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Klas Markensten
Ana Popovicki Capin
Ian Christoplos

Review of the Regional Cooperation Council's (RCC) Project "Women entrepreneurship"

Final Report

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Authors: Klas Markensten, Ana Popovicki Capin and Ian Christoplos

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SWEDISH INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION AGENCY

Address: S-105 25 Stockholm, Sweden. Office: Valhallavägen 199, Stockholm
Telephone: +46 (0)8-698 50 00. Telefax: +46 (0)8-20 88 64
E-mail: info@sida.se. Homepage: http://www.sida.se

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
EU	European Union
GEM	Gender Equality Mechanism
GTF	Gender Task Force
LFA	Logical Framework Analysis
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
RCC	Regional Cooperation Council
RBM	Results Based Management
RS	Republika Sprska
SEE	South East Europe
SME	Small and Medium sized Enterprises
SEECEL	South East European Centre for Entrepreneurial Learning
WE	Women Entrepreneurship
WETNA	Women Entrepreneurs Training Needs Analyses
WETNAS	Women Entrepreneurs Training Needs Analyses System

Preface

This report presents the findings of the Final Evaluation of the project Women Entrepreneurship – A Job Creation Engine for SEE (South East Europe). Indevelop (www.indevelop.se) was commissioned by the Swedish International Development Co-operation Agency (Sida) to undertake the evaluation through Sida's Framework Agreement for Reviews, Evaluations and Advisory Services on Results Frameworks.

The main objective of the evaluation was to learn from the first 18 months of implementation in order to get an empirical basis for an improvement of the remaining 18 months.

The review was undertaken between November 2013 and February 2014 by an independent evaluation team consisting of Klas Markensten as Team Leader and Ana Popovicki Capin, with Ian Christoplos contributing technical support on the methodology and process.

Indevelop's Project Manager for the assignment was Jessica Rothman, who was responsible for coordination and management of the evaluation process. Ian Christoplos provided quality assurance for the reports.

Sida's strategy expert Anders Hedlund managed the evaluation from Sida in Stockholm.

Executive Summary

This is an evaluation of the regional project Women Entrepreneurship (WE) – A Job Creation Engine for South-East Europe, which is financed by Sida. The following countries are participating: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo[1], Macedonia[2], Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey. The Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) in Sarajevo is the project coordinator. The project is implemented by the South East European Centre for Entrepreneurial Learning, SEECEL, and the Gender Task Force, Regional Centre for Gender Equality, GTF.

The project objective is to promote best policy practices in women entrepreneurship in line with the Small Business Act for Europe (SBA), and capacity building of national and regional women entrepreneur's networks and associations. The main activities in the first phase of project implementation were to revise the indicators for policies on women entrepreneurs, make pilot training needs surveys for WE, map the WE situation, promote WE networks and platforms, construct WE databases, and organise regional exchange of experience.

The main purpose of the evaluation is to learn from the first 18 months of implementation in order to get an empirical basis for an improvement of the remaining 18 months. Six countries were visited for interviews. Enhancement of the utility of the evaluation has been a priority, with the evaluators participating in a semi-annual project meeting in Croatia and a conference/stakeholders meeting in Turkey.

Turkey and Croatia are the most advanced on WE issues in the region, and have been supplying models and experiences to other countries.

Conclusions

The project **is relevant** for women entrepreneurs, for the Swedish support strategy for the region, and for the EU accession processes.

The project has **reached its planned outputs**. New WE indicators have been formulated, training needs have been surveyed, mapping of the WE situation and platforms

[1]This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/99 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence

[2] The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

for dialogue have been produced for all countries. Work on databases has also been started. Communication between project actors and with stakeholders needs more attention.

The project has mainly worked on the output level, but there are some outcomes such as new WE strategies and increased awareness among stakeholders of WE issues. The probability of future outcomes hinges very much on the strength of EU influence and on the degree of national ownership.

There is a definite **need to change planning, management, monitoring and reporting** of the project. The results frameworks and the internal coordination foreseen in the project document have not been followed in practice. Transfer of funds has been extremely delayed with very negative consequences for the processes that had started in the countries.

The fact that the project has been **regional has been positive**. WE is a relatively new subject in the region, and introduction and exchange through a regional project has been suitable. With time, support to the national level should gradually receive higher priority.

The **sustainability of the WE processes and results is not discussed** in the project document. National ownership is a key issue. The work of GTF to support national processes and ownership contributes to sustainability, especially if more stakeholders are engaged. Better synergy could be created with the work SEECEL does with ministries of education on entrepreneurship. The fact that the project is regional supports sustainability. A prolongation of the project would increase sustainability.

Recommendations

1. *Recommendations to Sida*

- It is recommended that Sida continues to finance the present project, once it has made plans and results frameworks for the continuation.
- Sida is also recommended to consider a proposal for a new phase of the project after 2015. In this phase it is recommended that Sida conclude separate agreements with SEECEL and GTF.
- Sida is recommended to support the effect of the follow up of the SBA WE indicators through dialogue with the governments.
- Sida should follow up so that transfer of funds is not delayed and should ensure that the Swedish embassies are kept informed about the progress of the project.

2. *Recommendations to SEECEL*

- SEECEL should focus more towards work on the national level. SEECEL should also use its experience from working with both ministries of education and industry to increase synergy for WE in the countries (which is also planned to be done during the continuation of the project).

- SEECEL is recommended to create a broader learning community on WE issues, in collaboration with GTF, and a hub for communication on WE.

3. Recommendations to GTF

- GTF should support their national partners to involve a broader group of stakeholders in the countries for WE issues, and to conduct campaigns to make the WE issue better known by the general public.
- GTF should pursue its efforts to have one national association being responsible for pushing the WE processes in the respective countries.

4. Recommendations to RCC

- RCC should in the present phase concentrate on fulfilling its formal role concerning transfer of funds and reporting. RCC audits should be waived or at least not require heavy input.
- RCC should propose a new role for itself, focused on engaging the governments for the WE issue, during a possible new phase of the project.

1 Introduction

1.1 CONTENT OF THIS REPORT

In this introductory chapter the project is described, and a theory of change constructed by the evaluators is presented. This is followed by the purpose of the evaluation and the methods used. Then some information is given on the regional context, including the Small Business Act, and a summary of the country briefs is found in Annex 5.

In the second chapter on findings, the relevance of the project is described. Then the outputs made are presented, followed by a discussion on possible future outcomes.

The project management and monitoring has been an important issue for the project and is treated in one section. A special discussion on regional projects follows. As the project is new, there are no real findings on sustainability, and this issue is therefore discussed in one section in the concluding chapter

The report ends with conclusions and recommendations. The recommendations are made separately for the different project actors and Sida.

1.2 THE PROJECT

1.2.1 Background to the Project

Sida decided in July 2011 to support a regional project aiming at improving the conditions for women's entrepreneurship. The project has the title *Women Entrepreneurship – A Job Creation Engine for South-East Europe.*

The Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), with a secretariat in Sarajevo, is the project coordinator. RCC is an institutional continuation of the former Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe.

The project is implemented by the South East European Centre for Entrepreneurial Learning (SEECEL) and the Gender Task Force, Regional Centre for Gender Equality, GTF. SEECEL is an organisation for entrepreneurship learning for the SEE region, supported by the EU. GTF was affiliated to the Stability Pact and became an independent organisation with the formation of RCC.

The three organisations RCC, SEECEL and GTF brought different capabilities to the project. RCC has access to the political sphere. SEECEL, has been working with entrepreneurship learning in the educational systems in the SEE countries within the context of the Small Business Act for Europe. It has constructed a methodology with surveys, working group websites and pilot projects, and a methodology that is applied

also to WE. GTF has since 1999 worked on gender equality in different spheres and has good contacts in the region especially with government institutions, policy makers and women's associations working with gender equality issues.

The project was initiated by committed individuals in RCC and GTF and drew upon experience from a regional WE project in Poland and the Baltic countries. SEECEL participated actively in the drafting of the project and promoted the use of the SBA indicators that had just been identified in a meeting in Istanbul in the autumn of 2010. The European Training Foundation (ETF) also supported the process. The Swedish embassy in Sarajevo participated in the Istanbul meeting and was instrumental in advocating within Sida for support to the project.

An agreement with Sida for the project was signed in July 2011 for a three-year project of 20 MSEK starting with an inception phase September-December 2011. This phase would result in a revised long-term proposal to Sida. The inception report was not approved. In March 2012 Sida approved a rewritten inception report and a new project proposal for a three-year project.

1.2.2 Project Objectives and Theory of Change

The **project objective** is to promote best policy practices in women entrepreneurship in line with the Small Business Act for Europe (SBA), and capacity building of national and regional women entrepreneur's networks and associations. The expected results[3] are:

- Awareness raised and policy dialogue initiated/advanced on women entrepreneurship policy framework in accordance with relevant SBA principles
- Enhanced capacities of women entrepreneur's networks and associations

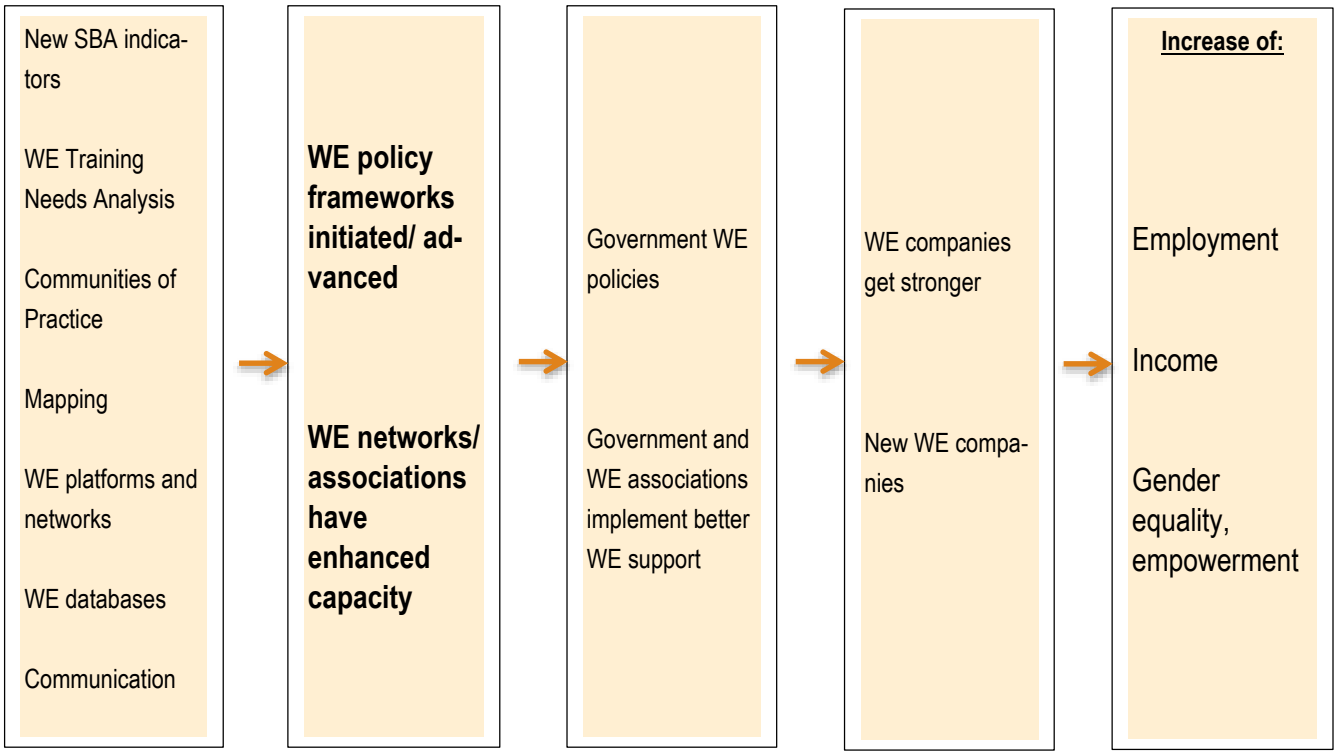
The target groups are: policymakers, women's business networks/initiatives, members of parliament, government officials, civil society, media, chambers of commerce/economy and NGOs. The final beneficiaries are women entrepreneurs in the SEE countries.

There is no explicit theory of change in the project proposal. The theory of change shown below was constructed by the evaluators, checked with the implementing organisations and included in the Inception Report. It is an attempt to depict what the evaluators understand as the intended theory of change in the project, judging from how it has been presented in the project proposal, from the project reports and from

[3] Project objective and expected results are in the project proposal called program objective and program purpose.

the interviews held in Zagreb in December 2013. The figure has been slightly revised from the Inception Report version.

Theory of Change



The project objectives in bold in the figure above are those stated in the project document. They can be considered as bridging outcomes, preceded by project outputs and followed by project outcomes.

