women) believe that change is possible through the efforts of individuals.

In the qualitative interviews, respondents report the projects to be relevant to gender equality and poverty reduction. They were also judged to be on the whole effective in contributing to change, although a large minority took a pessimistic view that change is very difficult to bring about and that the projects were therefore not very successful.

The evaluation team came to the following conclusions and recommendations.

Implementing partners must be themselves included (as key stakeholders with their own goals and objectives) in project planning. In the OM paradigm this can mean that they include themselves as another boundary partner group in their own planning or that their framework partner includes them in a higher-level intentional framework.

Be aware that effective activists are not necessarily effective bureaucrats and keep a look-out for unplanned but meaningful project outcomes. These may be a sign of successful improvisation and/or of intuitive rather than explicit programming. Find ways to attract and retain effective activists who are put off by the formalities of project application and management procedures.

We recommend that OM could/should be adopted by donors right from the project application stage, either in its entirety or in a hybrid OM/LFA form.

Some of the “spirit” of OM can be adopted without implementing it formally. Even this “spirit” can really change the way CSOs think about how they work. It can usefully influence planning & implementation.

It is important to explore how the Outcome Challenge really fits in with the motivational and conceptual structure of the boundary partners. This is more than “informing stakeholders about their rights” but involves a genuine dialogue between boundary partners and implementing partners during the planning process.

Consider distinguishing between different subgroups of boundary partners in terms of how much progress they already made on the boundary partner ladder at project start, and design some activities specifically for each subgroup. Differentiate and extend the progress marker ladder for each subgroup.

LFA encourages “monolithic M&E”, i.e. the subsidiarisation of evaluation data collection down to the lowest level. Donors needs for evidence of program impact at the top levels is supposed to be met by aggregating outcome and impact information collected at individual project level which is in turn largely an aggregation of low-level outputs (numbers of handbooks printed etc.) or speculative extrapolation. This approach is inadequate for a number of reasons.

The M&E needs of projects and programs are quite different. This monolithic M&E model is a disservice to implementing partners because they are less interested in gathering information to demonstrate impact and have more need to collect timely management-relevant information.

At the same time, donors get invalid M&E information because it is filtered up a chain of informants who have a vested interest in misrepresenting the truth.

Evidence is passed through many hands and collected and aggregated by people who are not qualified to do so.

Only very circumspect evidence on impact can be provided because adequate methods cannot be employed (randomised assignment to treatment and control, use of independent and external researchers, use of standardised and/or reliable and proven measures, triangulation information from stakeholders not involved in the program, representative population samples, rigorous content analysis of interviews).

We strongly recommend breaking down this monolithic approach in favour of a mix of M&E strategies.

2 About the Program

2.1 Goals and Objectives of Sida's Support to Civil Society in Bosnia and Herzegovina

The present report is an evaluation of six civil society projects in Bosnia and Herzegovina funded by Sida via three framework partners. Sida funds these kinds of projects because it sees civil society as having the potential to empower poor people, promote democracy, promote peace and security and develop a global arena.¹

2.2 Sida's Vision for Civil Society

(...) Sida's vision is that civil society in BiH in the next four years will be more democratic and visible than today. It has taken up a greater advocacy and watchdog role with respect to human rights as well as the implementation of new policies and legislation. This role is generally accepted and appreciated by government, media and the public. There are a few strong, well recognized NGOs leading coalitions and networks. These coalitions are actively trying to involve, educate and mobilize the public around issues of their concern. NGO's generally are more transparent, and do engage more citizens as actors in their activities. More NGOs are member based, and members participate in the decision-making processes. Domestic, transparent funding to civil society is growing at all levels of government².

2.3 Mission

The system of framework partners is described as follows³:

In the end of the 1990s, Sida created a system of Swedish framework non-governmental organizations for support to civil society. In Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), as in most other countries in the region, Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation (KtK), the Swedish Helsinki Committee (SHC) and Olof Palme International Centre (OPC) were chosen as partners. It is up to these organizations to decide which local projects, initiatives or associations Sida should invest in. They are also responsible for project management and capacity building.

The mission statement itself explains how the support to these three framework partners is designed to target gender equality, human rights and people's participation in decision making:

The gender equality program is to be implemented by KtK, over a period of four years. The mission of the program is to strengthen and consolidate the emerging women's movement in BiH. It will contribute to active networking between women NGOs. Through capacity building the organizations shall enhance their capacities in lobbying and advocacy, and increase their cooperation with the government at all levels of society. Women NGOs shall participate in formulating and implementing effective and sustainable national strategies for domestic violence and trafficking. They shall also contribute to increasing women's participation in politics at all levels in society. Furthermore, some women NGOs should develop their skills in analysis and research, thus taking up a stronger watchdog role for women's rights issues. NGOs supported by KtK/Sida shall improve their public outreach and communication with citizens.

¹ This text and the texts in orange boxes on this page are from Sida's support to civil society in development cooperation (Sida 2007), pp 5–7.

² Ibid. p. 8

³ Ibid. p. 8

The human rights program is to be implemented by SHC over a period of four years. The mission of the program is to contribute to the development of a few strong, independent and highly professional human rights watchdogs in the civil society. In particular, these human rights organizations shall develop their skills in analysis and research, and improve their ability to share analysis with each other. NGOs, universities and media shall to a larger extent than now engage in coalitions and networking, drawing on each others capacity. The organizations should also enhance their capacities in lobbying and advocacy, and improve on public outreach and communication with citizens. Organizations to be supported by SHC/Sida shall exercise democratic values, such as openness, transparency, accountability, participation and equality.

The citizen's participation program is to be implemented by OPC over two years, but resources should gradually be transferred to one or a few local NGO(s). Financing of local NGOs should be considered after OPC has withdrawn. The mission of the program is to increase citizen's influence and participation at all levels in society. The program shall improve the democratic values within civil society, in particular as regards involving citizens in the NGOs and their activities. It shall also improve civil society's public communication with citizens. The program shall furthermore increase civil society's ownership of setting priorities of the development agenda, subsequently decreasing its dependence on international donors. NGOs supported shall develop their lobbying and advocacy skills, and increase cooperation with the government at all levels.

Table 1 presents an overview of the three framework organisations with corresponding pairs of implementing partners, together with information about each implementing partner.

Table 1: Framework partners and implementing partners

Framework organisation	Partner organisation	Title of evaluated activity	Background to evaluated activities Jan-Dec 2007
Kvinna til Kvinna	The Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation (KtK) supports women in regions affected by war and conflict. KtK works in partnership with women's organisations in the Balkans, in the Middle East and in the Caucasus.	Women's Centre in Trebinje: Association for helping women and children who are victims of family violence (ZC)	Women's political lobby
	Women's association "Most" ("Bridge"), Višegrad (MV)	Village activities (including round tables in towns)	The Women's Centre in Trebinje has been involved since its inception in securing money for safe houses in Eastern Herzegovina. In 2007 the focus of activities was on finding a systematic solution for financing safe houses. The Centre will continue with these activities until its vision is realised.
			Organization "Most" was established in 1998 and is a self-organized association of women of different ages, social status, educational, ethnic and religious backgrounds and which is trying to address the needs of women in BiH, especially in the area of Visegrad and eastern Republika Srpska (RS), which is a very traditionally patriarchal, nationalistic part of Bosnia.
			From 2002 "Most" has been carrying out a variety of activities with women with the aim of informing women in towns and villages about their rights and about gender equality and issues that concern women in order for women to improve their lives and be equal citizens.

