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Sida Decentralised Evaluation

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# Evaluation of the Sida funded Programme of Core Support and connected projects in Ukraine

Final Report



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**January 2015**

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# Abbreviations and Acronyms

|          |                                                                                                |
|----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| BOD      | Board of Directors                                                                             |
| CB       | Capacity Building                                                                              |
| CoE      | Council of Europe                                                                              |
| CS       | Civil Society                                                                                  |
| CSO      | Civil Society Organisation                                                                     |
| DANIDA   | Danish International Development Agency                                                        |
| HoO      | Head of Organisation                                                                           |
| HRBA     | Human Rights Based Approach                                                                    |
| HR       | Human Rights                                                                                   |
| IDP      | Internally Displaced People                                                                    |
| INGO     | International Non-Governmental Organization                                                    |
| IRF      | International Renaissance Foundation                                                           |
| EPL      | NGO "Environment, People, Law"                                                                 |
| EC       | European Commission                                                                            |
| EU       | European Union                                                                                 |
| KhPG     | NGO "Kharkiv Human Rights Group"                                                               |
| LGBT     | Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender                                                        |
| M&E      | Monitoring and Evaluation                                                                      |
| MLI      | NGO "Media Law Institute"                                                                      |
| MP       | Member of Parliament                                                                           |
| NGO      | Non Governmental Organization                                                                  |
| ED       | Executive Director                                                                             |
| OD       | Organizational Development                                                                     |
| OECD/DAC | Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development |
| PO       | Programme Officer                                                                              |
| RAF      | Results Assessment Framework                                                                   |
| RPR      | Reanimation Package of Reforms                                                                 |
| SDA      | Swedish Development Advisers                                                                   |
| TOR      | Terms of Reference                                                                             |
| TTDI     | Think Tank Development Initiative                                                              |
| UNDP     | United Nations Development Programme                                                           |
| USAid    | US Agency for International Development                                                        |

# Preface

The Swedish Embassy in Ukraine commissioned this evaluation of “the Sida funded Programme of Core Support and connected projects in Ukraine” through Sida’s framework agreement for reviews and evaluations. The evaluation was undertaken by Indevelop between October 2014 and January 2015.

The members of the evaluation team were Cecilia Karlstedt (team leader), Megan Bick (INTRAC) and Katerina Stolyarenko. Quality Assurance was conducted by Ian Christoplos, Indevelop’s Project Director for the framework agreement. The project manager at Indevelop, Anna Liljelund, was responsible for ensuring compliance with Indevelop’s QA system throughout the process as well as providing backstopping and coordination.

The team would like to thank the members of civil society and the international donor community in Ukraine, the Swedish Embassy in Kyiv, as well as everyone else who participated in the evaluation in Ukraine and Sweden for generously giving their time and assistance and sharing their experiences of the programme. In particular we would like to thank Olga Sandakova at the Swedish Embassy in Kyiv for both facilitating the process and providing valuable insights.

# Executive Summary

This report presents the findings and recommendations of an external evaluation commissioned by the Swedish Embassy in Ukraine of its core support programme to strategic Ukrainian CSOs. Since 2010 the Swedish Embassy has been mainstreaming support to Ukrainian civil society organisations (CSOs) in the prioritised sectors of Swedish support. A core funding modality was conceptualised for the support in coherence with the overall objectives of the Swedish policy for reform cooperation with Ukraine for 2009–13 and the former Swedish policy for support to pluralistic and vibrant civil society. The modality was designed to strengthen CSOs in their roles as change agents for increased accountability and democratic development. As a pre-condition for the core support, CSOs had to have adequate governance structures and robust internal structures and systems in place. Therefore a two phased structured model was applied with a pre-core phase for institutional development prior to the actual core support phase. Presently 13 CSOs are in various stages of support through the modality. It is complemented by two additional initiatives to enable broader outreach into civil society - a Think Tank Development Initiative and a capacity building programme for smaller CSOs called the MarketPlace.

The overall objective of the evaluation is to analyse *“the overall effectiveness, efficiency and impact of the programme of core support to CSOs in Ukraine with the reference to its overall goal of promotion of European standards and effectiveness of partner-CSOs to become mission-based and deliver their own strategies.”*

The evaluation specifically addresses four evaluation questions:

1. Internal transformations of the supported CSOs towards becoming more strategic, accountable, transparent and mission-driven organisations.
2. The relevance and effectiveness of the approach and modality itself, including its strengths and weaknesses, to promote organisational change.
3. Synergies with and complementarity to other donors' support to civil society in Ukraine.
4. Management of the programme by the Swedish Embassy.

Building on desk reviews of documentation from a sample of eight CSOs a field visit in late November 2014 included in-depth interviews with their board members, management and staff and focus group discussions in which most supported CSOs participated. Discussions were also held with financial auditors, systems based auditors, technical advisors, and staff at the Swedish Embassy and at Sida head office during various stages in the evaluation process. Furthermore eight donors providing civil society support in Ukraine were interviewed.



*Relevance*

The evaluation found the Swedish Core Support Programme relevant in relation to the Swedish results strategy aimed at enhancing European integration, strengthening democracy, respect for human rights, increased rule of law and a better environment. Supported strategic CSOs are seen as change agents contributing by promoting agendas, drafting legislation and engaging in policy dialogue in all areas. While the number of supported CSOs is limited, the choice of partners is concluded as relevant to the Swedish aims with the exception of mainstreaming gender equality, which needs to be further reinforced.