The activities executed by the project (conferences, surveys, mapping exercises, method development, peer learning, capacity building, working groups, regional exchange etc.) would lead to outputs such as:

- Having new WE indicators included in the future format for follow up of Small Business Act indicators
- Concluding pilot Training Needs Surveys among WE in the region
- So-called Community of Practice (CoP) being active (website for SEECEL working groups)
- Mapping of the WE situation in the countries
- Establishment of WE association networks and WE platforms that can serve as a basis for dialogue with the governments in the nine countries
- Databases of women entrepreneurs established
- Communication on WE issues and project results

These outputs can serve as the basis for initiating WE policy frameworks and for a stronger capability for WE associations and networks, which are the objectives set in the project document – here treated as bridging outcomes. The associations could for example propose elements of new strategies and laws for WE.

This can lead to outcomes in the form of new government laws, strategies, action plans and concrete support schemes being formulated and implemented – not only on economic issues but also other features that are important for women entrepreneurs such as child care and labour regulations.

The project outcomes - better government policies and associations supporting WE – would lead to more and stronger WE companies with positive effects in the form of more income and increased employment - the ultimate objective of the project "Women entrepreneurship – a job creation engine for South East Europe".

1.3 THE EVALUATION – PURPOSE AND METHODS

The agreement between Sida and RCC includes that the project should be subject to an in-depth review and assessment by the end of 2013.

1.3.1 Purpose and Evaluation Questions

The main purpose of the evaluation is to learn from the first 18 months of implementation in order to get an empirical basis for an improvement of the remaining project period. The main intended users of the evaluation are RCC, SEECEL, GTF as well as Sida, the embassy in Sarajevo and other Swedish embassies in the region.

On the basis of the questions in the ToR and the theory of change above, the, evaluation questions below were formulated in the Inception Report, based on the OECD criteria with addition of a few special questions in the ToR(see Annex 3). These evaluation questions were transformed into standard protocols for four different interview groups, essentially government officials, women entrepreneur associations, Swedish embassies and project staff.

1.3.2 Methods

The issue of methods is also discussed in the Inception Report (see Annex 3). The theory of change constructed by the evaluators (see 1.2.2) was discussed at an early meeting in Zagreb with the project implementers, and then in revised form presented in the Inception Report. This theory of change has been used as a basis for the discussion in Chapter 2 of the outputs and outcomes of the project.

Data collection was made in the form of document review and interviews. The document review included project proposals and reports, EU and SEE documents, SBA documentation and follow up of indicators, Sida documents on a regional strategy and regional projects in the Western Balkans, GTF-related documents such as country WE mapping and WE platforms, SEECEL reports on WETNAS and new indicators,

country research studies related to women entrepreneurs, and documentation from meetings within the project (see Annex 5).

Most interviews were made during field visits, using the standard protocols. Because of resource limitations, six out of nine countries were visited (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Serbia and Turkey). Skype interviews were made with interlocutors in Moldova. Swedish embassy representatives in Serbia, Moldova, Turkey and Macedonia were interviewed by telephone. With limited time, normally two days per country, the selection of key informants was given special attention in the planning of the work. Priority was given to involved government officials and women´s associations. In total, structured interviews were made with 52 persons (see further interview lists in annex 4). The timing of the fieldwork, most of it in December/January, made it difficult to gather people in focus groups.

Based on the document study and the standardised interviews, a general picture is presented in this report of the answers to the evaluation questions.

As concerns quality issues, priority has been given to utility. The evaluation is essentially of a formative character. The project is in mid-term but has suffered delays, and it is also possible that a new phase will be formulated after the present project ends in 2015. Therefore there is little in the way of outcomes for women entrepreneurs to show, but there is enough information to discuss improvements of the project, which would influence maybe a four-year period.

With the aim to maximise the usefulness of the evaluation findings for the project organisations and for Sida, the evaluators have made interviews and discussed proposals for changes with the organisations and Sida at two occasions. The first was in connection with a semi-annual meeting for the project in Zagreb in December 2013, mainly focusing on roles and coordination, but where also the theory of change and other issues were discussed.

The other opportunity was in connection with a workshop on best practices and a stakeholders meeting for the project in Istanbul in February 2014. Preliminary findings from the evaluation and outstanding questions were discussed with the three project organisations and the responsible Sida officer, and informally with other participants. In connection with the Istanbul meeting, short interviews were also made with representatives from Montenegro and Macedonia, countries that had not been visited or contacted by the evaluators.

To ensure that the findings are reliable and can be aggregated to general conclusions, several measures were taken. One was to use the standard protocol for interviews. Another was data triangulation in comparing information from documents and reports with information gathered in interviews. Also, during field visits, several interlocutors within the same type of group were interviewed and information given was corroborated.

Finally, the fact that the two evaluators travelled to different countries made it possible to do a comparison of the information gathered and the conducted analysis. In fact, the conclusions from the different countries were, in spite of many differences between the countries, very similar as concerns the effects of the project.

1.4 THE SMALL BUSINESS ACT AND WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

Increased emphasis on entrepreneurship in the EU led to the enactment of the European Small Business Act (SBA) in 2008. The SBA is a continuation and further concretisation of the EU Enterprise Charter. EU member states and pre-accession countries are obliged to report about implementation of the SBA, measured by 68 indicators of which four concern women entrepreneurs. In a meeting in Istanbul in April 2010 a first generation of women entrepreneurship indicators was developed with focus on:

- Policy and data for women entrepreneurs
- Training for women entrepreneurs
- Improved access to finance for women entrepreneurs
- Networking and good practice

The first follow up of these indicators yielded the table below[4]:

Table 1.2. **Scores for Sub-dimension 1.2: Women's entrepreneurship**

	ALB	BIH	HRV	KOS	MKD	MNE	SRB	TUR
Policy support framework for promotion of women's entrepreneurship	2.50	3.00	3.00	1.50	1.50	3.00	3.00	2.50
Training for women's entrepreneurship	1.50	1.50	2.50	1.00	2.50	1.50	2.00	1.50
Financing for women's entrepreneurship	3.00	2.50	3.50	1.50	1.50	2.50	2.50	2.50
Network for women's entrepreneurs	3.00	1.00	4.00	2.50	2.50	3.00	3.00	2.50
Overall weighted average for 1.2	**2.50**	**2.00**	**3.25**	**1.75**	**2.00**	**2.50**	**2.50**	**2.25**

[4] EU, ETF, EBRTD, OECD; SME Policy Index: Western Balkans and Turkey 2012, p 69. Moldova is not included in this table. In the self-evaluation of the new indicators, Moldova had the lowest score.

The scores are measured from 1 (only ad hoc actions) to 5 (full policy framework and budget, institutions and monitoring systems in place,). The table shows that at the time of the measurement, only Croatia reached the mid-level score.

The South-East Europe 2020 Strategy for economic development was developed at the same time as the project, and was adopted in 2013. It includes women´s entrepreneurship in one out of five pillars in the strategy, mainly seen from the social perspective. The strategy process was led by RCC.

1.5 THE WE SITUATION IN THE NINE COUNTRIES

Short country briefs are presented in Annex 2 giving information on the WE situation and activities of the project.

The general picture of the WE situation is that Croatia has the highest WE score. Croatia started early with WE issues and has institutions, policy frameworks, a strong WE network, and a budget for concrete support to WE. The WE practices in Croatia are often used as a model for the other countries.

Turkey does not have the highest WE score but with its size it has well developed structures both on central and local government levels, and especially in the civil society – there are 125 WE associations in Turkey with a joint web portal. A main impediment in Turkey is traditional gender roles and lack of gender equality policies.

Albania, BiH, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia are at similar levels with problems with databases, beginning to make WE strategies, with few civil society organisations working with WE.

Kosovo has the lowest WE score. However, after this measurement was made and with support from a very active minister for industry and trade, several schemes of WE support have been started. In 2012 the business registry initiated gender-disaggregated registration, and a special Woman's Chamber of Commerce was formed in 2012. Moldova is part of the SBA process for the Eastern Partnership countries but participates also in this project. In Moldova, WE institutions, policies and schemes are lacking. The country considers that it can benefit a lot from participating in the project.

2 Findings

2.1 RELEVANCE

The situation for women entrepreneurs in the region is difficult. To quote the project proposal from April 2012:

> *"In WB and SEE in general, women face many obstacles related to traditional gender roles which affect their economic opportunities. Women in most cases have no ownership of assets, women business owners are insufficiently respected, and have a poor or no government support. All of the aforementioned are important factors that hinder the development of a more pronounced women entrepreneurship. In addition, many women are also often held back by a low confidence in their ability to succeed in business. Difficult access to information and financing, as well as pervasive cultural barriers are among the most important challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in the region."*

The evaluation questions on relevance focus on the project´s relevance for the Swedish objectives, relevance for the EU accession process and the relevance to immediate target groups for the project such as policy makers and WE associations.

In May 2013, Sida sent to the Swedish government a proposal for a 7-year strategy for the future support to the Western Balkans countries. One of the priority areas proposed was economic development. Specifically, support was proposed for better competitiveness for SMEs, for a better dialogue between the private and the public sector, and for a stronger position for women entrepreneurs. Regional and some bilateral projects were foreseen. The Swedish government has not taken a formal decision yet, but it is expected that support for women entrepreneurs will be part of the strategy. Such support is also congruent with the Swedish government´s special focus on gender equality.

As for the relevance for the EU accession process, it is evident. Based on the Small Business Act, the countries are expected to improve the situation for women entrepreneurs, and they have to report on their policies and actions. Their progress is measured by the WE indicators. This also means that SBA focal points would be expected to find the project relevant.

The WE associations and networks get immediate benefits from the support primarily from GTF, for example in becoming stronger partners in the policy dialogue on WE with the government. The project addresses the needs of women entrepreneurs to be included in policy processes, and provides gender mainstreaming into the SME policies.

In summary, the project is addressing an opportunity in the region to increase economic growth and equality. There are many barriers to WE that need to be addressed by policy changes and proactive measures. The project is embedded in the EU accession process and therefore very relevant to support this process. It is also very congruent with the (proposed) new Swedish 7-year strategy for support to the region.

2.2 EFFECTIVENESS – OUTPUTS[5]

The evaluation questions on effectiveness focus on how the project has reached its objectives and to what extent the project approach has been successful.

2.2.1 SBA Indicators for Women Entrepreneurship

The four so-called Istanbul indicators on WE were used for the first time, as pilot indicators, in the SBA assessment in 2011 (together with 64 other SBA indicators). They measure WE policy support, training, financing and networks. Croatia came out best in the assessment with an average of 3,25 out of 5 points.

During the assessment, it was found that the indicators were complex and that some indicators were underdeveloped. Through the project, SEECEL initiated an ambitious process to change the indicators, ending in a revision with more emphasis on government institutions and good practices.

The new indicators were identified and discussed in a group consisting of national experts from the nine countries, SEECEL and international experts . The group was strongly supported by the national SBA coordinators. An interactive website, called Community of Practice (CoP) was used for sharing information in the group[6].

The new indicators were tested through a self-evaluation by each country, which was crosschecked by a peer review by representatives of another country. Finally a formal decision was taken in 2013 to change the WE indicators according to the proposal, to be used in the next SBA assessment in 2015. At the same time SEECEL officially became a partner in doing future SBA assessments.

This planned output has been reached, and in the process considerable learning and knowledge sharing has taken place. In Turkey, for example, the methodology for self-

[5] The selection of outputs follows the discussion on the Theory of Change in chapter 2

[6] The term Community of Practice has been used by SEECEL to refer to both the website and the working groups. Normally this term is used for a group of people only. Here the term is used in the way SEECEL uses it.

assessment and peer review will be applied also for other purposes. The new set of indicators will, according to SEECEL, better focus on policies and institutions for support to women entrepreneurs. In this way, the project has contributed with a better content for future SBA assessments, and the project can finance the participation of SEECEL in the next assessment.

2.2.2 WE Training Needs Analysis (WETNA)

SEECEL has previously done much work on entrepreneurship learning. A methodology, based on earlier surveys made by SEECEL on entrepreneurship learning, was developed for making national training needs analyses for WE. The purpose was to determine the needs for training of women entrepreneurs. A working group was set up, and after a first meeting and utilising the CoP website, a questionnaire was produced.

The survey was made early 2013 and the result is presented in a recent publication[7]. Around 200 women entrepreneurs with at least three years of business activity in each country were supported in filling in the questionnaire. It consisted of 37 items divided into five chapters (general information, networking and business partnerships, enterprise information, access to finance and human resources and training). In the report, the survey is appropriately called a "research study". A multitude of data was collected under the different chapters. The wide scope of the study was a result of the needs identified by the SBA coordinators and the working group.

The report ends with a table on the most important areas of training that were identified, split up on micro, small and medium-sized enterprises. For example, in Albania medium-sized women-owned enterprises give priority to training in ICT, customer services and leading and motivating.