Framework organisation	Partner organisation	Title of evaluated activity	Background to evaluated activities Jan-Dec 2007
Olof Palme International Center	The Olof Palme International Center (OPIC) works with international development co-operation and the forming of public opinion surrounding international political and security issues. It was established in 1992 by the Swedish Social Democratic Party, the Trade Union Confederation and the Cooperative Union.	Helsinki Citizens Assembly Banja Luka (HB)	Academy for political leaders
	Civil Society Promotion Center (CP)	Local Government leadership building activities	Helsinki Citizens' Assembly (hCa) Banja Luka has been active since 1996 in the promotion, strengthening and networking of civil initiatives. The evaluated activity aims to involve young political party activists to create a new generation of politicians ready to work for the good of their local communities. This is a new activity for this organisation and is planned to be continued in the coming years.
Swedish Helsinki Committee for Human Rights	The Swedish Helsinki Committee for Human Rights was established in 1982 and is a politically and religiously independent non-governmental organisation. The Committee monitors the compliance of human rights in accordance with the so called Helsinki agreement from 1975 and supports projects to improve democracy and civil society.	BiH Press Council (PC)	Promotion of the Press Code and press freedom through seminars and conferences with journalists and judges
		Vaša Prava ("Your Rights") BiH (VP)	The Press Council was founded in 2000 with the aim of promoting ethical and professional standards in the print media, monitoring the implementation of the Press Code for print media and continuous education of journalists and the public of the need for protecting freedom of expression. The Evaluated Activity began in 2006.
			Vaša Prava ("Your Rights") BiH is the legal successor of legal advice centres set up by UNHCR in 1996. In the last four years, Vaša Prava BiH has been informing the public through information sessions in collective centres (for displaced persons) throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina.

3 About the Evaluation

3.1 Objectives

The evaluation objectives are to explore the individual projects and the overall program of support to civil society in terms of outcomes, relevance and sustainability, as well as to investigate the potential of a new method, Outcome Mapping (OM), for project and program evaluation.

Outcome Mapping (Carden, Smutylo, & Earl, 2002) was chosen as the evaluation method for this evaluation because Sida's intention was to focus particularly on an exploration of immediate outcomes and it was believed that OM is well suited to deliver this kind of information. Moreover Sida and the

implementing partners were interested to explore whether OM could mitigate some of the perceived weaknesses of existing planning and monitoring methods and potentially be used more widely in future.

So the three aims in detail are as follows.

- A. (“project evaluation”: about 40%): to what extent the six chosen civil society projects in BiH are contributing to outcomes in terms of changed behaviours, relationships, actions or activities among those persons, groups or organisations these projects are interacting with directly.
- B. (“program evaluation”: about 40%): provide general lessons for achieving sustainable outcomes in civil society projects.
- C. (“OM demonstration”: about 20%): to explore the strengths and weaknesses of OM as a project planning and M&E tool

3.2 Evaluation Methodology, Timeframe and Contingencies

Sida has a long-term commitment to the framework partners; and Sida and the framework partners have a long-term commitment to each of the implementing partners. Funding for framework partners and for local partners does not depend on the results of this evaluation.

The timeframe of the present evaluation is calendar year 2007, i.e., conclusions are to be reached about how projects were implemented during that year. The evaluation benefited from using a prospective design, i.e. both a baseline and final assessment were conducted. However as the baseline was conducted in May 2007 and the final assessment around November 2007, only a slice of activities for 2007 could be covered. In some cases only a fraction of the planned project activities for 2007 were actually carried out during the evaluation timeframe. Moreover most of the projects had already been running since before 2007 and will continue into 2008 and possibly beyond.

Table 1: Evaluation time-frame captures only a small slice of project implementation

	Framework partner support: several years
	Implementing partner support: several years
	Duration of projects being evaluated
	Evaluation timeframe for project activities: Jan–Dec 2007
	Research time-frame: May–Nov 2007

In addition to Outcome Mapping, two more quite extensive evaluation methods were used: comparison of questionnaires on progress markers at baseline and final assessment; and a series of in-depth qualitative interviews. Evaluation methods will be described in more detail in the Findings chapter.

3.3 What is OM⁴?

As the evaluation method itself, OM, is also itself under evaluation in the present report, some information about it will be presented here.

Outcome Mapping (Carden et al., 2002) is a new approach to project planning, monitoring and evaluation. It can be used at the project, program or organisational levels. It is considered by some to be a more flexible alternative to address some of the criticisms (Davies, 2007) directed at LFA, RBM etc (Coleman, 1987) and as particularly suitable for development programming.

⁴ Sources For OM: International Development Research Centre www.idrc.ca

3.3.1 OM as an alternative to LFA

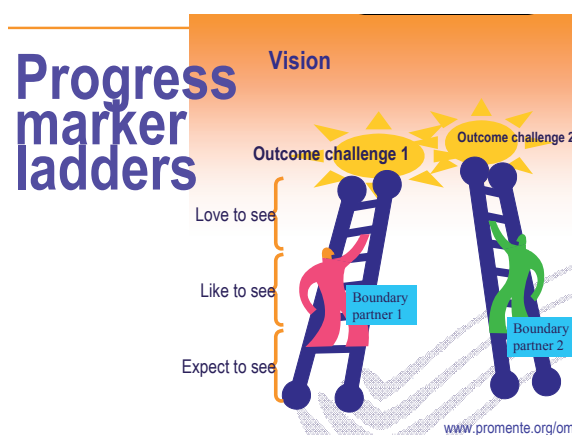
Table 2: Criticisms of Results Based Management (RBM)/Logframe (LFA) & Solutions suggested by OM

Criticisms of Results Based Management (RBM)/Logframe (LFA)	Solutions suggested by OM
Force implementing organisations to try to demonstrate that they caused numerically large impacts	Focus on development/change of key partners: outcomes, not impacts
Focus too much on impact in areas where implementing organisations have little influence	Quality, not quantity of change
Inflexible: has difficulty coping with unexpected positive & negative results	Flexible
Many development NGOs see it as alien	Fits better with what NGOs feel they are doing: stimulating change, not delivering outputs
Requires attribution of impacts to agents (did they really cause the change?) which is difficult to answer. Credit usually goes to a single contributor.	Focus on contribution (what did they do, what worked?)
Mechanistic approach to strategy	Strategy maps inspire thinking about different dimensions of planning
Provides only “clueless feedback” serving control functions rather than learning	Rich, useful feedback
Exclusive focus on impact/results	Built-in focus on strategy and organisational learning as well as outcomes

3.3.2 Main distinguishing features of OM

Although OM is a complex method which has many similarities and differences with conventional methods, there are three elements which most clearly distinguish it from existing methods of program planning and M&E.

1. OM focusses on a limited number of “boundary partners” with whom a program or project has direct contact rather than on a larger number of final beneficiaries. Boundary partners are defined as “those individuals, groups, & organizations with whom a program interacts directly to effect change & with whom the program can anticipate some opportunities for influence” (ibid, p.1).
2. There is a narrower emphasis on outcomes, conceived primarily as changes in boundary partner behaviour and relationships, rather than on impact. OM does not try to force implementing organisations to try to demonstrate that they caused numerically large impacts, especially not in areas “where their influence ... is low and decreasing relative to that of other actors” (ibid, p.5). The focus is on the development/change of key partners; quality, not quantity; and on contribution (what did they do, what worked?) rather than on attribution (did they really cause the change?) which is sometimes impossible to prove.
3. OM introduces the concept of progress markers as a graduated ladder⁵ of specific changes in boundary partner behaviour and relationships which define and describe progress towards each outcome challenge. These kinds of change have



⁵ It should be stressed that OM does not conceive of progress markers as really being arranged in a linear fashion. Progress towards the outcome challenge will rarely occur in an ordered, step-by-step fashion. However we found the ladder metaphor useful to introduce the concept and did not find that partners understood it in a too literal fashion.

traditionally been seen as difficult to capture, particularly because it is more difficult to formulate them in accordance with the SMART paradigm (Mikkelsen, 2005, p. 164). And yet OM stresses that these kinds of change in fact often represent the heart of development work. The concept of progress marker ladders is an attempt to define and document these kinds of change systematically. The progress markers for each outcome challenge are grouped into “expect to see”, “like to see” and “love to see”, with the first set describing concrete boundary partner behaviour which the project assumes will happen and the final set describing behaviour so desirable as to more or less form part of the vision.

3.3.3 Strategy planning in OM

Table 3: Strategy maps

	Causal	Persuasive	Supportive
Individual	Cause a direct effect Produce an output e.g., Deliver money, obtain research, prepare a report	Arouse new thinking/skills Always expert-driven Single purpose e.g., Capacity-building activities, skill enhancement, methodological workshops, training	Build a support network Based on a supporter/mentor who guides change over time Involvement is more frequent and sustained e.g., Program member who provides regular guidance and input, expert (management, fundraising ...)
Environmental	Change physical or policy environment Incentives, rules, guidelines e.g., Technical transfer, policy change, Internet access, terms of reference (TOR)	Disseminate information/messages to a broad audience Create a persuasive environment Change/alter message system e.g., Radio, TV, Internet, publications, conferences, findings, workshops	Create a learning/action network Boundary Partners working together and collectively supporting each other on a regular basis e.g., Research network, participatory research program

OM also provides a framework called “Strategy Maps” for planning (and monitoring) project activities (Carden et al., 2002, p. 61). Activities are assigned to one of the six boxes in a grid which is reproduced in an abbreviated form above. This helps give an overview of the strategies employed and ensures that important types of activities are not forgotten such as persuasion and support, and activities aimed at the environment within which individuals live and work as well as the individuals themselves.

3.4 Evaluation Activity Plan

The main activities are described in Table 4. More details of the activities are available in the project-level report which accompanies this one.

Table 4: Activity plan

Date	Activity
19–24 March	Meeting between the consultant and the reference group, consultation about work plan. Signing of agreement.
02–23 April	First field visits to all projects, aimed at outlining the intervention logic of the projects. This includes an outline of the vision, mission, outcome challenges, progress markers and strategy maps. (two-day visit); introduction to outcome journal and strategic journal
30 April	Presentation of the intervention logic of the projects to the reference group.
May	Developing cross-cutting interview guideline on poverty; and questionnaires for at least 3 boundary partner groups.

Date	Activity
May	Second field visits, including meetings with boundary partners. Boundary partners Interviewing including semi-structured questions for qualitative data analysis module. Supervision of outcome journal and strategic journal. Application of questionnaires.
End of May	Meeting with the reference group and presenting field report.
June–August	Interim field visits, including meetings with boundary partners.
September	Preparation of evaluation-end instruments
November	Final field visits, including meetings with boundary partners. Boundary partners Interviewing including program-end semi-structured questions for qualitative data analysis module. Supervision of strategic journal. Application of program-end questionnaires.
November	Data analysis including qualitative and quantitative additional modules. Meeting with the reference group.
December	Draft report and final report

OM does carry a certain risk of overloading and demotivating stakeholders, particularly those boundary partners who have a more peripheral role. During the evaluation we strove to keep the OM framework as simple as possible and ensure that boundary partners, while of course critical to the application of OM, were not asked to do take part in the OM process to an extent which is out of proportion with their role in the project overall.

We also tried to make the evaluation as useful as possible to the implementing partners themselves, asking them during the preparatory interviews how we could do this. In the case of one project (MV⁶), they requested that we carry out a small additional piece of quantitative research, which we did. The results are in the project-level report.

We encouraged flexibility in the way OM was used. Changes could be made to any part of the intentional design such as progress markers as long as the changes and their motivation were documented. Local partners, framework organisations and boundary partners were specifically encouraged to be open and frank about identifying problems and difficulties.

4 Findings

In this chapter, the results from the three main evaluation methods will be presented.

4.1 OM

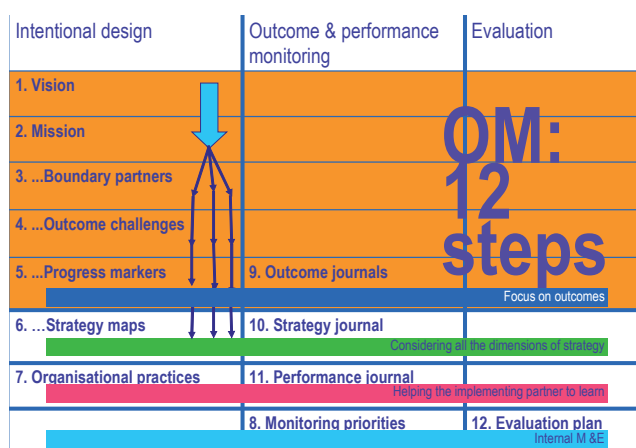
The information in this section is a summary of the results of the OM procedures which are given in more detail in the project-level report. Organisational practices and performance journals, which are additional components of OM (Carden et al., 2002, p. 69), were not part of the present evaluation.

4.1.1 Background

4.1.1.1 Shadowing: how Outcome Mapping was applied parallel to existing planning and M&E tools

In the diagram, the 12 steps usually used to set up an OM system are presented (Carden et al., 2002, p. 31). OM is conceived more as a tool for project planning, monitoring and management rather than a tool for external project evaluation (Step 12, Evaluation Plan, is primarily a plan for internal evalua-

⁶ The abbreviations of the projects are explained in Table 1.



tion). However it can be so used providing the intentional design (at least steps 1–6 in the diagram) have been defined in advance in order to provide criteria for the evaluation. Evidence of outcomes are recorded in the outcome journal (step 9) and changes to strategy are recorded in the strategy journal (step 10) during implementation.

As mentioned above, evaluation according to OM requires the intentional design or intervention logic to have been defined. However the projects had already been designed and

approved using traditional methods such as logframes. Moreover, we were not in a position to require the partners to actually adopt OM as their main planning and monitoring tool. So the evaluation team and the implementing partners collaborated to “shadow” the existing project planning and monitoring using OM as an additional tool. This also fed into the third evaluation aim, above; assessing how OM performs as a planning and monitoring tool. So over a series of meetings during the baseline field visits we tried to help the partners to apply OM in parallel to their existing tools. This OM “shadowing” meant that we did not require the implementing partners to actually implement OM themselves, which would have involved them keeping outcome and strategy journals themselves. Instead, we effectively collected and collated this data for them, which involved carrying out a total of over 50 interviews at baseline and another 50 at the final assessment.

The information from this “shadowing” use of OM was also used not only to assess the viability of OM as a method but also to evaluate the projects from an external perspective.

A prospective evaluation design was used, i.e. using baseline field visits at evaluation start as well as final field visits at evaluation end.

4.1.2 Which are the persons, groups or organisations which the projects interact with directly?

Each of the six projects were able to identify one or at most two groups of boundary partners with whom they work directly. Each project involved between 10 and 100 persons as boundary partners. These numbers are quite a lot smaller than the numbers typically given as “beneficiaries” of civil society projects.

Two projects chose boundary partners from socially excluded populations – rural women in one case (MV⁷) and residents of collective centres in another (VP): populations which would very commonly be defined as “beneficiaries”. We will refer to these kinds of boundary partners as the “less powerful”. The other four projects worked with activists, politicians and professionals who tended to younger and better educated. Of these, two focused on political activists (HC and CP) who could be broadly characterised as “potentially powerful” and the other two (ZC and PC) focused on boundary partner groups primarily for the sake of their existing roles in society; we can refer to these boundary partner groups as “powerful”.

Boundary partner groups can be divided into “less powerful”, “potentially powerful” and “powerful”.

One project which involved women in rural areas (MV) actually had the aim of encouraging them to be more active in terms of increasing their awareness of their rights as women and of acting accordingly. So the boundary partners for this project were broken down into three subgroups: very active, active and less active women, with overlapping progress marker ladders. Nevertheless, the majority of

⁷ The abbreviations of the projects are explained in Table 1.

women were in the “less active” group. We conducted a small additional research project on this issue at the request of this organisation⁸, which reveals very clear, if not unexpected, sociodemographic and other differences between very active, active and less active women: more active women are better educated, more likely to be employed, read newspapers more frequently, much less likely to live in a village, and are much less likely to watch television.

It was also hypothesised that it is more difficult for women from traditional backgrounds to be active for women’s rights, for instance due to opposition from their husbands, this hypothesis was not confirmed by the women’s answers in this additional piece of research.

4.1.3 What are the project visions, missions and outcome challenges? What are the expected outcomes, in terms of changed behaviours, relationships, actions and activities, for these boundary partners?