The training needs priorities can guide national actors when planning future training for WE. The next activity in the project is to form a new regional working group to formulate training modules for training of trainers, and to define criteria for good practice examples.

The survey was made using an on-line data collection tool specifically developed for the project. The argument for using this method was that everybody has to adjust to the modern IT society. However, the online method was according to the interviews problematic in most of the countries. The large number of questions, often translated

[7] SEECEL. Women Training Needs Analysis – A Systematic Approach in the Western Balkans, Turkey and Moldova, Zagreb 2014.

into the national language, and technical problems made it difficult to fill in the questionnaire, not least in the rural areas.

The difficulties with the method also left most of the ownership for conducting the survey with the executing organisation or person employed by SEECEL. The data collected were sent to the national counterparts to be further used. Some government officers said in interviews that they were interested in the result of the research, but that there was a need further on of making follow-ups nationally, and then not online but with other methods such as having physical meetings and discussions with women entrepreneurs.

2.2.3 Community of Practices (CoP)

The term CoP is mainly used by SEECEL to denote an IT tool used by working groups to exchange information and ideas. The working groups on SBA indicators and WETNA had specific project areas within CoP where a lot of useful interaction took place. All members were supposed to go into the website at least once a week. Also the WETNA piloting institutions and key experts participated. The possibility to ask a question one day and get an answer the next was much appreciated. For Moldova, as a newcomer, the CoP has been very useful. Altogether 1702 contributions related to WE have been posted on the CoP, and in total 70 stakeholders have participated.

A project area will be opened for the new working group on training modules. The CoP also has an open space for other parties not involved directly in the working groups, for example members of the SEECEL steering committee, project partners and women entrepreneurs, but this has not been used much. According to the interviews, some have needed support to use the CoP, and the CoP has been more of a sporadic source of information for a number of people. SEECEL has used its access to CoP to monitor and coordinate the project. CoP has naturally been a very cost-efficient way of sharing information.

The CoP has not functioned as a general web portal for having all project information accessible and in one place. There has not been this kind of central hub in the project, and there has not been an active information flow for example in the form of regular newsletters from the project staff.

2.2.4 Mapping

SEECEL has worked predominantly with government officials and experts, as well as with the most representative WE associations and chambers, especially when it comes to WETNA. GTF's role in the project has more been to work on WE issues with civil society organisations. In this way, their work has been complementary.

One of the first GTF activities for the project was to engage national consultants to do a wide mapping of the WE issues in the respective countries. This included mapping of different actors and stakeholders, describing the policy support for WE and the financial instruments for women entrepreneurs such as credit or guarantee schemes.

The mapping was updated for all countries at the end of 2013. A comparison with the original mapping made by the evaluator's shows above all positive changes for national WE associations and networks. They have started to cooperate more with each other than before the project, and WE Associations are more recognised as dialogue partners for the government and other stakeholders in relation to WE policies.

The mapping has not been explicitly used for monitoring of the results of the project, but it has been discussed, for example at a strategic expert project workshop in Tuhelj, Croatia in 2012: "Mapping progress in WE was agreed to be an on-going and crucial process to track changes (improvements or backlash) over the whole project duration…". See further Section 2.4.

2.2.5 Networks and Platforms

GTF's work has been very appreciated in the respective countries in engaging business associations and gender equality organisations in joint work on WE. According to the interviews made by the evaluators, the focus group discussions and the networking that GTF carried out contributed all countries to the formulation of platform documents (except in parts of Bosnia-Herzegovina). These platforms express a common ground for the participating organisations on WE issues, and are intended to serve as a basis for joint dialogue with the governments. In for example Moldova, a number of government organisations also signed the platform. The bottom-up method used by GTF ensured wide participation (and could in this sense be called a human rights based approach).

There have been major problems with transfer of funds to the implementing organisations in the project, and in 2013 the non-transfer of funds especially hit GTF during eight months. This happened when most of the platforms were written and the work of dissemination and dialogue was planned to start in the respective countries. Through the lack of funds, travel and meetings could not take place. In several cases the process stalled and local organisations became demotivated.

In spite of this, there is now much more networking than before the project. GTF had earlier good connections with some gender equality organisations. For the work with women entrepreneurs, GTF contacted also WE or business organisations. According to the country interviews this worked well, but in some countries the gender equality organisations were too new to the WE subject, and some WE organisations were small and without enough human resources.

According to the interviews with the associations, there has also been uncertainty in some cases regarding which organisation has the lead, and there has not been enough funds from the project to give a strong support to the coordinating activities of the national organisations chosen by GTF. GTF has now decided to focus more on the business organisations and to build their capacity.

Some of the WE platforms have been successful in the sense that they have been endorsed by government structures and been useful as advocacy tools. They have also functioned as information for NGOs which are not themselves directly engaged in WE. The platform in Montenegro has influenced the work with a new WE strategy.

2.2.6 WE Databases

One aspect that has been highlighted by the presence of the project is the need for correct statistics and databases on WE. In four countries there are some available statistics on WE and three countries have databases (according to the GTF mapping). In Kosovo, applauded by the project, a decision has been taken to disaggregate the business database by gender. All new applicants for business registration now have to tick a box stating the gender of the owner.

The project made special efforts to create databases for WE in the Federation in BiH and in Macedonia. After hard work by GTF, there are now databases for WE in both. A host organisation has not been found for the upkeep of the database in the Federation. The creation of the database in Macedonia showed that women entrepreneurs own 32 per cent of the number of businesses.

One problem is that an agreed definition of a woman entrepreneur does not exist. The project has used the definition 51 per cent ownership but in the region also other definitions are used (lower percentage, women managing director).

The implementing organisations consider that correct and accessible WE databases are absolutely necessary for successful action. They will propose financing for further work on this issue for the coming project period (and for a possible new period after 2015).

2.2.7 Visibility and Communication

The project plan included the intention to create a visibility for the project, with a project logo and promotion materials. Efforts have been made but not completed and both SEECEL and GTF have used their own logos. RCC has tried to coordinate this issue without success.

This is an illustration of the coordination issues that exist in the project (see further Section 2.4). Both SEECEL and GTF entered the project with a strong identity and history and have to a large extent worked separately.

It can also be debated whether a strong identity for the project as such should be a goal. SEECEL has stated that it works through government structures in the countries and prefers to have a more discreet role, with more emphasis on quality than on image promotion. GTF has worked with partners in the region since 1999 and has an established identity.

It is also (see section 3.5) possible that the project could in the future give more emphasis to the national level, and to the national organisations. In that case, the visibil-

ity of the national organisations and their possibilities to do advocacy would be more important than the identity of a regional project or regional organisations. In such a scenario, the role of the regional organisations might become more of organising exchange of knowledge between the countries. In such a case, general communication issues and resources would become more important.

For example, the present websites of SEECEL and GTF (and RCC) do not offer many documents or other material on women entrepreneurs in the region, and they do not have very visible links to each other's websites. SEECEL' s focus is predominantly on general entrepreneurship education, which shows on the website(although the two new SEECEL publications on WE indicators and training needs can now be found there). GTF records mostly past and upcoming events on its website.

According to SEECEL, time is now ripe to open up the CoP website and to utilise that more for sharing knowledge on WE. In this way, the CoP site could be transformed from being mainly a website for SEECEL small working groups to becoming a broad community of experts on WE.

But there is also a need for a broader communication, of posting more WE material from and links to interesting parts of the websites of the national organisations. For example in Croatia and Turkey, web portals for WE are now being built up, and GTF is looking at the possibilities to link these more widely. A web portal, emailing lists and newsletters are possible options.

GTF has discussed how to systematise experiences from the project also for the general public, given that their present main target groups, women´s associations, are not very numerous. Given that many women never come the capitals, meetings in country regions might also be considered.

To summarise regarding outputs: the outputs have largely been reached. There is now a new set of approved WE indicators that will be used in the SBA follow up in 2015. WETNA surveys have been made and made available in a publication. The CoP has functioned well for the two working groups.

Mapping of the WE situation has been done in all the nine countries, WE networks have been created or energised, and all countries (not the whole of BiH) have WE platforms which can be used for advocacy. Progress has been made on databases and the project has been especially active and successful on this in BiH and Macedonia. Communication and advocacy is an issue that needs more effort and deliberation.

2.3 EFFECTIVENESS - OUTCOMES

Supported by the outputs, the project aims at having enhanced capacities of WE networks and associations, and that awareness and policy dialogue on WE should be initiated/advanced (in this report these are called bridging outcomes).

This would then lead to final outcomes in the form of positive changes in government WE policies, and stronger direct support from government and WE associations to women entrepreneurs.

In general, the project has mainly been producing outputs. This is according to plan, and it is important to note that the project, after a prolonged inception period, only started in April 2012. It also suffered problems with transfer of funds (see 2.4). This caused delays in producing outputs (for example publishing of results, holding stakeholder meetings), which hindered the process towards outcomes. The national processes of forming networks and disseminate platforms which had just started were also stalled, which not only meant slowing down, but in some cases also moving backwards in the process towards outcomes.

The fact that there are changes made which are defined as outcomes in the project document does not automatically mean that these changes can be attributed to what the project has done. Women entrepreneurs is a topic that is 'in vogue' in the region, together with economic empowerment in general of women (which is a priority for example for UN Women and USAID in the region). With many actors involved and increased interest from the European Union for the subject, it becomes difficult to ascertain if an outcome can be attributed to the project or to other activities or a combination. One example is that major steps forward were recently taken by the ministry of trade and industries in Kosovo in line with the project objectives. This was probably more related to the efforts of an extremely positive and active minister than due to the project.

However, some outcomes can be largely attributed to the project. One example is that in Montenegro the government elaborates a WE strategy. The new strategy for SME in Albania now includes a section on WE, with an Action Plan soon in place, and in the new strategy for entrepreneurship in Serbia there will be a separate chapter for WE. The WE databases created in Macedonia and in the Federation in Bosnia and Herzegovina have led to the insight that there are many more women entrepreneurs than was known, which according to the interviews will influence policy.

Apart from these final outcomes, the project has not yet led to notable changes in policy or in direct support to women entrepreneurs. In fact, the women entrepreneurs themselves have not been much involved yet, apart from participating in the WETNA survey and to some extent in network meetings.

But according to the interviews there are definite changes in awareness on WE issues (a bridging outcome). For example, there is much more awareness within the governments now that there is a need for WE databases and statistics, which was not there before. And there is a perception in civil society that the formation of networks and platforms give them a much stronger role vis-à-vis government, and more possibilities to influence future policies. The dialogue would probably have been even bet-

ter if GTF in all countries had made clear which of the cooperating national organisations would be the lead organisation (and if more funds had been available for the national lead organisation).

Apart from the outcomes reached, it is important to clarify how the outputs made can lead to future outcomes. The new WE indicators indicate the sequence of steps to be taken towards higher scores, which can be an incentive to climb the ladder. It has also been suggested by SEECEL that increased SBA scores for a country could make it easier for it to access more IPA financing.

But climbing the ladder will only happen if the governments do take decisions to change. The World Bank assessments on the climate for doing business have had very strong influence on the countries surveyed. The effect of the SBA assessments (where WE is a very small part) hinges predominantly on how important EU is for the countries.

The probability of positive outcomes from the WETNA preparations for training is similarly dependent on to what extent the countries actually set aside budgets and human resources for actual training.

The WE mapping does only lead to outcomes if it is successfully used as an advocacy tool. The same is true for the WE platforms. Mobilisation of more stakeholders such as banks, universities and ministries of finance could increase governments' motivations to change WE policies. The uncertainty of reaching outcomes in the short perspective is an argument for having a prolonged project after 2015.

There is a difference in principles and working methods used by SEECEL and GTF. SEECEL uses a model from their work in the education sector where instruments are developed, piloted, reviewed and then published for the countries to continue the work. This is what SEECEL calls evidence based policymaking.

GTF is more broadly involved in national processes and is focussed on the attainment of final results on the ground. At the moment this does not make much difference as not only SEECEL but also GTF are still working on the policy level. But in the longer run there would be a difference, with GTF being more involved in achieving actual outcomes. This is not to say that SEECEL will not contribute to outcomes. But SEECEL is an organisation founded by the pre-accession countries and closely related to the government structures for accession and the SBA process. As part of this framework, it is very dependent on if its contacts within the government structures do continue the work piloted by SEECEL.

To summarise: the project is still active mainly on the output level, also because the project has only worked for a short period and suffered delays caused by late transfers of funds. Some outcomes in the form of new WE strategies or strategy elements can be noted, which can clearly be attributed to the work of the project. Awareness on

WE issues among policy makers and other relevant stakeholders has increased as a result of the project. The likelihood that outputs reached will lead to outcomes depends very much on the strength of the EU processes and of the willingness of country governments to change. As such processes take time, this suggests the importance of prolonging the project.