Every project was able to formulate outcomes for their boundary partners. However the projects can be distinguished according to how much these changes are intrinsic to the project vision. In the case of the project which agitates for sustainable funding for safe houses (ZC), this vision does not directly include the boundary partners. It is the mission and outcome challenge which include those boundary partners, lawmakers and (potential) lobbyists, as means to that end. If an appropriate law was passed by divine intervention, the vision would be fulfilled but the outcome challenge would not, as there would have been no change in the boundary partners. This is a good example of what one could call an “extrinsic” vision. This is of course a legitimate intervention logic but one which does not fit so well with OM thinking. Success in these kinds of endeavours depends heavily on external factors.

Other projects had visions which were almost exclusively related to their boundary partners and outcome challenge, such as the project with rural women. Somewhere in between, two of the “professionals” projects aimed at increasing the skills and networking of political activists as part of the strengthening of civil society, partly for intrinsic purposes – because those activists are themselves already a part of a strengthened civil society – and partly for the sake of potential changes in the communities and networks surrounding those activists which they might stimulate.

Projects with less powerful boundary partners tended to aim at stimulating changes in these boundary partners per se, whereas projects with more powerful boundary partners tended to aim at changes in domains which these partners could influence rather than at changes within the partners themselves.

4.1.4 What project strategies and activities are meant to contribute to the expected outcomes? How?

The projects employed a range of different activities, most frequently education or coordination workshops but also providing financial and office support, creating websites, issuing press releases etc.

Looking at the Strategy Maps drawn up for each project, the “causal” and “persuasive” activities tended to be well defined whereas the “supportive” activities were less numerous and in general less well defined. Environmental and individual activities were about evenly balanced.

The projects seem to be conceived more in terms of changing individuals rather than in changing systems, groups and relationships. There is a lack of activities which are specifically collective in nature (such as encouraging networking or providing opportunities for group decision-making).

Some of the projects were also weak on engaging and relating to other CSOs working on similar topics and in one case some of the difficulties in project implementation can be attributed to this lack of coordination with other actors which is particularly noticeable across the inter-entity line.

⁸ Published in the project-level report

Overall the projects are quite well designed in terms of how activities should contribute to outcomes, but there is a lack of specifically collective or systemic strategies and also of supportive strategies.

4.1.5 Were the activities actually carried out according to the planned strategy? Did the project design/intervention logic change? How and why?

In accordance with the above comments, projects tended to be weaker in actually implementing supportive activities, even where these were planned, compared with causal and persuasive activities.

All of the projects had a few difficulties and delays implementing some of their activities but none suffered serious setbacks. Two of the organisations (VP and HC) went through substantial management changes during the course of the evaluation but that does not seem to have affected project implementation substantially.

In general there were no changes to the overall intervention logic, but one organisation (MV), partly due to their involvement in the OM work, decided during the evaluation to concentrate in future more on a narrower group of boundary partners, namely those women who are already aligned with the vision of the organisation, and to concentrate less on women from the “less active” group (see section 4.1.2).

One organisation (VP) experienced some difficulties in implementing its individual/persuasive strategies in the sense that its boundary partners live in conditions of long-term extreme social exclusion and are difficult to motivate.

One organisation (HC) decided to employ an additional person to implement their environmental/persuasive strategies, specifically to handle media.

One organisation (PC) decided to change its project vision to make it more realistic.

4.1.6 Outcomes: do boundary partners think, act or network differently because of the project?

All the projects can demonstrate that their chosen boundary partners think, act or network differently because of the project.

The projects with rural boundary partners who have less education are less successful at demonstrating change. The focus on development is less clear with these groups; a service-provision model might be more applicable.

On the other hand there is indeed evidence in the rural projects that a small number of individuals moved a couple of steps “up the progress marker ladder” due to the project – for example a woman in an isolated rural area started to challenge power relationships at home. One can argue that this kind of change is much harder to achieve than with, for example, young students and should therefore be seen as more valuable. However, the Outcome Challenge does not always fit well with the motivation and world-view of these boundary partners. For example in the case of one project (MV), some rural women see the weaker position of women in society as normal and logical and are not motivated to change it.

There were some difficulties in cooperation between NGOs in the Republika Srpska⁹ and the Federation.

Moreover, cooperation between NGOs working in the same field cannot be assumed.

Some progress markers such as “adopting European standards in xyz” give the impression of having been transferred from the approved project logical framework or having been inserted at the insistence of donors. These types of progress markers were less likely to be achieved.

⁹ the Republika Srpska and the Federation are the two Entities which make up Bosnia and Herzegovina

4.2 Progress Marker Questionnaires

4.2.1 Background

For nearly all of the projects, customised questionnaires based around the projects' progress markers were developed. Results from around 100 baseline and 100 final assessment questionnaires were compared on a per-project basis.

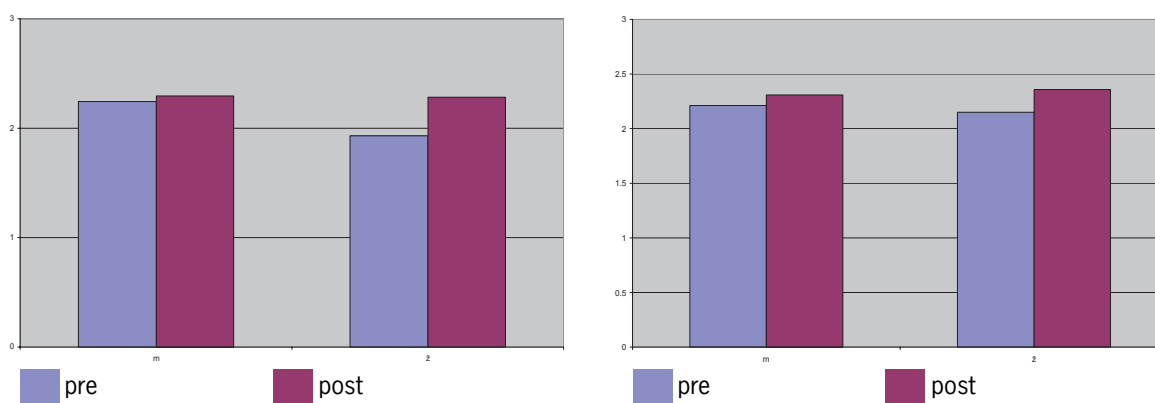
Short individualised questionnaires were developed for the boundary partner groups of all except one project. Each question captured the beliefs, attitudes, behaviour and/or relationships specified in each progress marker.

The questionnaires consist of a set number of items, with answers on a Likert scale from 1 to 4, with 1=not at all, 2=a little, 3=a lot and 4=extremely.

These questionnaires were used at baseline and final assessment. Some boundary partner groups were expected to have lower literacy levels, so with these groups the researchers read and explained the questions rather than asking the respondents to fill them in themselves.

The analysis of this data complements the OM results by providing not only a somewhat more objective view of program baseline and effects but also differential information about project outcomes in different stakeholder groups and subgroups.

4.2.2 Outcomes: change on progress markers from baseline to final assessment



The diagrams show scores on progress marker questionnaires at baseline and final assessment for the two projects for which comparable data was available for these two timepoints. The projects are not named, as previously agreed. In both projects there is a small but significant¹⁰ overall improvement, with a tendency for women to improve more.

It should be mentioned that these two projects involved boundary partners who were on average younger and better educated than in the rest of the projects.

There was also another project for which this kind of quantitative analysis had been planned. However at final assessment it was not possible to locate the same boundary partners as at baseline. For this reason baseline-final comparison would not be valid for this project. Nevertheless it should be mentioned fact the final assessment scores for this third project are overall somewhat lower than at baseline, which may be explained by the fact that some of the more active respondents had moved away from the area before final assessment.

For two projects, baseline questionnaire scores were compared with final assessment scores. In both cases, there was a small but significant improvement.

¹⁰ One result is significant at $p < 0.01$ and one is significant at $p < 0.1$ (Welch two-sample t-test for unpaired samples)

4.2.3 Do the projects affect different subgroups of boundary partners differentially?

There is some evidence that the projects are more successful when they target younger and better-educated boundary partners. In both projects for which analysis was possible, there was a tendency for women to benefit more than men.

4.3 Interviews on Relevance

In order to assess project and program relevance, an extensive series of in-depth interviews was carried out with boundary and implementing partners. 44 interviews additional to the OM interviews were carried out at baseline exploring stakeholder views of how poverty, gender and civil society are related, and another 37 were carried out at final assessment to explore how stakeholders view project and program relevance in retrospect. These two waves of interviews were transcribed and analysed using specialised software.

4.3.1 First qualitative study on project and program relevance

4.3.1.1 Background

This additional module was aimed at gathering additional information on relevance of project design and implementation to poverty as a cross-cutting theme. A semi-structured interview guideline was drawn up on gender, poverty and social exclusion (see the annex to this report). These interviews were carried out with boundary and implementing partners in all projects at baseline. These 44 interviews were transcribed in full and then analysed using NVIVO 2 software for qualitative data analysis to identify and present explicit and hidden themes emerging from the interviews. This analysis is separate from standard OM evaluation procedure: trained coders read each of the transcripts carefully and gradually built up a list of frequently occurring kinds of statement such as “young people are particularly affected by poverty”. One passage of text could be coded with more than one statement if required. In the first phase of the analysis, the coders were looking for striking statements which seemed to be strong expressions of a particular opinion. These statements were then grouped under a few main headings by the research team working together.

At the same time, all the respondent statements were coded with the respondent’s characteristics: boundary or implementing partner, urban or rural residence, age, sex, education level. In this way it was possible to analyse which kinds of statements were primarily made by which kinds of respondents.

4.3.1.2 Interviewees

Table 5: Frequency with which individual themes were mentioned per person in first wave of qualitative interviews

Themes	references per theme per person
Gender	
there is no gender equality	0.82
poverty, low education cause inequality	0.25
tradition causes inequality	0.75
women are capable of leading	0.64
women are not interested in change	0.48
bad strategy in fight for equality	0.11
Poverty	
victims of poverty	
pensioners are hit by poverty	0.11
young people are hit by poverty	0.16
reasons for poverty	

Themes	references per theme per person
system does not care for vulnerable	0.20
poverty is due to the war	0.25
poverty is due to unemployment	0.34
forms of poverty	
there is much material poverty	0.59
there is much mental poverty	0.25
Possibility of change	
political leadership	
corruption is everywhere	0.25
the wrong people are in power	0.11
politics is all wrong	0.25
we need ~strong~ leaders	0.05
Civil society	
individuals cannot do anything alone	0.34
there is no ~civic consciousness~	0.23
change possible if we work together	0.43
individuals can help change society	0.43
change is possible	0.52
change is impossible	0.16
citizens are not interested	0.11
civil society is the people	0.25

In-depth interviews were held with 10 representatives of implementing partner organisations – of these, 9 were female, 7 lived in urban areas and 7 had participated in tertiary education; half were under 30 and none were over 50.

Of the 34 boundary partners, 20 were women, 23 were from rural areas, 14 had never begun secondary education and 14 were over 50.

So there was a wide range of respondents. The number of statements selected per respondent was fairly evenly distributed between different respondent groups, with about 8 statements being coded per boundary partner as opposed to 9 for implementing partners.

Details of the respondents and the full list of themes with example statements are given in the project-level report.

4.3.1.3 Themes

Although the themes discussed of course reflect on the themes of the interview guideline, the statements are very much the respondents' own.

Gender

The themes around gender were not easy to relate to the themes around poverty. In other words, although some of the respondents did talk about links between gender and poverty, they are broadly speaking seen as separate issues. Some respondents mentioned that poverty and poor education can be a cause of gender inequality.

The respondents had strong opinions about gender equality, with nearly all the respondents saying that there is no real gender equality. There are some strong differences between respondent groups on gender

themes, with 1.26 statements per person for persons who had entered tertiary education attributing gender inequality to tradition as opposed to 0.33 for persons with only primary education. Most bring up the issue that women are capable of taking leading roles in society; on the other hand many do not believe that women are really interested in change; this is especially true of female respondents.

Respondents tended to see women as capable of taking a leading role in society but as not very motivated to do so. Highly educated respondents are much more likely to blame “tradition” for gender inequality.

While most stress the presence of material poverty, about one respondent in four brought up the concept of “spiritual” or “intellectual” poverty, as a form of poverty, which covers not only a perceived lack of education but also depression, hopelessness and helplessness.

Possibility of change: civil society, political leadership.

Some respondents spontaneously mentioned existing political leadership when discussing the possibility of change, with most of them seeing political leadership as an obstacle to change. Males in particular very frequently mentioned the problem of corruption.

There is a radical split between implementing partners and boundary partners in terms of how optimistic they are about the possibility for individuals being able to contribute to change, with implementing partners being much more optimistic. They are also more optimistic about the possibility of change overall. Both groups believe to approximately the same extent that change is possible “if we work together”. A surprisingly small number opine that what is needed is strong political leadership.

The projects can overall not be considered to be mass movements but are relatively small groups of people centred around a handful of courageous and charismatic individuals. Paradoxically, these individuals (often educated women) believe that change is possible through the efforts of individuals.

4.3.2 Second qualitative study on project and program relevance

4.3.2.1 Background

This second additional interview module was aimed at gathering additional information on project and program relevance and effectiveness. A semi-structured interview guideline was drawn up on these themes. The themes were similar to the initial interview but focussed more on project relevance and effectiveness in the light of how the projects had functioned in the previous few months. These interviews were carried out with boundary and implementing partners in all projects at final assessment. These 37 interviews were again transcribed in a similar way to the first set of interviews.

4.3.2.2 Interviewees

In-depth interviews were held with 8 representatives of implementing partner organisations and 29 boundary partners. There were nearly equal numbers of women and men (18 and 19 respectively). 12 had primary education or less and 9 had completed only secondary education. Most (23 persons) were aged 30–50.

So there was again a wide range of respondents. The number of statements selected per respondent was fairly evenly distributed between different respondent groups, with around 5 statements per person.

4.3.2.3 Themes

A rather different set of themes emerged as in the first set of interviews. In particular respondents had a lot to say about the possibility of positive social change, not all of it encouraging. The most popular theme of all was one which was named “people don’t have the courage”, with 42 responses. This result is particularly striking as the interview guideline does not directly address this issue.

Table 6: Frequency with which individual themes were mentioned per person in second wave of qualitative interviews

Themes	references per theme per person
Project	
outcomes	
projects more visible in media	0.05
project raises consciousness	0.03
there is no change	0.32
project- good influence on commun'ty	0.57
relevance	
rural areas need more help	0.16
project relevant to gender equality	0.46
project relevant to boundary partner	0.38
project relevant to community needs	0.49
Program	
mechanisms	
more youth included = more change	0.08
NGOs need better image	0.03
NGO and GO together = change	0.19
continuous education necessary	0.35
more women included = more change	0.22
change thru civil society	
always the same activists involved	0.05
no sense of collective responsib'ty	0.14
people don't care about society	0.16
people care too much what others say	0.11
exchange of info leads to change	0.30
civil society activity v important	0.38
change only thru collective action	0.41
people don't have the courage	0.43

Some respondents attribute the lack of courage or apathy specifically to women. One of the women for example said:

It is our fault. We are to blame, all of us. We don't have the strength to fight. Those who are suppose to help us, they will not. And we don't have the power, as women, to struggle.

There is also a related, less common theme which can be labelled “people care too much what other people think”, which applies both to young people and also and specifically to women who might like to be involved in women’s NGO activities. Some statements of expressing this theme were:

If some activity is announced, even on the radio, only a very small number will attend. The other day I heard a comment: “What are you doing there? People will think you are being abused by your husband.”

These themes are perhaps linked to another strong recurrent theme, that change is only possible through collective action. Perhaps the strong group norms typical of the countries of former Yugoslavia are an explanation for all of the findings mentioned here.

In the qualitative interviews, respondents report the projects to be relevant to gender equality and poverty reduction. They were also judged to be on the whole effective in contributing to change, although a large minority took a pessimistic view that change is very difficult to bring about and that the projects were therefore not very successful.

5 Conclusions and Recommendations: Achieving Sustainable Outcomes in Civil Society Projects

The evaluation team came to the following conclusions and recommendations.