2.4 PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND MONITORING

The project started in July 2011 with an inception period until December 31 that year. The full project period was supposed to start January 1, 2012 but was delayed until April 2012, when a revised inception report was approved and the three-year project started.

Sida has an agreement with RCC, which has agreements with the implementing partners SEECEL and GTF. GTF and SEECEL are implementing partners that report to RCC, which in turn reports to Sida. The funds are transferred Sida to RCC, and then to SEECEL and GTF.

It was not easy for RCC to take on a coordination role for the project. Two strong implementing partners with a long history and practical experience from areas connected to WE are not easy to coordinate for an organisation like RCC, which had little experience connected to WE and of the execution of projects with sub-implementers. RCC is essentially a political organisation with comparative advantages in working with strategies for the region and similar activities.

The role of RCC in the project is described in the agreement with Sida:

> *"Although the Project implementation rests on the implementing partners, SEECEL and Gender Task Force, the RCC Secretariat will be indirectly responsible for project implementation by closely supervising, monitoring and coordinating the work of implementing partners".*

The role of the implementing partners is clear, but the role of RCC is not clear. It has also not had capacity to organise project coordination, monitoring, funding and reporting in a manner satisfactory to Sida or the implementing organisations. RCC at a high level gave strong support in formulation of the project but with changes of personnel this support decreased.

Added to the problems for RCC was the fact that SEECEL and GTF, in spite of having headquarters in the same city, have not always been fully coordinating their activities. One example is the lack of coordination for a project logo. Also, in the beginning of the project, both organisations failed to keep each other fully informed of developments in their respective parts of the project. They now send monthly reports on executed and planned activities to RCC and the other implementing organisation. In the countries in the region, there has been little contact between the respective nation-

al partners of SEECEL and GTF. Complaints have been voiced by national actors on lack of information sharing and feedback.

2.4.1 Late Transfer of Funds

A specific problem has been transfer of funds to the implementing organisations. The agreement between Sida and RCC was concluded July 13, 2011. Before the project started, there was an inception period July-December. The funds for that period did not reach the implementing organisations until October 31.

After a prolonged inception period, the full project started in April with an amendment of the Sida/RCC agreement. The first instalment for the full project period reached the implementing organisations in July 2012.

In April 2013 SEECEL and GTF had in principle spent all their funds from the first instalment from Sida. The second instalment was paid into their accounts December 10, 2013. This last delay thus meant that the implementing organisations were without funds for 8 months.

There were several explanations for the late transfer of funds. RCC was too passive or made mistakes and Sida also made mistakes. The last very long delay also had an additional explanation, a slow audit. According to the agreement with Sida, RCC should make one mid-term audit and one at the end of the project. But according to RCC's internal rules audits of the implementing organisations should be made every year.

The first such audit was started in April 2013 and ended in July. It not only took a long time (and was costly), but also engaged senior personnel in both SEECEL and GTF for many working hours. The result of the audit, to judge from the audit report, did not warrant using so much human resources. According to RCC's rules, payment of the Sida funds from RCC to the implementing organisations could not be made until the audit was ready and approved. RCC tried to push the audit company to deliver but could not request funds until there was a positive audit report at hand.

The effects of the late payments were that plans had to be changed and partners became disappointed. During 2013, some momentum in the new project was lost, and the implementing organisations ended up not making definite plans due to the perceived uncertainty of funding. In spite of the problems, the three organisations tried to do what they could to save the situation. Funds were advanced from other sources, payments were delayed to others, and the implementing organisations kept working hard with the project.

2.4.2 Results Frameworks and Monitoring

A reasonable results framework was annexed to the final project proposal, but it had little real ownership from the project partners, and it has not been guiding the project implementation, monitoring and reporting. Focus has rather been on the activity level. This has also influenced the reporting.

At the semi-annual meeting with Sida in December 2013 it was decided that a new work plan and results frameworks would be produced. This would also be necessary as there were substantial savings in the project budget due to the problems with transfer of funds. The new proposal would include new activities, and the new work plan would also be the basis for a proposal to Sida to accept a longer implementation period than the remaining 18 months of the agreement.

In the inception report for this evaluation it was indicated that a more complete theory of change with more emphasis on outcomes was needed. It was also expressed that there was a need for a more systematic monitoring system in the project, clearly linked to the new results framework and using the indicators in that framework. In its comments to the semi-annual report from December 2013, Sida proposes that for future reports it should be considered to also have a section with information about the progress in each country, possibly in the shape of a matrix with country/project components.

Actually, both SEECEL and GTF have possibilities to better use monitoring data from their existing work. SEECEL has in the work with the new indicators defined different levels of change for the four WE indicators, which will be used in the follow up of the SBA indicators. And GTF initially made a baseline mapping of the WE situation, which could also be followed up[8].

In summary, project management, coordination, monitoring and results reporting need to be improved. RCC has had a very difficult role and not enough capacity to execute it. SEECEL and GTF have managed their respective parts of the project well but could have made more efforts of coordination, especially on the national level The late transfer of funds has been a major drawback. Results frameworks and the related monitoring and reporting are weak.

[8] This was also expressed already in the first project proposal from June 2011: ”Throughout the first half of the project, national experts will gather information on the context and policy frameworks for Women Entrepreneurship in each country. This comparable data will be systematized regionally and serve as a baseline for tracking the policy shifts/improvements, etc. The remainder of the project will involve monitoring the changes in the situation.”

2.5 REGIONAL PROJECTS

In the Terms of References it is stated that the evaluation shall look at how Sida and the Sarajevo Embassy have administered the project and give advice on how to improve the way that regional projects are handled[9].

The issue of when regional projects can be effective was studied in the preparatory stage of the regional strategy for the Western Balkans now proposed by Sida[10]. In the Sida proposal for a regional strategy for the Western Balkans, it is said that regional projects are warranted when they can solve a regional problem, when the regional approach improves coordination and efficiency, when they contribute to reconciliation and integration, and when there is a cooperation partner capable of implementing a regional project.

For the WE project, the general message from the country interviews is that this regional project is helping to introduce a relatively new issue, WE, in institutional structures in countries where many basic systems are similar. As the issue is new for most of the countries, the regional production of models and exchange of information and experience is considered very useful. Latecomers can learn from early achievers. The regional format also made it easier to reach the government structures especially those for industry and trade. There is also some peer pressure evoked by the fact that the project is regional, as comparisons are made based on indicators and mapping.

However, in the end the effects for women entrepreneurs must happen within the countries themselves. There have been complaints that communication between the regional and the national levels has not been frequent enough and sometimes top-down (especially SEECEL). As the project progresses, the need would increase for stronger support to the national level and of organising truly mutual exchange (which also puts demand on the national actors to be active).

Sida's administration of the project has been handled by the Swedish embassy in Sarajevo since the start of the project in 2011, but from January 2014 it will be administered directly by Sida in Stockholm. The embassies in Kosovo and Albania came to know of the project late. The embassy in Serbia did not feel involved. Other embassies had varying experiences of involvement. The embassies in Serbia and Kosovo had critical questions on the project.

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[9] This question is interpreted as stating experiences and making recommendations for the actual project only.

[10] Joakim Anger, Indevelop,Reform cooperation in the Western Balkans - regional cooperation: experiences, constraints and opportunities, 2013

Generally, Sida officers in Swedish embassies have to concentrate on their bilateral programmes and do not have much time for regional projects. Sida is now making a review of regional projects, in connection with a reorganisation where Sida in Stockholm will normally handle all regional projects in the region. The number of projects is supposed to decrease and their size increase.

In this way, it is expected that the few and big regional projects remaining will become more interesting for the embassies, and the responsible persons at HQ can focus more on these fewer projects. With stronger regional projects, the opportunities for synergy with bilateral projects would also probably increase.

One point of view from the embassy side is that the responsible persons at HQ should travel more and learn more of the actual situation. It has also been suggested that all reporting from the regional projects should also be sent to the embassies, and that HQ should have the responsibility to ensure that this happens.

In the Terms of Reference there is a question on the coordination with similar projects. It is a fact that there are many regional meetings related in some way to WE, to which the project partners nationally and in the region are invited. Although the evaluators did not have much opportunity to discuss with donor representatives in the countries, the picture that emerges from discussions with the project, with the Swedish embassies and with some donors is that the coordination has not been a major problem. However, when the project leaves the policy level and comes more into national training activities, there will probably be a need for more close coordination with other WE training financed by other donors.

The US is a major donor in the field of economic development, and finances a regional project on WE. This seems to be more focussed on regional meetings than on long-term project development in the countries. It is not, like the present project, connected to the EU processes. UN Women is more active nowadays in the area of economic empowerment. European donors sometimes support the WE issue, but mostly with short-term projects.

To summarise: having a regional project has been positive in that it has introduced WE as a relatively new subject and organised regional exchange. The question is if the national level can get more support and a stronger role in the future, with the role of the regional level becoming more backstopping and giving technical support and sharing information.

The fact that gender equality will be a major priority for the Swedish support to the region, as well as economic development (probably), is a justification for the Swedish embassies being well informed about the continuation of the project. The coordination with other donor-financed WE projects does not seem to be a major issue.

3 Conclusions

3.1 RELEVANCE

The project addresses a weakness in the whole region – that women´s capability as entrepreneurs is under-utilised. The project is embedded in the EU accession process, and falls within the priorities in the (proposed) 7-year strategy for Swedish support to the region.

The project targets the two main needs of women entrepreneurs – to be included in policy processes, and to have stronger WE associations advocating their cause. The project is also relevant in that it supports gender mainstreaming into policies for small and medium enterprises and contributes with WE perspectives in gender policies.

3.2 OUTPUTS

The implementing organisations, SEECEL and GTF, have according to the country interviews done a very good job. Their areas of action complement each other and can create a synergy. There has not been much connection between the work of SEECEL with the ministries of education and this project, partly because the ministries of education were not included as main stakeholders in the project.

The planned outputs for the first period of the project have been reached. A new set of WE indicators has been formulated, to be used in the SBA follow up in 2015. Surveys of the WE training needs have been made in each country. The CoP method has been functioning for two working groups.

Mapping of the WE situation has been made in all countries, WE networks have been initiated and WE platforms have been produced. Work on databases has started. Communication needs more attention.

3.3 OUTCOMES

The project is still active mainly on the output level, as the project has only worked for a short period and suffered delays caused by late transfers of funds. Some outcomes attributable to the project can be noted, for example a new WE strategy in Montenegro, and in Albania there is now a section for WE in the new SME strategy and draft action plan. Awareness on WE issues has increased among decision makers and other relevant stakeholders. There are also a number of positive processes ongoing with support from the project that can lead to outcomes later. The women en-

trepreneurs themselves have not yet been directly targeted although some have participated for example in GTF events.

It is difficult to say anything firm on future outcomes in the form of policy changes or more support being given to women entrepreneurs. The new indicators will be followed up in 2015, but it is unclear what the effect these indicators will have. Much depends on the effect the EU pre-accession reports will have on decision makers.

Also, there is a question if the WETNA analyses will be followed up nationally, and if the future training modules and material will be used efficiently. The mapping of WE situations is followed up, but with what effects? And will the new databases be used?

The WE platforms and the strengthened networks are on-going processes, and if this work continues in the countries, this will probably further the WE cause. It is especially important to strengthen the WE associations in countries where these are weak. Increased efforts on communication and regional exchange would hopefully increase the probability of positive outcomes in the countries. The visibility of the regional project (with logo etc.) is less important than visibility for the WE cause, and for the responsible national associations and organisations.

3.4 PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING

There is a definite need to change the way planning, management, follow up and reporting is organised in the project. There is a lack of an explicit theory of change and a results framework with indicators that is used for monitoring and reporting. Transfer of funds has been a major problem, which has to be addressed with urgency. Coordination can be improved both in the project as a whole, and between the implementing partners.

The project design included attention to the issues of management, definition of roles and coordination, and there was originally a reasonable results framework. But in the implementation these intentions were not followed enough.

The choice of national partners for GTF has in a few countries created some uncertainty. The national WE processes could be conducted more efficiently in the countries in coordination between GTF and SEECEL. Information sharing has not been given enough attention.

3.5 REGIONAL PROJECT

Having a regional project has been positive in that it has introduced WE as a relatively new subject and organised regional exchange. The question is if the national level can get more support and a stronger role in the future, with the role of the regional

level becoming more of backstopping and giving technical support and sharing information.

The fact that gender equality will be a major priority for the Swedish support to the region, as well as economic development (probably), suggests the importance of the Swedish embassies being informed continuously about the progress of the project.

3.6 THE ROAD TOWARDS SUSTAINABILITY

The project document does not discuss sustainability, and there is naturally not any firm information yet on the sustainability of WE processes. Here we discuss what might be needed to move towards sustainability.