5.1 Project and Program Evaluation

5.1.1 Relevance

Conclusion	Recommendation
<i>The Sida strategy of reducing poverty and exclusion through strengthening civil society</i>	
There is a strong feeling amongst stakeholders that norms need to be changed across the whole of society in order to achieve social improvement. "People" are perceived as being timid and lethargic. They are seen as being in principle capable of initiating change but too unwilling to make a stand if that means standing out from the crowd. In stark contrast to these beliefs, it seems that civil society progress is in fact initiated a very small number of activists.	Consider communication strategies (with key stakeholders as well as with the general population) which promote the ideal and importance of courageous individuals who are prepared to make a stand and stand out from the crowd. At the same time, and especially with rural communities, projects should be aware of and respect group norms, which tend to be very strong. Consider working more with boundary partners in contexts in which they are already meeting as a group, identifying any activities which the group as a whole is motivated to undertake. These strategies of encouraging individual initiative and working with existing groups can go hand in hand.
Stakeholders do not in general consider BiH to have a strong civil society; it is seen as something that might happen someday. It is not clear that a strong civil society is a high priority for stakeholders, who are more motivated to solve specific problems.	Consider problem-based rather than vision-based programming.
<i>Implementing and boundary partners: activists</i>	
The projects are not really mass movements but are relatively small groups of people centred around a handful of courageous and charismatic individuals. Paradoxically, these individuals (often educated women) believe that change is possible through the efforts of individuals. However these activists, as they themselves belong to implementing partner organisations may not even be included in program planning. There is a radical split between implementing partners and boundary partners in terms of how optimistic they are about the possibility for individuals being able to contribute to change, with implementing partners being much more optimistic. They are also more optimistic about the possibility of change overall.	Distinguish clearly between partners who are at different levels of development towards or agreement with project visions. Develop different ways of identifying, targeting, and programming with members of these different levels. In particular, prioritise working with existing activists who are in a high level of agreement with Sida civil society goals, who are themselves key components of civil society. Ensure these activists are explicitly included in program planning (for instance, OM techniques would identify them as a special group of boundary partners with associated outcome challenges etc.). Program planning should consider their motivation and career prospects.
<i>Types of boundary partners</i>	
Boundary partner groups can be usefully divided into "less powerful", "potentially powerful" and "powerful". Influential and powerful boundary partners may find it difficult to find time to be involved. They may have strong opinions of their own which only partly overlap with those of Sida and the implementing partners. It can be difficult to approach them in the right way. Working on constructive resolution of misunderstandings or conflicts between powerful boundary partner groups is difficult but can be very productive.	Encourage implementing partners to work with boundary partners who are particularly influential; but consider special training for implementing partner groups who have chosen to work with them. Training can include conflict resolution and negotiation skills. Be wary about including boundary partners in programming solely because of their influence on project outcomes if their motivation and vision do not coincide sufficiently with those of the implementing partner.

Conclusion	Recommendation
Potentially powerful boundary partners such as young activists can benefit from civil society programming. However, their downstream influence on further partners is not secured, especially in BiH, as they need to work very hard to win the respect of senior stakeholders.	Consider targetting <i>potentially powerful</i> boundary partners such as young activists as a very effective way of making a sustainable contribution to civil society development. However it is particularly important to work also on how they will interact with other partners in the future. Programs need to be more explicit about how downstream influence is to be achieved and should work on support networks and the development of relevant skills.
<i>Are the projects relevant from a poverty perspective?</i>	
In general, projects were able to make a plausible link between their planned outcomes and poverty reduction. Three of the six projects have a direct connection to poverty reduction.	
“Poverty” is interpreted by stakeholders to mean not only material but also what they call “mental” or “spiritual” poverty. Many say that well-meant material help from international organisations has led to increased passivity.	Pay more attention to an emic understanding of poverty also as “mental poverty”; depression, hopelessness, lack of perspectives.
Projects which target <i>less powerful boundary partners</i> such as the rural poor are most likely to include change in those individuals themselves as part of their vision and outcome challenge. However these changes envisaged with and for them do not necessarily fit with their own priorities and world views.	When targetting less powerful boundary partners, make special effort to ensure that outcome challenge and progress markers envisaged for them overlap sufficiently with their own motivation and world view. This is more important than ensuring more abstract goals such as strengthening civil society per se.
<i>Are the projects relevant from a gender perspective?</i>	
There is much agreement amongst stakeholders that there is a high level of gender inequality in Bosnia and Herzegovina. But while most stakeholders believe that women are <i>capable</i> of taking a leading role in society, just as many believe that women are not really <i>interested</i> in change. They are seen as being particularly restricted by the opinions of others and therefore as particularly unwilling to stand out from the crowd. Stakeholder interviews indicate that gender equality is not perceived to be a primary need amongst far-flung rural populations. The better educated strongly believe that tradition is to blame for inequality.	Projects could focus on concrete activities which are seen to meet the immediate needs of women. As noted above, projects need to work primarily with “natural” groups of (women) boundary partners while at the same time encouraging and supporting individuals (women) who have the courage to make a stand.
The two KtK projects have a strong and obvious gender focus. The other four projects do all include or take account of gender issues but gender mainstreaming is less of a priority. Even when the non-gender-specific programs included gender aspects they sometimes found that the participants, including female participants, were not particularly open to mainstreaming. However one legal aid project (not funded by KtK) was successful in helping to women to take steps to divorce partners who were violent and alcoholic.	Consider realistic ways to improve gender mainstreaming in projects which are not specifically gender focussed.

5.1.2 Achievement and sustainability of outcomes

Conclusion	Recommendation
The clearest success of the projects is to help develop individual civil society actors, not only amongst boundary partners but also members of implementing partner organisations themselves.	Implementing partners must be themselves included (as key stakeholders with their own goals and objectives) in project planning. In the OM paradigm this can mean that they include themselves as another boundary partner group in their own planning or that their framework partner includes them in a higher-level intentional framework.
In rural communities and with less educated partners, progress may be small. This can sometimes be demoralising for the implementing partners involved. Those projects with more visible progress towards outcome challenges tend to be those which are less well connected to the poverty issue. But one can argue that change in rural communities is much harder to achieve than with, for example, young students and should therefore be seen as more valuable	Reconsider and if appropriate reaffirm the meaning and value of (possibly limited levels of) positive change amongst marginalised and excluded stakeholders.
It has not been demonstrated that civil society development has reduction of poverty as a direct outcome, however plausible this might be.	Reassess the connection between civil society programming and poverty reduction. Just because they are two desirable goals does not necessarily mean that one has to lead to the other.
The projects which could more easily demonstrate significant progress tend to target small groups of younger and better-educated boundary partners who are also either powerful or potentially powerful members of society. It is not possible to tell which of these factors (youth, education, power, smaller groups), if any, contributed to this better progress. Working with these kinds of stakeholders such as political younger activists could have a substantial influence on BiH politics in the medium term.	Programs seeking immediate and visible results should consider focussing on small and well-defined groups of younger, at least potentially powerful stakeholders with better education.
In spite of stakeholders understanding the importance of sustainability, in general it is not given the highest priority in program planning and implementation. Project strategy maps are somewhat weak in terms of providing longer-term support and in encouraging inter-sectoral, intra-sectoral and cross-entity networking between boundary partners and also between implementing partners.	Use Strategy Maps and other tools to increase practical measures to secure sustainability of outcomes.
It is not clear if a rich and stable network of civil society structures typical for Scandinavian societies is a realistic or suitable goal for foreign aid to BiH at present.	Perhaps issue-based campaigning with less importance given to formal structures is more appropriate for BiH in the twenty-first century.
Some of the more successful projects were those with the greatest number of unfulfilled strategies and progress markers. These are projects which would actually look like poor performers from a controlling point of view. Easterly points out that effective activists are not necessarily effective bureaucrats (Easterly, 2006).	Be aware that effective activists are not necessarily effective bureaucrats and keep a look-out for unplanned but meaningful project outcomes. These may be a sign of successful improvisation and/or of intuitive rather than explicit programming. Find ways to attract and retain effective activists who are put off by the formalities of project application and management procedures.
Some of the projects achieved substantial outputs or impacts not described in the outcome challenge.	Be aware of achieved outputs or impacts not described in the outcome challenge(s) and feed them back into future project design.

5.2 Caveats and Limitations

In retrospect, we did not always succeed in formulating vision, mission, outcome challenge and progress markers for the projects in full accordance with OM principles. These shortcomings are partly due to the fact that this was a collaborative process together with the implementing partners but also because our experience with the techniques grew during the evaluation.

As mentioned in section 3, we only assessed changes over about half a year of project implementation. A longer research timeframe would have given more information about project impact.

6 Recommendations for Project Planning Monitoring and Evaluation

Unlike the previous one, this chapter consists only of recommendations, not preceded in each case by corresponding conclusions. The recommendations are not based on specific data. Rather, they represent the professional opinion of the evaluators, on the basis of the experiences we went through in implementing this OM project.

6.1 Advantages of OM

Our experience in this evaluation confirms many of the claims made for OM:

- It does help partners focus on development/change of key partners; quality, not quantity.
- It fits better with what most CSOs feel they are doing: stimulating change, not delivering outputs.
- It focusses on contribution (what did they do, what worked?)
- As a monitoring and evaluation tool it does give richer feedback.
- Strategy maps do inspire thinking about different dimensions of planning¹¹
- It does help focus attention on subtle and perhaps quite small changes e.g. amongst rural populations

6.2 Adopting OM Formally

We recommend that OM could/should be adopted by donors right from the project application stage, either in its entirety or in a hybrid OM/LFA form. Otherwise, it is difficult to implement. There are certain prerequisites, as follows.

- Donors have to lower the measurement bar: from attribution (what were the impacts?) to contribution (what did they do and what effect did it have on immediate partners).
- Donors have to want to help organisations to learn, at the cost of demonstrating effectiveness.
- OM systems will work best with a focus on limited, quality information rather than trying to measure every element of a program.

¹¹ OM also includes a third tier of elements focussed around “organisational performance” which are designed to help implementing agencies to become “learning organisations”. However, this element was not implemented in the present evaluation.

- OM champions need to be identified in implementing and framework partners
- Reporting formats at the level of individual CSOs need to be kept simple. Program design and management are at least as much influenced by the application format as by the reporting format. Application, program design, monitoring/management and reporting/evaluation formats should be compatible. Introduction of OM should not be allowed to lead to a proliferation of formats and terminologies. If hybrid LFA/OM formats are introduced then the donor needs to bear the burden of developing the hybrid and keeping new terminology to a minimum.
- Frequent contact between donor, implementing partner or consultant and implementing partner is necessary.

6.3 Adopting OM Informally

Some of the “spirit” of OM can be adopted without implementing it formally. Even this “spirit” can really change the way CSOs think about how they work. It can usefully influence planning & implementation. One “Take-home-point” could be: In your planning and monitoring, agree on a limited number of boundary partner groups and try to focus on a “ladder” of changes in their behaviour/ consciousness which you would like or love to see.

Adopting OM ideas would mean adapting formats to include any of the three strands of OM:

- Outcomes orientation (vision, mission, boundary partners, outcome challenges, progress markers ...)
- Strategy maps (only briefly covered in this evaluation)
- Organisational learning (not covered in our presentation; OM has its own approach but almost any organisational learning strategy would also be OK)

6.4 General Recommendations on Project Planning and Monitoring

The following recommendations apply to civil society project planning and monitoring and are expressed within the framework of OM; however some of the points also apply regardless of the planning and monitoring format adopted.

It is important to explore how the Outcome Challenge really fits in with the motivational and conceptual structure of the boundary partners. This is more than “informing stakeholders about their rights” but involves a genuine dialogue between boundary partners and implementing partners during the planning process. Comparison of questionnaire data from boundary partners with implementing partner interviews reveals that boundary partners understand progress markers in different ways from implementing partners and see them in a different light. Detailed discussions on outcome challenges and progress markers – meaning and language – will produce results which are probably surprising to all concerned. Such discussions could provide a help in bridging world-views.

In terms of project M&E, boundary partners are more realistic about achievements and can give quite differentiated information.

Consider distinguishing between different subgroups of boundary partners in terms of how much progress they already made on the boundary partner ladder at project start, and design some activities specifically for each subgroup. Differentiate and extend the progress marker ladder for each subgroup.

OM has the weakness of not having the concept of “the charismatic leader who runs the show”. Some projects have just a very few people who are key to their success. In such cases it might be better to define these individuals as separate boundary partner groups with their own Outcome Challenge.

6.5 General Recommendations for Program Evaluation

6.5.1 How to address the need which donors have to demonstrate overall program impact? Criticism of the “monolithic model of M&E”

LFA encourages “monolithic M&E”, i.e. the subsidiarisation of evaluation data collection down to the lowest level. Donors needs for evidence of program impact at the top levels is supposed to be met by aggregating outcome and impact information collected at individual project level which is in turn largely an aggregation of low-level outputs (numbers of handbooks printed etc.) or speculative extrapolation. This approach is inadequate for a number of reasons.

- The M&E needs of projects and programs are quite different. This monolithic M&E model is a disservice to implementing partners because they are less interested in gathering information to demonstrate impact and have more need to collect timely management-relevant information.
- At the same time, donors get invalid M&E information because it is filtered up a chain of informants who have a vested interest in misrepresenting the truth.
- Evidence is passed through many hands and collected and aggregated by people who are not qualified to do so.
- Only very circumspect evidence on impact can be provided because adequate methods cannot be employed (randomised assignment to treatment and control, use of independent and external researchers, use of standardised and/or reliable and proven measures, triangulation information from stakeholders not involved in the program, representative population samples, rigorous content analysis of interviews).

We strongly recommend breaking down this monolithic approach in favour of a mix of M&E strategies:

- Local CSOs can provide a certain amount of information through simplified reporting formats (such as that included in OM) optimised for their own management purposes. They could also collaborate in providing richer information on just one or two aspects of their work which particularly challenges or interests them.
- Sida can in addition initiate studies or systems at a national and/or sectoral and/or regional level quite separate from individual projects and programs, where the reporting burden is on Sida and not on the individual CSOs. Examples:
 - Commission studies with a deeper focus on one country or sector or project (perhaps using OM techniques).
 - Commission a study in which OM techniques are compared with traditional techniques such as LFA in order to explore how reporting and M&E format affect program performance.
 - Establish a cross-national “ladder of civil society space” in collaboration with stakeholders which could be conceived as a groups of progress markers at the level of individual societies. Advantages of this kind of ladder:
 - It could be used as a reference for the planning and activities of individual programs and projects, with progress markers providing inspiration for outcome challenges at program and project level and vice versa.
 - Case studies of (successful) Sida projects could be linked to relevant sections of the ladder for a particular country to serve as an illustration for taxpayers of how individual project can contribute to overall change.
 - Research could focus on countries or sectors which had big positive or negative changes in the previous year in order to explore the reasons for the changes and the influence of civil society programming, from the point of view of stakeholders and experts.

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Annex 1 Terms of Reference

Outcome evaluation of six civil society projects in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Background

Sida's funding to civil society in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) is mainly channelled through three Swedish NGOs; Olof Palme International Center (OPC), Swedish Helsinki Committee for Human Rights (SHC) and Kvinna till Kvinna (KtK). These organisations are entitled to decide which local projects, initiatives or organisations to fund on behalf of Sida. They are responsible for project management, and do provide capacity building for some of their partners. The supported initiatives are focusing on human rights, gender equality, and citizens' participation in decision-making. In 2006, the three Sida partners disbursed approximately 2,4 Million EUR (22 MSEK) to about 30 projects.

During 2006 Sida provided training in a project planning and evaluation method called Outcome Mapping to the organisations funded by SHC, OPC and KtK in BiH. Subsequently to these trainings it was decided that an outcome focused evaluation should be carried out during 2007. The OPC, SHC and KtK project managers in BiH has chosen two projects each as case studies for the evaluation. These projects are:

1. Zenski Centar, Trebinje (funded by KtK)

During 2007 Zenski Centar is launching a lobby campaign for the inclusion of shelters for domestic violence in the Republika Srpska entity budget. Zenski Centar will organise round tables with women NGOs, women parliamentarians and representatives for Gender Centers, and tv- and poster campaigns targeting the public. The aim of the project is to "contribute to the resolution of the financing status for Safe Houses in Republic of Srpska". Most of the activities will take place in Banja Luka.