The work by SEECEL before the project on entrepreneurship learning has been going on for several years, and in some countries this is continued in national processes with good ownership. There is of course a strong connection between training in entrepreneurship in general and training for WE, and both are part of the SBA process. This connection has not been fully emphasised in the WE project but it will be exploited further, which could support sustainability.

The WE training model to be used by SEECEL is to define good practices, produce training modules for training of trainers, and some training material. This is then expected to be applied by national institutions. The main challenge is to capacitate the WE associations and government institutions to be able to do training for and give support to women entrepreneurs over the longer term. This is also an argument for a continuation of the project after 2015.

The work with the new WE indicators in the SBA process is aimed to give better measurements of progress on WE in the countries. With this as a basis, the operative instrument is the repeated measurements included in the EU accession process. If the government structures do change policies and actions as a result of wanting to increase their score on the WE indicators, this can become a sustainable change. But there is a risk that the EU accession process does not give enough motivation to accomplish the changes that give higher country scores on WE indicators. . To accomplish a sustainable change, it is probably necessary to engender other pressures and incentives than just the indicator scores.

The platform process pushed by GTF contributes to this. But the constituency for WE issues could have been broader, for example by including national statistics organisations, gender equality institutions, the banking sector and universities. The members of parliament are an important target group, which is included in the original project plans. Much depends on the outreach of the national partners of GTF. GTF is challenging them to work more collaboratively with governments, the private sector and other NGOs.

It could be discussed also to target more the ministries of finance to convince them that using budget funds to further WE is a profitable option A complementary type of action to contribute to sustainability could be to create more visibility for the WE question in media, schools and with the general public. A broad national awareness and ownership of the WE issues is a main driver towards sustainability.

The fact that the project is regional supports sustainability, as a regional project can survive temporary setbacks in the countries, for example when governments change – an important factor as the political situation in most of the countries is not stable.

There has been one missed opportunity for securing sustainability, namely inclusion of WE in the SEE 2020 strategy process. WE is mentioned in the 2020 strategy, but only in one out of five pillars. It is also mainly treated as a social rather than an economic issue.

To conclude: the question of sustainability is primarily a question of national ownership. Good ownership for SEECEL by government representatives could contribute. The combination of the activities of SEECEL and GTF gives more push for sustainability than if they had worked separately. The regional character of the project also helps. Engaging more stakeholders could give better prospects of long-term survival. Sustainability could be emphasised more in project planning than now, and a prolongation of the project after 2015 would be a support on the road towards sustainability.

4 Recommendations

Recommendations to Sida

- It is recommended that Sida **continue to finance the present** project if the project makes plans acceptable to Sida. An important next step is the redrafting by the project of the proposed work plan for the remaining project period (probably 2 years) and a results framework with indicators that will be the basis for future reporting. The work plan should preferably include country-specific plans and indicators made in consultation with national partners. Sida is recommended to communicate to the partners its conclusions from this evaluation so that this could influence their work with work plans and budgets.

- It is recommended that Sida **entertain a proposal for a new phase** of the project after 2015. This new phase should be more focused on direct support to women entrepreneurs and their associations. A new project proposal should include a plan for sustainability, and national partners should be involved in forming the proposal. If a new project proposal is elaborated before the ministerial conference planned at the end of the present phase, it could be endorsed there.

- For a possible new project phase after 2015, **Sida is recommended to conclude separate agreements** with the two implementing organisations and at the same time incentivise RCC to become a stronger proponent for WE within the regional mechanisms. To ensure coordination, SEECEL and GTF should sign a memorandum of understanding on coordination, which would describe how coordination would be done in the form of reporting, annual meetings, budgeting, country level coordination etc. Having separate agreements would facilitate an exit for Sida, as the two implementing organisations would not have to split up a monolithic project organisation. An alternative could be for Sida to conclude an agreement with one of the organisations SEECEL or GTF, which would then have a sub-agreement with the other organisation.

- The follow up of the SBA WE indicators is an incentive for the governments to change. Sida should in the **dialogue** with the governments emphasise the importance of higher scores on WE indicators.

- Sida should follow up that **transfer of funds** to the implementing organisations is not delayed.

- Sida should ensure that the **Swedish embassies** in the nine countries are well informed about the progress of the project.

Recommendations to Seecel

- SEECEL should gradually **focus more on the national level** and national actors, working with the institutional framework for WE. SEECEL should with time focus more on backstopping and organising exchange of experiences.

- The deep knowledge that SEECEL has on entrepreneurship learning in the education system should be tapped in a better way. This is also planned by SEECEL. **SEECEL should promote more synergy for WE** between the ministries of education, the ministries of industry and the civil society in the countries.

- SEECEL should initiate the creation of a **broader WE regional learning community**, and should organise – in consultation with GTF - exchange of best practices in support of the national processes. A **resource centre** should be built which is also connected to the national WE portals in the region and to EU knowledge resources on WE. Web-based tools such as email lists and newsletters should be used. Universities should be spurred to participate in the WE processes.

Recommendations to GTF

- GTF should, in collaboration with SEECEL, stimulate national counterparts to **involve a broader group of stakeholders** in the countries for the advancement of the WE issue. The women entrepreneurs themselves should be encouraged to participate more. Gender equality mechanisms could be more involved. The business sector (including banks) should be asked to participate more actively, also to give emphasis to the fact that WE is an economic issue more than just a social issue. Ministries of finance should be drawn into the process to caption that increased women's entrepreneurship can give economic gains and is worth investment of budgetary resources. Statistics offices could support creation of WE databases.

- GTF should choose **one national association to be responsible** for pushing the WE process in the countries. It could be a specific WE association, a chamber of commerce or a gender equality organisation, depending on their relative strengths. GTF should use its experience (and experience from the other countries) to guide and capacitate this organisation to advocate WE issues, and the organisation should also receive some financial support to sustain the national processes. These lead organisations could be used by the GTF (and SEECEL) as advisors for example when making project proposals and long-term plans.

- GTF should support SEECEL in the work with an information hub for WE. GTF should initiate and support campaigns to **make the WE issue better known by the general public** in the countries.

Recommendations to RCC

- In the present phase, **RCC should concentrate on fulfilling its formal role**. This includes to ask for Sida funds in time and to transfer funds received promptly to SEECEL and GTF. Formats for reports to Sida should be clear and agreed so that SEECEL and GTF can fill in their indicators and results easily. Time limits should be respected.

- **RCC audits should be waived or at least not require heavy input** of human resources by SEECEL and GTF.

- **RCC should propose a new role for itself** during a possible new phase of the project. This role should have focus on **engaging the governments** in the region more in the WE issue(perhaps, as has been informally suggested by the RCC coordinator, RCC could initiate a platform or forum to bring together regional stakeholders and governments on the matter of women entrepreneurship).

Annex 1 – Terms of Reference

Terms of reference – review of RCC Women Entrepreneurship

1. Background

Sida decided in July 2011 to support a regional project aiming at improving the conditions for women's entrepreneurship. The project has the title *Women Entrepreneurship – A Job Creation Engine for South-East Europe*. The following countries are participating: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia, Turkey

The Regional Cooperation Council in Sarajevo is the project coordinator. The project is implemented by South East European Centre for Entrepreneurial Learning, *SEECEL*, and Gender Task Force, Regional Centre for Gender Equality, *GTF*.

The Goal is that women entrepreneurship in SEE is promoted through combined public and private sector efforts. The Project Objective is to promote best policy practices in women entrepreneurship in line with the Small Business Act for Europe (SBA) and capacity building of national and regional women entrepreneur's networks & associations.

Project Purpose:

- Policy support frameworks for women entrepreneurship initiated/advanced in beneficiary countries based on best practices
- Women entrepreneur's networks/associations in beneficiary countries are able to support women entrepreneurs and better represent their interests.

The Expected results were formulated in this way:

- Awareness raised and policy dialogue initiated/advanced on women entrepreneurship policy framework in accordance with relevant SBA principles.
- Enhanced capacities of women entrepreneur's' networks & associations

Target groups: Policymakers, Women Business Networks/Initiatives, Members of Parliament, Government Officials, Civil Society, media, chambers of commerce/economy, NGOs. The Final beneficiaries are Women Entrepreneurs in the SEE countries.

The project has a budget of 20 MSEK. The inception phase started in September 2011 and was finalized in December 2012. The inception report contained country mapping and assessment of the implementing parties. Discussions with Sida led to some modifications. In March 2012, Sida approved the Inception report, work plan and the adjusted project document. Sida and RCC signed an Amendment to the Specific Agreement. Activities on the project started in April 2012. The 1st semi-annual meeting took place in October 2012. The 2nd semi-annual meeting was scheduled for April 2013, but postponed until September 2013. The 3rd semi-annual is planned to take place in Zagreb on 12 December. The project is planned to continue until April 2015.

Sida's administration of the project has been handled by Sweden's Embassy in Sarajevo since the start of the project in 2011, but from January 2014 it will be administered directly by Sida HQ in Stockholm.

2. Objectives /Purpose of the review
The agreement between Sida and RCC (§7) says that the project shall be subject to an in-depth review and assessment by the end of 2013, which shall summarize obtained and expected results in relation to the project document dated 2012 for the Women Entrepreneurship, as well as in relation to the Inception Report, and contain an analysis of any deviation therefrom.

The main purpose is to learn from the first 18 months of implementation in order to get an empirical basis for an improvement of the remaining 18 months.

3. Scope of work
Sida has asked Indevelop to do the evaluation in accordance with the Framework Agreement between the two parties. The task should be comprised of preparatory work (document reviewing) and field work (interviewing and/or focus groups consisted of relevant stakeholders).

The following should be assessed:

- the relevance, effectiveness and sustainability of the project approach, project planning and working methods,
- the selection of partners in the participating countries, the capacity of the partners, and the relevance/effectiveness/sustainability of their work to achieve the project objectives,
- the coordination with similar bilateral projects,
- the outputs so far,
- the progress against the objectives and the likelihood that the objectives will be reached.

In addition, Indevelop should also look at:

- how RCC has administered the project, at the coordination with the implementing partners SEECEL and GTF, and suggest how it can be improved.
- how Sida and the Sarajevo Embassy have administered the project and give advice on how to improve the way that regional projects are handled.

It is suggested that the focus of the evaluation should be on Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Moldova, Serbia and Turkey.

The consultant shall make an inception report after reviewing the written documents and the first round of interviews. The inception report shall be sent to Sida for approval. It shall include

- an overview of the findings of the document review
- identification of key informants,
- identification of monitoring data,
- proposal of useful evaluation questions,
- final proposal on methodology and workplan, including a search for methods that could help to get empirical evidence,
- proposal on how to best use the allocated days, including the option that not all days are used,
- proposal on which countries should be visited and when alternative methods could be used to get the information (desk research and Skype interviews).

4. Reporting, documentation and time schedule

The consultant shall:

- Study the written documentation provided by Sida, the Sarajevo Embassy and RCC. The next semi-annual report will be released on **5 December** and is expected to include an overview of the first 18 months of the project.
- Organize a briefing meeting with Sida and the Sarajevo Embassy, face-to-face or via video- conference call.
- Participate as an observer at the semi-annual meeting of Sida, RCC, SEECEL and GTF, which is planned to take place in Zagreb on **12 December 2013**. Perform a first round of interviews with key persons before/after the semi-annual meeting.
- Submit an Inception report for Sida's approval by **17 December** with the content described above.
- Perform interviews during January and February 2014.
- Organize a briefing meeting with Sida, RCC and the Sarajevo Embassy on **3 February** with a focus on preliminary findings that could be essential for project planning.
- Submit a draft review report (in hard and electronic copy) containing clear and specific advice/recommendations addressed to RCC and to Sida: **27 February**. Written feedback/comments from Sida, the Embassy in Sarajevo and RCC on the Draft Report**: 7 March 2014**
- Submission of the Final Report electronically in PDF: **18 March 2014**
- Send an original invoice with the hard copy.
- Be available to present the report at the first semi-annual project meeting of 2014 or at another time decided jointly by Sida and RCC.

All work including payment of invoice shall be finalized before 1 June 2014.

5. Team Qualification and Estimated Time of Consultancies

It has been estimated that the time needed for the evaluation/review amounts to 25 days by an international consultant and 25 days by a local consultant. Sida approves a six-day working week for the field work.

The consultants should be familiar with the challenges of women entrepreneurship, with the countries of South-East Europe and with the work of EU in the region, including the EU Small Business Act. Preferably the two consultants will combine management expertise (for reviewing implementation processes and technical expertise (reviewing the design and the results of the project).