2. Most, Visegrad (funded by KtK)

Most visits villages and organises round tables in villages in Visegrad municipality with the aim of raising rural women's awareness of their rights and to encourage them to become involved in decision-making in the local communities (MZ:s) where they live.

3. Civil Society Promotion Center – GROZD, "Citizen in action" (funded by OPC)

GROZD aims at building project beneficiaries capacities in planning and running effective community advocacy, lobbying and media campaigns for solving prioritised problems as these are identified and formulated in "Civic Platform for 2006 Elections". It also seeks to encourage and support the promotion and development of new potential leaders in local self-government. In total 80 civil society organisations and citizens groups in 15 selected communities/municipalities will participate in the project.

4. Helsinki Citizens Assembly (HCA) – Academy for political leaders (funded by OPC)

HCA in Banja Luka is currently running an academy for 30 young political leaders which aims at engaging youth activists in political parties, and provide them with skills and knowledge necessary for people who are involved in politics. The academy consists of five modules: 1) media, advocacy and leadership; 2) the political system in BiH; 3) constitution law and European integration; 4) human rights in BiH and conflict resolution; 5) Youth in BiH, and regional youth cooperation. Besides these five modules the students will be involved in practical work on youth problems in BiH.

5. Vasa Prava (funded by SHC)

Vaša Prava BiH represents the largest organisation for provision of free legal aid and information and is one of the largest NGOs in the region. It has developed an effective network of legal aid in the region with approximately 80 employees in 16 offices and 60 mobile teams across BiH. Its mission is to con-

tribute to rule of law, human rights protection, and strengthening of the civil society through free legal assistance to vulnerable people. *Vaša prava BiH* also carries out public awareness activities with the aim to raise the visibility of rights and issues of vulnerable individuals and underserved communities. Professional legal staff furthermore analyses trends in the implementation of laws, to identify problems that have to be addressed by national authorities and the international community in BiH.

6. BiH Press Council

The BiH Press Council was the first self-regulatory body for print media to be established in the former Yugoslavia. As a regulator of the print media, the Press council seeks to protect the freedom of speech and media, but also to maintain standards in media and serve as a fast and reliable institution for general public to turn to if mistreated by the print media. The present structure of the press council comprises 12 members, representatives of media and public and the operational Secretariat. The Mission of the BiH Press Council is improvement of ethical and professional standards in print media, by supervising the application of the Press Code, and by education of journalists and the public about freedom of expression and the importance of responsible, professional print media reporting.

Evaluation Purpose

The purpose of this evaluation is to assess to what extent the six chosen civil society projects in BiH are contributing to outcomes in terms of changed behaviours, relationships, actions or activities among those persons, groups or organisations these projects are interacting with directly. The assessment shall provide general lessons for achieving sustainable outcomes in civil society projects.

Evaluation Questions

Every case study shall be evaluated in relation to its intervention logic. However, there are some general questions that should be posed and answered in each case. These questions can be grouped in four categories: 1) what and how, 2) relevance, 3) outcomes and, 4) sustainability, as described below:

What and how

- Which are the persons, groups or organisations which the project interacts with *directly*?
- What are the expected outcomes, in terms of changed behaviours, relationships, actions and activities, for each of these *boundary partners*?
- What project activities are meant to contribute to the expected outcomes? How?

Relevance

- Is the intervention logic (or the project theory) of the projects sound? I.e. is it realistic? Does it presuppose unrealistic societal or political preconditions that are not in place.
- Are the project activities relevant in relation to the expected outcomes?
- Are the projects relevant from a poverty perspective? ¹

Outcomes

- Are the projects contributing to changed behaviours among boundary partners? If so, how? If not, why not?

¹ While doing this assessment, it is important to recognize that poverty is a multi-dimensional phenomenon. See Perspectives on Poverty (Sida 2002). Sida's policy for civil society and Sweden's Development Cooperation Strategy with BiH 2006–2010 shall also serve as a background documents, as regards intervention logic.

- Are the projects contributing to any changed relationships? If so, how? If not, why not?
- Are the projects contributing to changes in actions and activities by the boundary partners? If so, how? If not, why not?

Sustainability

- Are changed behaviours likely to be long-lasting?
- Will changed relationships prevail?
- Are changed actions and activities temporary, or do they signify sustainable change?

Recommendations and Lessons

The main purpose of the evaluation is to provide general lessons for how to achieve sustainable outcomes in civil society projects. The evaluator may also provide general recommendations for donors and project implementers. The main purpose is not to provide lessons or recommendations for the individual projects.

Methodology

Outcome mapping shall be used as a method. This means that the general conceptual framework of outcome mapping shall be applied, and that the evaluator shall focus on assessing outcomes, in terms of changed behaviour, relationships, action and activities among those persons, groups or organisations the projects are interacting with directly (so called boundary partners).

The six projects evaluated are of rather different character. Thus, the evaluator shall first visit all projects in order to get a good understanding of the intervention logic of each project. The intervention logic should be outlined within the conceptual framework of outcome mapping; i.e. in terms of the project's *vision* and *mission*, and of *outcome challenges* for each of the *boundary partners*. The relevance of project activities should be analysed within the framework of *strategy maps*.²

The evaluator shall agree with the project leaders for each project and the evaluation reference group on which boundary partners to evaluate. For these boundary partners *progress markers* should be established, and progress in terms of changing behaviours, relationships, actions and activities should be monitored at field visits over one year. Both project leaders and boundary partners should provide their assessment as regards progress markers.

The evaluator should interview the projects leaders or the project team at each field visit. The evaluator should meet with representatives from the chosen boundary partners at least three times. Boundary partners could be interviewed both individually and in groups. Surveys could be conducted, and self evaluation tools used. The methodology for data collection should be described in the proposals.

Stakeholder Involvement

There will be an evaluation reference group, consisting of representatives from the Sarajevo offices of Sida, SHC, KtK and OPC. Other stakeholders can be invited to reference group meetings. The evaluator shall report to the reference group after each field visit. Any major changes of the evaluation plan should be agreed to by the reference group.

² Find more about outcome mapping on www.idrc.ca. The selected evaluation team shall also seek more information on outcome mapping before the evaluation starts through co-operation with Joakim Molander at Sida Sarajevo.

The evaluator shall furthermore strive for close cooperation with the projects leaders of the respective projects. The project leaders shall be involved in the elaboration of, and agree to, the vision and mission statements of the projects, and outcome challenges and progress markers for boundary partners. The boundary partners should be consulted as regards the outcome challenges and progress markers.

Tentative Work Plan and Schedule

18 February	Deadline for proposals.
22 February	Decision on consultant.
27 February	Meeting between the consultant and the reference group. Signing of agreement.
March	First field visits to all projects, aimed at outlining the intervention logic of the projects. This includes an outline of the vision, mission, outcome challenges, progress markers and strategy maps.
March	Presentation of the intervention logic of the projects to the reference group.
April	Field visits, including meetings with boundary partners.
May	Meeting with the reference group.
July–August	Field visits, including meetings with boundary partners.
September	Meeting with the reference group.
November	Field visits, including meetings with boundary partners.
1 December	Draft report. Meeting with the reference group.
15 December	Final report

It is expected that the evaluation should be conducted within 80–100 working days. The budget for the evaluation shall not exceed 35 000 EUR.

Reporting

A draft report should be provided for comments to the evaluation reference group no later than 1 December 2007. The final report should be delivered no later than 15 December 2007.

The report should be focused on general findings, lessons learned and recommendations. It should not be exceeding 150 000 characters (with spaces), or about 50 pages. It should be written in English, in Word for windows. The report will be published as a Sida Evaluation.

Evaluation Team

The evaluator should be familiar with qualitative research and evaluation methods. It is an advantage if the evaluator is familiar with outcome mapping. Interviews should be conducted in Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian, and the report written in English. Due to the sensitivity of interviews with rural women in Visegrad one of the members in the evaluation team must be female.

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