Annex 2 - Country Briefs[11]

The following indicators of women's entrepreneurship are referred to in the country briefs that follow:[12]

Table 1.2. **Scores for Sub-dimension 1.2: Women's entrepreneurship**

	ALB	BIH	HRV	KOS	MKD	MNE	SRB	TUR
Policy support framework for promotion of women's entrepreneurship	2.50	3.00	3.00	1.50	1.50	3.00	3.00	2.50
Training for women's entrepreneurship	1.50	1.50	2.50	1.00	2.50	1.50	2.00	1.50
Financing for women's entrepreneurship	3.00	2.50	3.50	1.50	1.50	2.50	2.50	2.50
Network for women's entrepreneurs	3.00	1.00	4.00	2.50	2.50	3.00	3.00	2.50
Overall weighted average for 1.2	**2.50**	**2.00**	**3.25**	**1.75**	**2.00**	**2.50**	**2.50**	**2.25**

1 Albania

In the evaluation of progress on the SBA WE indicators, Albania got a score of 2,5 for women´s entrepreneurship - with higher scores for financing and WE networks and lower for training.

The National Strategy for Development and Integration 2013-20 includes gender empowerment, and one aim is that the share of SMEs run by women shall increase from 26% in 2011 to 40% in 2020. An action plan 2014-16 is now being worked out within the newly formed government.

Data on WE is a problem. There are also as yet few practical programmes in place for government support to WE. The agency for gender equality is weak. There is no national network for WE associations.

[11] Documents used for Country Briefs: GTF Mapping reports; EU, ETF, EBRD, OECD: SME Policy Index,Western Balkans and Turkey 2012; SEECEL, Women Entrepreneurship Indicators, Developing 2nd Generation, 2013; SEECEL, Women Entrepreneurs' Training Needs Analyses, The Systematic Approach in the Western Balkans, Turkey and Moldova, 2013.

[12] EU, ETF, EBRD, OECD:SME Policy Index, Western Balkans and Turkey 2012

SEECEL has in Albania gone through its programme for changed indicators, self-evaluation and WETNAS survey. One strong membership-based organisation for WE, SHGPAZ, has been helpful both for SEECEL and GTF.

GTF started the work on a platform but for reasons of lack of funds the work stalled. It has been revitalized, and now there is a draft platform that will probably be endorsed in the spring 2014. The government has a positive attitude to the platform.

2 Bosnia and Herzegovina

In the evaluation of progress on the SBA WE indicators, BiH got a score of 2,0 for women´s entrepreneurship– with higher scores for policy support framework and low for WE networks and training.

BiH has an institutional infrastructure established related to gender equality (there are gender equality mechanisms at all levels, local, cantonal, entity and state) and to entrepreneurship and SME. There is a Gender Action Plan for period 2013- 2017 for BIH (state level). In Republika Serbska (RS), a Law on Development of SME 2013 has a chapter about WE. In RS, there is a guarantee fund for WE, and in the Federation of BIH there is a grant fund for WE.

In BiH there are NGOs dealing with WE, but there is no strong WE Association. A donor driven initiative (USAID) resulted in the establishment of a new WE Network "ONE".

One of the challenges is the fact that in BiH there is no centralised and systematic database for WE for whole country. However, at entities levels, Chambers of commerce have some data about WE, but the procedure for registration of businesses in Chambers of Commerce is on voluntarily basis. In RS, some data related to WE exist.

Within the project, and with negative experience from getting data from government institutions, GTF made a detailed database of WE for the Federation through a private company. The database can be used for decision makers to create policies that will support WE. But it has not been decided which institution should keep and update the database, and there is still no proper database for RS.

BiH has specific structure, and selection of governmental partners in BiH is always difficult. The present selection of a representative for SBA indicators only from one entity (RS) can be a problem, since the legal frameworks is different in the entities. Lack of project funds directly affected development of a WE platform in BiH, so a platform has as yet only been signed in one entity, the Federation of BiH.

3 Croatia

Croatia has by far the highest SBA score of for women´s entrepreneurship (3,25). Two main factors give that result: a policy support framework for promotion of WE

(3.0) and the existence of good WE networks (4.0). Croatia is the only project country that is a member of the EU.

Croatia has a policy framework specifically addressing WE, which is now being updated for the period 2014 - 2020. Croatia also adopted in 2013 a new Strategy for Development of SME, with WE as integral part.

Croatia has institutions dealing with both gender equality and SME and entrepreneurship. Fiscal, economic, social, educational, training and employment policies in Croatia are gender sensitive. The Ministry of Entrepreneurship and its predecessors have been very active in promoting WE through various EU funded projects and programs. There is no any special government body dealing with WE. There are some concrete and specific instruments for financial support tor women entrepreneurs.

Croatia has a strong association of business Women "KRUG" which coordinates efforts to further WEs. They cooperate closely with all relevant governmental institutions. KRUG has made a database on WE, which is very useful as the Croatia Statistic Office has limited statistic data on WE.

Within the project, KRUG has been supported to establish 12 sub-offices and also to make links with EU programs for supporting WE (EU mentorship network and EU network of ambassadors).

Croatia with its strong and powerful WE Association and well developed policy framework and institutions is very good role model for the other project countries to gain practical knowledge about possible steps and threats in advancing WE.

4 Kosovo

Kosovo has the lowest score for women's entrepreneurship in the region at 1,75 (not including Moldova). However, after that measurement was made in 2011, the Kosovo government, and especially the Ministry for Trade and Industry, became very active (partly because the minister was very dedicated). A number of small schemes and budget allocations are now in place to support WE. A special Women's Chamber of Commerce was formed in 2012. A landmark was when in 2012 the business registry started to make the registry gender disaggregated.

The gender equality function in the Government is relatively well endowed and a gender equality strategy has been in place since 2007. There is no national network for WE. The strongest WE organisation is SHE-ERA with 280 member associations.

The WETNAS survey through SEECEL was organised with the help of SHE-ERA. The CoP has worked well in Kosovo. The ministry for education is active in further piloting entrepreneurship training based on SEECEL pilots.

GTF chose as their partner in the project - apart from SHE-ERA - a smaller organisation, which they had relations to before. Criticism has been waged that this organisation had difficulties in organising a greater network. A platform has been issued and agreed between the participating organisations. However, partly for lack of funds, the implementation of the platform was stalled for a long time.

5 Macedonia

The SBA indicators for Macedonia are relatively low (mean value 2,00), especially as concerns policy framework and financing. Macedonia does not have a formal strategy for WE. Economic empowerment of women is included in the strategy for gender equality 2013-20 and the action plan for gender equality 2013-16.

There is no formal institutional framework for WE and few WE get support from the government in the form of training or credits. Macedonia did a Training Needs Analysis for WE in 2013.

The work initiated by the project on a platform became very successful. The platform was agreed upon together with a code of ethics. The number of organisations participating in the platform has increased from 18 to 35.

The work with the platform led also to the identification of a need to have data on WE, which was lacking before. With active support from the project there is now an institutionalised collection and presentation of data for WE. The first batch of WE data showed surprisingly that there were many more WE than was predicted, which would influence policy from focusing on start-up of new business ventures towards more support to existing women entrepreneurs.

6 Moldova

WE is a new topic in Moldova and most initiatives related to WE are ad hoc and donor driven. There are no WE related policies. The Ministry of Economy developed a Law on Entrepreneurship and a Strategy of Small and Medium Enterprises for the period 2012- 2020, which has some gender indicators but no WE indicators.

There are no institutions in Moldova dealing specifically with WE. According to the Gender Equality Law there are gender focal points in each Ministry, but their power and influence is limited. There are no specific financial support instruments for WE nor are there fiscal regulations promoting WE in Moldova. There is also no systematic database about WE.

There are some NGOs dealing with WE but there is no national network of women entrepreneurs in Moldova. An association of Moldovan women in business has recently been created. The selection of partners by GTF was not easy in Moldova. Some of the potential partners had long experience with gender equality but not in WE or policy dialogue. GTF had to change from a partner that organised focus group discussions and instead select the strong NGO network IKAW to implement the plat-

form. In Moldova there was a good coordination between SEECEL and GTF. This was not a result of the project setup but rather a consequence of existing informal relations. For Moldova, the main challenges related to WE policies development are a strong patriarchal heritage and political instability with frequent turnover of decision makers.

7 Montenegro

In Montenegro, only 10 per cent of the businesses are owned by women. Montenegro has a medium score for women´s entrepreneurship in the SBA indicators (2,50). It scores high on the variable Policy support.

Women´s entrepreneurship was incorporated in the SME strategy 2011-15. Montenegro has also during 2013 (supported by the project) prepared a special strategy for development of WE. Montenegro has adopted an Action Plan for gender equality 2013-17, which includes a separate pillar related to WE.

This action plan includes a budgetary allocation for WE. The Investment and Development Fund of Montenegro has a special credit line for WE. However, collateral is still needed to get credits, and only 6 per cent of women own real estate. There are no comprehensive data on WE, but it would be possible to collect such data.

There are several associations working with WE issues. The most important is the Montenegrin Employers Federation, which has a special section for women entrepreneurs. It is still a very new organisation but it recently made a major study on the environment for women entrepreneurship.

The WETNA Survey gave the authorities a good basis for policy and action. The new SBA WE indicators are considered to give a better picture of changes than the old indicators. The work on a platform led to an agreement on the platform and on a code of conduct. The platform created the initiative for the government WE strategy to be prepared in 2014 with coaching from GTF and Croatian experts.

8 Serbia

The WE SBA index for Serbia is 2.5. Policies related to WE and WE networks have a higher score (3.0). The legal and institutional framework for gender equality in Serbia is well developed, but it is not directly targeting WE issues. The main national gender equality related documents have some chapters dedicated to WE. In the National Strategy for Improvement of the Position of Women and Promoting Gender Equality 2010-2015 and a following Action Plan for its implementation, one of the main 6 pillars is related to economic empowerment of women. The National Employment Strategy also has chapter related to WE.

A new Strategy for Entrepreneurship and Competitiveness Development 2014 – 2020 will have as one of its main 6 pillars the empowerment of WE and youth entrepre-

neurs. This Strategy will be a continuation of the previous Government's efforts related to promotion of entrepreneurship.

The available statistics include valuable data related to WE but there is still no systematic database of WE in Serbia. WETNA research showed that only 25% of WE in Serbia had some education about how to start up a business. A few financial instruments to support WE exist, such as a guarantee fund for women in the province of Vojvodina, which gives loans to women entrepreneurs.

One of the main advocacy actors in Serbia is the Association of Business Women of Serbia, bringing together women entrepreneurs and women who want to start their own businesses. This was one of the project partners of GTF. Selection of partners in Serbia has been difficult for GTF, which has had four partners in the project. However, GTF will now focus on cooperation with the Association of Business Women.

9.Turkey

In the evaluation of progress on the SBA WE indicators, Turkey had a mean score of 2,25 – with higher scores for policy support framework (2.5), financing for WE (2.5) and WE networks (2.5) while training for WE got only 1.5.

In Turkey the WE topic is well known, and there is an institutional framework dealing with WE established at national and local levels, including the government body KOSGEB . Also, strategic and policy documents related to WE are in place, e.g. the Turkey Entrepreneurship Strategy and Action Plan 2014- 2016.

KOSGEB coordinates all activities related to WE in Turkey, and the selection of KOSGEB as one of the project partners ensured significant project results and visibility of WE topics among decision makers. In contrast, the gender equality legal and institutional framework remains weak in Turkey. In line with traditional gender roles, WE is still often considered more as a social rather than an economic category. A number of business or entrepreneurs associations have WE sections, and there are 125 WE Associations in Turkey. One of the major NGO's active in the field of WE, KAGIDER Women Entrepreneurs Association of Turkey, is a project partner.

In Turkey, there has been a synergy between the project partners and other stakeholders dealing with WE. Project partners from government, business and the civil society have used the presence of the project to synchronise their efforts and increase their capacities and the visibility of WE as topic. The project also helped KOSGEB to establish a list of all relevant WE experts/resources in Turkey.

KAGIDER has initiated a new WE Internet portal, which is common for all the 125 WE Associations and their members and covers the whole country. It has chapters about legislation, strategic frameworks and all other relevant information related to WE. KAGIDER also developed a mentorship program for WE, based on the results of the mapping process.

Annex 3 – Inception Report

2013-12-16

Executive Summary

Sida supports a regional project aiming at improving the conditions for women's entrepreneurship called *Women Entrepreneurship – A Job Creation Engine for South-East Europe*. The following countries are participating: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo[13], FYR Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey. The Regional Cooperation Council in Sarajevo is the project coordinator. The project is implemented by the South East European Centre for Entrepreneurial Learning, *SEECEL*, and the Gender Task Force, Regional Centre for Gender Equality, *GTF*.

The project objective is to promote best policy practices in women entrepreneurship in line with the Small Business Act for Europe (SBA), and capacity building of national and regional women entrepreneur's networks and associations.

The main purpose of the evaluation is to learn from the first 18 months of implementation in order to get an empirical basis for an improvement of the remaining 18 months.

The evaluators have done preliminary desk research and participated in a semi-annual meeting for the project in Zagreb December 12, 2013. At that time interviews were also held with the project organisations.

In this inception report the theory of change of the project is analysed. It is noted that the results framework will be revised within the evaluation period and be used for more systematic reporting. The results of the initial desk review are summarized and the availability of monitoring data from the project is discussed. Evaluation questions

[13] This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/99 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

are formulated based on the questions put in the Terms of References and following the DAC format.

A work plan for the continued work and a list of key informants is presented. Field work will be done in Serbia, Turkey, Bosnia-Hercegovina, Albania and Kosovo. Information will also be solicited from stakeholders in Moldova without travel to Moldova. The team leader will participate in a stakeholder´s meeting in Turkey and then also brief Sida and the project organisations on the progress of the evaluation. A draft evaluation report will be presented February 27, 2013

1. Background

1.1 The project

Sida decided in July 2011 to support a regional project aiming at improving the conditions for women's entrepreneurship. The project has the title *Women Entrepreneurship – A Job Creation Engine for South-East Europe*. The following countries are participating: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo[14], FYR Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey.

The Regional Cooperation Council in Sarajevo is the project coordinator. The project is implemented by the South East European Centre for Entrepreneurial Learning, *SEECEL*, and the Gender Task Force, Regional Centre for Gender Equality, *GTF*.

The **project objective** is to promote best policy practices in women entrepreneurship in line with the Small Business Act for Europe (SBA), and capacity building of national and regional women entrepreneur's networks & associations. The expected results are:

- Awareness raised and policy dialogue initiated/advanced on women entrepreneurship policy framework in accordance with relevant SBA principles.
- Enhanced capacities of women entrepreneurs' networks & associations

The target groups are: policymakers, women's business networks/initiatives, members of parliament, government officials, civil society, media, chambers of commerce/economy and NGOs. The final beneficiaries are women entrepreneurs in the SEE countries.

[14] This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/99 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

The project works in a positive context in the sense that women's entrepreneurship is one factor included in the follow up of the implementation of the EU Small Business Act and thereby included in the annual Progress Reports made by the European Commission, monitoring the progress towards EU accession for the SEE countries.

The project has a budget of 20 MSEK. The inception phase started in September 2011 and was finalized in December 2011. The inception report contained country mapping and assessment by the implementing parties. Discussions with Sida led to some modifications. In March 2012, Sida approved a revised Inception report, and an adjusted project document. Sida and RCC signed an Amendment to the Specific Agreement. Activities on the project started in April 2012. The 1st semi-annual meeting took place in October 2012. The 2nd semi-annual meeting was scheduled for April 2013, but was postponed until September 2013. The 3rd semi-annual took place in Zagreb on 12 December 2013.

The project duration is 36 months, until April 2015. In view of problems that have occurred with transferal of project funds, it was discussed at the Zagreb meeting to possibly prolong the project period to accommodate activities that have been delayed because lack of funds.

Sida's administration of the project has been handled by the Swedish embassy in Sarajevo since the start of the project in 2011, but from January 2014 it will be administered directly by Sida in Stockholm.

This inception report has benefitted from the evaluators participating as observers in the third semi-annual meeting for the project December 12, 2013. In connection with the meeting in Zagreb, interviews were also made with the headquarters for SEECEL and GTF and with the RCC coordinator for the project.

1.2 Purpose of the review

The agreement between Sida and RCC (§7) states that the project shall be subject to an in-depth review and assessment by the end of 2013, which shall summarize obtained and expected results in relation to the project document dated 2012 for the Women Entrepreneurship, as well as in relation to the Inception Report from April 2012 from the project, and should contain an analysis of any deviation therefrom.

The main purpose of the evaluation is to learn from the first 18 months of implementation in order to get an empirical basis for an improvement of the remaining 18 months.

The main intended users of the evaluation are RCC, SEECEL, GTF as well as Sida, the embassy in Sarajevo and other Swedish embassies in the region.

2. Theory of change, Results framework and Monitoring

2.1 Theory of change

There is no explicit theory of change in the project proposal. The theory of change shown below is an attempt to depict what the evaluators understand as the intended theory of change in the project, judging from how it has been presented in the project proposal, in the reports and in the interviews held in Zagreb.

The project objectives in bold in the figure below are those stated in the project document. They can be considered as bridging outcomes, preceded by project outputs and followed by project outcomes.

The activities executed by the project (conferences, mapping, starting surveys, capacity building, working groups on indicators, etc.) would lead to outputs such as:

- Having new WE indicators included in the future format for follow up of Small Business Act indicators
- Establishment of learning groups, so-called Communities of Practice (CoP)
- Making a pilot Training Needs Survey among WE in the region.
- Establishing WE platforms that can serve as a base for dialogue with the government in all 9 countries
- Databases of women entrepreneurs established
- WE association networks in the countries established

These outputs can serve as the basis for advanced policy dialogue and for stronger position for WE associations and networks, the objectives set in the project document. The associations could for example propose elements of new strategies and laws for WE.

These in turn can lead to outcomes in the form of new government laws and strategies being formulated and implemented – not only on economic issues but also other features that are important for women entrepreneurs such as child care and labour regulations. Also, the greater capacity by the WE associations and networks can result in more practical support from them to the women entrepreneurs so that they can start new companies or increase or diversify production in existing businesses.

More production in companies owned or run by women entrepreneurs will generate employment – the ultimate objective of the project: "Women entrepreneurship – a job creation engine for South East Europe". Probable effects are also increased income and increased empowerment of and equality for women.

2.2 Results framework and monitoring

A results **framework** was made at the same time as the project proposal, but with little ownership from the project partners, and it has not been guiding the project implementation, monitoring and reporting.

At the December meeting in Zagreb, it was decided that the project would make a reprogramming and reallocation of budgets for the remaining phase of the project. In view of the savings made, more activities would be proposed, with budgets. A prolongation of the project period was also discussed.

In connection with the reprogramming exercise, a revised results framework would be produced for the remaining time of the project. The evaluators were asked to make observations on this forthcoming results framework.

From the desk review and interviews held with the project implementers, the evaluation team concluded that there was no systematic **monitoring system** established at the beginning of the project, clearly linked to the project intervention and the results framework. Indicators listed in the results framework were not used systematically for monitoring or reporting.

However, both SEECEL and GTF have internal monitoring systems to collect project related data. SEECEL developed Community of Practices for the two main pillars of their activities: Training Needs Indicators and revision of WE indicators for the Small Business Act. These CoP generate data and information for SEECEL´s monitoring. GTF designed a mapping matrix to measure changes at country level. This is based on process indicators developed in the inception phase. This gave a good baseline and is followed up by experts enrolled by GTF in the respective countries.

The monitoring of the project by SEECEL and GTF is mainly made for the purpose of getting management information on how to continue their activities. SEECEL and GTF report monthly to RCC about activities implemented and planned for the near future. The SBA data are normally collected every two years and can be used for monitoring results at the end of the project. More ad hoc information is produced on what happens in the countries, for example if strategy processes for WE have started or new WE databases have been collected.

The revision of the results framework that was decided at the semi-annual meeting in December will, it was said in the meeting, be used by the project as a base for establishing a more systematic monitoring framework of results. Both the new results framework and the proposed monitoring system will be made available to the evaluators.

3. Evaluation Questions

3.1 Questions in the terms of references

The following issues and questions are included in the scope of work in the ToR:

- the relevance, effectiveness and sustainability of the project approach, project planning and working methods.
- the selection of partners in the participating countries, the capacity of the partners, and the relevance/effectiveness/sustainability of their work to achieve the project objectives.
- the coordination with similar bilateral projects,
- the outputs so far.
- the progress against the objectives and the likelihood that the objectives will be reached.
- how RCC has administered the project, at the coordination with the implementing partners SEECEL and GTF, and suggest how it can be improved.

- how Sida and the Sarajevo Embassy have administered the project and give advice on how to improve the way that regional projects are handled.

3.2 Evaluation questions

On the basis of the issues and questions in the ToR and discussions with Sida, evaluation questions have been formulated below. They are organized according to the DAC criteria, with the addition of specific questions on regional projects and learning.

These evaluation questions will be transformed into interview guides for four types of groups:

a) Project staff within RCC, GTF and SEECEL
b) Women Business Networks and initiatives; Civil Society Organisations dealing with women economic empowerment; women entrepreneurs
c) Policy makers, Members of Parliaments, Government Officials, SBA focal points, Chambers of commerce/economy; GEMs (gender equality mechanisms)
d) Focal points in the Swedish Embassies.

Relevance

- Does the project address adequately the needs of the project´s immediate target groups – policy makers, including SBA focal points, and the women entrepreneurs' national networks/associations?
- Is the project relevant in view of the Swedish objectives for reform cooperation in the region?
- Is the project relevant for the EU accession process, specifically related to the principles in the Small Business Act?

Effectiveness

- What has been the progress towards the objectives of the project and what is the likelihood that the objectives will be reached?
- To what extent can the changes occurred be attributed to the work of the project?
- Are the project approach, the selection of partners, the roles of the three participating organisations and the planning and working methods relevant and effective for reaching the project objectives? Which are the key factors for achievements so far?

- Does the project practice a rights-based approach in the design and implementation, for example by participation of the WE associations or by women entrepreneurs?
- Which activities of the project are deemed relevant and effective to achieve the objectives?
- Which have been the main challenges in implementation? What could be changed? Are there unplanned results?

Efficiency

- What type of monitoring data is available and used in the project? Is the monitoring system adequate? Does the results based management function well?
- Were the criteria for selection and the actual choice of target groups (women's networks, policy makers, institutions) adequate?
- What has been the role of RCC in the project and how has it fulfilled that role?
- How well have SEECEL and GTF managed their respective parts of the project?
- How has the coordination between RCC, SEECEL and GTF worked? Is the project organisation and setup cost-efficient?
- How has the coordination with similar donor financed projects worked (nationally and regionally)? Is there overlap? Is there synergy?

Sustainability

- Will the results from the project be sustainable? Which are the key factors to ensure sustainability?
- Will the participating organisations have the commitment, capacity and financing to continue the activities of the project if there is no further Sida funding?

Regional projects

- How has the regional dimension of the project been reflected in planning, implementation and results of the project (regional common problems, regional approach, reconciliation, regional synergy for EU accession, SBA, position of women in the region)?
- How has Sida and the embassy in Sarajevo administered the project? To what extent have other Swedish embassies in the region been involved with the project?
- Is there an added value of this as a regional project (compared to country-level initiatives) and if so which?

Learning

- What general lessons can be drawn by the different actors and stakeholders from the project?
- What would be the recommendations for future support to women entrepreneurs in the region?
- What can Sida learn for future regional projects?

3.3 Comments to the evaluation questions

The evaluation questions on **relevance** do not include specific questions on the effects on individual women entrepreneurs or people they provide for. The main target groups for the project are higher up in the system – WE associations and networks, and stakeholders involved with policy.

The questions on **effectiveness** might be difficult to answer in some respects. The project has only been ongoing for a limited time, and has had serious problems in transferal of funds for the operation of the project. Also, the short time elapsed means that only finalized activities or at best outputs are likely to be found. Outcomes will probably take more time, and time expended is far too short to see impacts.

The question on unplanned results is directed towards "results harvesting" in the sense that there might be results, negative and positive, that are not foreseen in the project document.

On **efficiency**, one major issue is availability of data and monitoring information. There is not a regular flow of systematic monitoring data at project level. Most of the questions on efficiency are geared towards the project planning, management and implementation made by the three organisations and Sida. The findings will be based on qualitative information from the project staff and outside stakeholders as there are no comparable quantitative data available on cost efficiency of the results produced by the project, this aspect of efficiency will be difficult to ascertain.

The findings related to the questions on **sustainability** are expected to be more speculative than firmly evidence-based

4. Proposed Approach and Methodology

4.1 Pre-findings from the inception period

The main updated document received by the evaluators is the report for the first project period.[15] Other documents studied were the project proposal and the results frameworks, the Inception Report, two semi-annual reports (for the periods: 1 April – 30 September 2012 and 1 October 2012 – 31 March 2013), finance reports from 3 partners. Further material was also provided by the two implementing organisations in Zagreb after the semi-annual meeting.

Apart from the documents received, the evaluation team also studied the SBA Act as well as the last review of its implementation among the EU countries. Also, the Sida proposal for a results strategy for Western Balkans and the pre-study conducted by Indevelop for that proposal were consulted.

[15] Narrative Semi-annual Report, Women Entrepreneurship – a job creation engine for South East Europe, No.3 encompassing the 1st phase of the Project(18 months), Including the semi annual reporting period:April 1st – September 30th 2013.

The main experience from the initial desk study is that the project appears to have progressed in the respective areas. This has been in spite of major problems with transfer of funds for the operation of the project, as highlighted in the report from the first project period. A second version of indicators for women entrepreneurship within the Small Business Act framework has been elaborated in consultation with national stakeholders. Training needs of WE have been surveyed, the Community of Practice for sharing experience in the two working groups has been set up, coordination Platforms have been established between relevant stakeholders for WE in all nine countries and also networks of WE associations. The general WE situation has been mapped and is continuously followed up in all nine countries. Apart from that, some advocacy initiatives related to improvement of WE policies in some of the countries have been conducted and work has started to establish databases for WE.

The desk study reveals that the development has been uneven between the countries. Some lessons already learned by the project are that there seems to be a strong ownership with some decision makers in the countries, and that sharing of experience takes place in the region without push from the project. It has also been noted that there is a serious lack of data on WE which is a challenge for the continued work. Building up the capacity of WE associations has been found to be a long-term process. The project implementers have therefore suggested that preparations for a follow-up project to be financed possibly by Sida should begin in good time and that this issue should also be addressed in the present evaluation.

Apart from information gathered by the desk review, the evaluators also received valuable information during interviews in Zagreb with representatives of the three concerned organisations, for example concerning project management and coordination.

4.2 Design of the continued work

In the continued work, the evaluators will focus on establishing which changes have occurred compared to before the project. As the original results framework with indicators has not been fully applied, the evaluators will endeavour to use the main project objectives in the project document as a starting point. Efforts will be made to find baseline data and to find out which changes have actually occurred. The original results frameworks and indicators can be helpful in this regard. The work will be based on conceptual framework in the theory of change put forward in Chapter 3.

If and when a new draft results frameworks is presented by the project, this will be taken into account. The evaluators will also give comments on such a draft but will not take the role of advisor for the process with the future results framework.

After the inception report, the evaluation will focus on the field work on the national level, with the objective to form an evidence-based picture of what happens on the ground and how this relates to the regional processes and the theory of change.

Also, it has now been decided that a stakeholders meeting with wide participation will be held in connection with a conference on best practices. The meeting will be held in Istanbul February 3, 2014. February 3 is also the date previewed in the Terms of References for the evaluators to give a briefing on the progress of their work. The team leader will participate in the stakeholders meeting and profit from the presence of the stakeholders. The briefing on the progress of the evaluation is foreseen to be held as a separate session. To make room in the budget for the Istanbul meeting, a little less time than planned before will be spent on the collection of national data.

4.3 Data collection and analysis

The evaluators will undertake a further analysis of the **documents and data** already received and those that will be made available during the evaluation period by the three organisations and during the visits to the countries involved,

The emphasis in the field work on the national level is to answer the evaluation questions and to corroborate information already studied or received through interviews. A preliminary overview of the information collected will be presented at the briefing in Istanbul. The evaluators count on receiving inputs and reactions during this briefing that will enrich the final report.

The **field work** will consist largely of interviews, individual and in groups, with relevant sources, including:

- Project staff working or collaborating with RCC,GTF and SEECEL;
- Sida/embassy staff
- Women Business Networks and initiatives
- Civil Society Organisations dealing with women economic empowerment
- Direct beneficiaries - women entrepreneurs, mainly in the form of group interviews) if it is possible to arrange this, or in the form of focus groups with for example representatives of WE associations, where women entrepreneurs can participate.
- Policy makers, concerned government officials, SBA focal points
- Members of Parliaments
- Chambers of commerce
- Representatives of gender equality mechanisms

Analysis and reporting will focus on addressing the evaluation objectives, stated in ToR, as well as the main evaluation questions detailed in 3.2 above. Focus groups or other types of joint discussions during the field work can be used to discuss lessons learned so far in the evaluation, and possible conclusions and recommendations. This will also serve to corroborate information from the desk review and interviews with the three implementing organisations.

Activity	**Dates**	**Number of days** Team Leader	**Number of days** Regional Evaluator
Desk review and Inception Report development	28 November – 17 December 2013	6	4
Participate as an observer at the semi-annual meeting of Sida, RCC, SEECEL and GTF. Field interviewees with key project actors	11 – 13 December 2013	3	3
Submission of the Inception Report to Sida	17 December 2013	1	
Field work in selected countries: Serbia, Kosovo, Albania, Turkey, Moldova and BIH	20 December 2013 – 2 February 2014	7	14
Briefing meeting with Sida, RCC and the Sarajevo Embassy, with a focus on preliminary findings, and stakeholders meeting	3rd February 2014	2	1
Analyses and drafting the Report. Submit a Draft Report	27th February 2014	5	3
Written feedback/comments from Sida, the Embassy in Sarajevo and RCC on the Draft Report	7 March 2014		
Submission of the Final Report electronically in PDF	18 March 2014	2	1
Total number of days		26	26

The use of the time available for the review is planned carefully. It will not be possible to travel far from the capitals in the countries visited. It is also possible that the level of ambition has to be lowered on issues of less priority.

Annex 4 – List of Persons interviewed

Name, Institution, Role in the project, Country, as follows;

1. Dragana Djurica, RCC, Project Coordinator, BiH
2. Mary Ann Rukavina Cipetic, GTF, Executive Director, Croatia
3. Ana Carevic, GTF, Office and Event Manager, Croatia
4. Dragan Sabljic, GTF, Project Assistant, Croatia
5. Stanimira Hadzimirova,GTF, Field Manager for Moldova, FYR Macedonia, Kosovo and Turkey, Bulgaria
6. Efka Heder, SEECEL, Director and Senior Education Expert, Croatia
7. Sandra Roncevic, SEECEL, Assistant Director and Program Manager, Croatia
8. Maja Ljubić, SEECEL, Assistant Director and Senior Education Expert, Croatia
9. Sonja Segvic,SEECEL,Office and Event Manager,Croatia
10. Anders Hedlund,SIDA, HQ Stockholm,Responsible for the project in Sida,Sweden
11. Anna Rahm,SIDA ,Technical assistance in inception phase,Zambia
12. Dušica Semenčenko,Institute Mihajlo Pupin,National expert for WETNAS,Serbia
13. Ana Trbovic,Ministry of Justice, Republic of Serbia; Dean of Faculty for Economy, Finance and Administration,National expert for WE indicators,Serbia
14. Sanja Popović Pantić, Business Women Association, President, Conducted online survey with WETNAS component, Serbia
15. Katarina Obradović Jovanović, Ministry of Economy, Member of SEECEL Board/national SBA coordinator, Serbia
16. Jakob Modeer , Consultant Kosovo, PSD expert , Sweden
17. Nataša Milojević, FOSDI Expert; WE Platform (GTF), Serbia
18. Jana Radaković, Women Entrepreneurship Academy, Focus Group (GTF), Serbia
19. Svetlana Kozić, Women Entrepreneurship Academy, Focus Group (GTF), Serbia
20. Jelica Minic, Ex RCC Executive Director, Serbia
21. Snezana Vojcic, Swedish Embassy Serbia, Programme officer Serbia
22. Necla Haliloglu, Small and business administration KOSGEB, National expert for WE indicators/coordinator for online survey with WETNAS component, Turkey
23. Yesim Muftuler Sevig , Women Entrepreneurs Association of Turkey, Co-organizer of the Project Launch, WE Platform (GTF), Turkey
24. Cigdem Aydin, Association for the Support and Training of Women Candidates (KA.DER), Chairwomen, Mapping and preparation for the MP Workshop in 2014(GTF), Turkey
25. Tulin Semayis, KADER, project coordinator
26. Annika Palo, Swedish Embassy , Head of cooperation , Turkey
27. Lucia Usurelu, Deputy Director of Entrance 2 Your Business, National expert for WETNAS, Moldova
28. Tatiana Batuschina, International Center for Advancement of Women in Business, ICAWB, Partner organisation that conducted online survey with WETNAS component, WE Platform (GTF), Moldova

29. Aurelia Sarari, Ministry of Economy and Trade, National expert for WE indicators, Moldova
30. Ecaterina Mardarovici, Political Club of Women 50/50, Director, Moldova
31. Olga Sirbu, Program Coordinator, Moldova
32. Nina Orlova, Swedish Embassy , Programme officer, Moldova
33. Gazmend Mejzini, CEO at the Ministry for Trade and Industry, National expert for WETNAS, Kosovo
34. Mirlinda Kusari Purini, Women's business Association SHE-ER, Partner organisation that conducted online survey with WETNAS component, WE Platform (GTF), Kosovo
35. Valdrin Lluka, SME support agency, Member of SEECEL Board/national SBA coordinator, Kosovo
36. Vjollca Kuqi, Women's Network QELIZA, Focus Group (GTF), Kosovo
37. Mimoza Kusari Lila, Djakova City, Mayor, former minister of trade and industry, Kosovo
38. Visare Gorani-Gashi, Swedish Embassy , Programme officer, Kosovo
39. Maria Melbing, Swedish Embassy, Head of cooperation, Kosovo
40. Edi Gusia Agency for Gender Equality, Prime Ministers Office Head of project department, Kosovo
41. Ms Qurraj Ministry of Economic Development, Gender Equality Officer, Kosovo
42. Veton Alihajdari, Ministry of Education, Member of Steering Committee, SEECEL, Kosovo
43. Flutura Xhabija, SGHPAZ - Shoqata e Grave Profesioniste, Afariste & Zejtarise, Partner organisation that conducted online survey with WETNAS component, WE platform, Albania
44. Tefta Demeti, Chief of SME unit at Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industral National expert for WE Indicators/ Member of SEECEL Board/national SBA coordinator, Albania
45. Rezarta Katuci, Swedish Embassy , Programme officer, Albania
46. Lisa Fredriksson, Swedish Embassy, Head of cooperation, Albania
47. Erisa Sela, UN Women, National Programme Coordinator, Albania
48. Mirela Arqimandriti, Gender Alliance for Development Centre, ED, Albania
49. Etleva Sheshi, Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender equality officer, Albania
50. Jelena Ivošević, Ministry of Industry, Energy and Mining RS, National expert for WETNAS BiH
51. Jasenka Perovic, Swedish Embassy Sarajevo, Programme officer, BiH
52. Marijana Dinek, BHWI Foundation, BIH, Excetutive Director; Co-organizer of the Project Launch; WE Platform, BiH
53. Željana Bevanda, Chamber of Economy of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Focus Group, BiH
54. Aida Zubcevic, WE Association ONE, Director, BiH
55. Nand Shani, RCC, Sarajevo, Ex Project Coordinator, BiH
56. Mentor Kadriu, Swedish Embassy, Migration assistant, FYR Macedonia
57. Biljana Dzartova-Petrovska, Swedish Embassy, Commercial officer, FYR Macedonia

Annex 5 – List of Documents

1.Project Proposal, LFA, Timeline

2.Inception report with Annexes

3.Inception Period Proposal, July 2011

4.Agreement between Sida and RCC on support of WE during 2011 – 2014, signed 1/10/2012

5.SBA, A Small Business Act for Europe: a new boost for small businesses. Communication from Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. COM (2008). 394 Final. Brussels. 25-6.08

6.OECD, et al. (2012), SME Policy Index: Western Balkans and Turkey 2012: Progress in the Implementation of the Small Business Act for Europe, OECD Publishing; http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264178861-en

7.Narrative Semi-annual Report for period 1 October 2012 – 31 March 20-13

8.Narrative Semi-annual Report for period 1 April – 30 September 2012

9.Financial reports of RCC, GTF, SEECEL for period 1 April – 30 September 2012

10.Auditors Reports and Recommendation Letters to GTF and SEECEL

11.Assessment Memo to RCC

12.On Regional Contributions in the Western Balkans and Eastern Europe, November 2013

13.Reform cooperation in the Western Balkans - regional cooperation: experiences, constraints and opportunities; Final Report; December 2012; Joakim Anger

14.SEECEL, Women Entrepreneurship Indicators, Developing 2nd Generation, 2013

15.SEECEL, Women Entrepreneurs' Training Needs Analyses, The Systematic Approach in the Western Balkans, Turkey and Moldova, 2013

16.Project Proposal, Support to SEECEL, IPA multi-beneficiary programs

17.Minutes from Strategic meeting; preparatory meeting for the WE Trade Fair, February 5, 2014

18.SEE2020 Strategy_100214

Review of the Regional Cooperation Council's (RCC) Project "Women entrepreneurship"

This is a mid-term evaluation of a Sida-financed project for women entrepreneurs in South East Europe (including Turkey and Moldova). The project promotes best policy practices in women entrepreneurship in line with the Small Business Act for Europe (SBA), and capacity building of national and regional women entrepreneur's networks and associations.

The project has reached its outputs but it is too early for substantial outcomes. The implementing organisations work well with the subject matter but project management, results monitoring and coordination should be improved. Sida is recommended to finance a new phase of the project after the present phase ends.

SWEDISH INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION AGENCY
Address: S-105 25 Stockholm, Sweden. Office: Valhallavägen 199, Stockholm
Telephone: +46 (0)8-698 50 00. Telefax: +46 (0)8-20 88 64
E-mail: info@sida.se. Homepage: http://www.sida.se

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