The programme has strengthened the CSOs as development actors in their own right by insisting on CSOs' ownership of their own agendas, long term strategic plans and of their organisational change processes. By emphasising accountability and transparency Sida, together with likeminded donors, contributes to changing attitudes and practises within civil society, which in the long term should make civil society more legitimate in the eyes of the general public.

The comprehensive and sequenced support emphasising clear, open and effective systems and better networking, combined with long term funding, is concluded to be a tough but relevant approach for support by the CSOs. They also consider the modality particularly relevant during the present turbulent context in Ukraine as it has created organisational capacity not only to survive, but also to capture opportunities and adjust operations to assist those in need most.

*Effectiveness*

The Swedish Embassy has been effective in selecting a range of well respected CSOs considered as leaders in their different sectors. However, selection criteria, methods and results have not been sufficiently communicated publicly.

The pre-core support is found effective for creating institutional change. The combination of systems based audits, internal change projects, verification missions and financial audits according to international standards, guided through the interaction with the Swedish Embassy, has proved to be a successful approach for organisational development. The pre-core support is valued as an end in itself. The degree of transformation was found to depend on the commitment of each CSO, the variations in starting points, the internalisation of the new concepts, the timeframe the CSOs are able and willing to devote to internal transformations, and the management capacity to assume ownership.

The way the core support is extended through long term, substantial and flexible funding for operations, administration and institutional development according to the CSOs' long term plans and budgets is considered effective. It has created space for strategising, investing in staff capacities for the future, expansion and piloting of new areas of work as well as networking, which has positively affected the CSOs' performance. The supported CSOs have become more strategic and mission driven. By be-

ing able to focus on implementation of their missions, the CSOs have gained higher reputations for their performance. This, together with their increased transparency and improved governance, has helped the organisations in their fundraising.

The effectiveness may increase by providing clearer guidance to the CSOs on expectations regarding applications and reports, facilitation of opportunities for joint exchange of learning between supported CSOs, and more interaction between the programme officers of the Swedish Embassy and the CSOs for improved monitoring and dialogue.

A weakness of the modality lies in its limitations for expansion. Due to the amount of managerial attention required, it will not become a large scale civil society development programme. The programme's strengths are in its explicit expectation of local ownership, long term focus, its depth and its unique combination of strictness and flexibility. Through the exclusivity, visibility and hopefully long term results, the programme is already playing a catalytic role on other civil society support. Learnings gained have influenced other support mechanisms for other segments of civil society. The combination of the Think Tank Development Initiative, the contribution to the MarketPlace Mechanism and the Core Support Programme is considered effective to reach different segments in the Ukrainian civil society.

### *Impact*

The focus on governance, accountability and legitimacy has made the CSOs more concerned about being rooted in society. Many of them are network organisations and have done strategic planning with all their members. Others are expanding their work into the regions, placing more importance on networking and finding means to listen more to citizens' concerns. This has in turn affected some of the CSOs' national level advocacy. While most of them were strong in advocacy prior to Sida's support, some evidence was found that the core support had contributed to the CSOs' ability to engage more in high level national advocacy. However this must also be attributed to support from many donors.

Evidence indicates that the core support programme is also having wider effects in civil society sector through the supported CSOs mentoring others within their networks as part of their strengthening internal systems.

The core support programme is seen within the donor community as a pioneering effort, addressing CSOs' needs in a more profound way than was previously done. Increased transparency, better documentation of the programme and clearer programmatic results indicators could contribute to creating further understanding and dissemination of the approach.

The programme complements what a number of donors are doing. Complementarity is particularly found with Danida's support to regional hubs through UNDP and the EED's "support to the unsupported". Close collaboration and synergies are found with USAID and EU around the supported CSOs where the Swedish support is re-

garded as a quality guarantee for an effective organisation. The reputation attributed to core supported organisations could be seen as an informal harmonisation of requirements where donors are placing greater importance on internal rules and procedures, proper financial audits and increased governance as conditions for funding. The programme has influenced some specific initiatives where components have been borrowed and the expertise of the systems based audits used. Thus the core support programme has had wider effects beyond the supported organisations.

The holistic composition of the core funding (encompassing funding of operations, institutional costs and funding for institutional development) has influenced the donor community where more comprehensive funding has started to emerge. However, the evaluation team unfortunately found no other donor yet willing to share this responsibility of providing core funding with Sweden.

### *Sustainability*

With improved governance and internal systems in place the CSOs have started to pay more attention to downwards accountability and increasing legitimacy. This, together with taking time for strategising and budgeting for clearer directions, and their enhanced performance and reputation have attracted more donors and many of them have broadened their funding base. The evaluation found awareness among the CSOs that the Swedish support should be regarded as a unique opportunity that must be used to the utmost, as it might not reappear.

### *Management*

A characteristic of the Swedish core support programme is the trustful relationship between the supported CSOs and the programme officers at the Swedish Embassy. This quality relationship is deemed critical for guiding the CSOs through the complex process, providing encouragement, strengthening CSOs' ownership of changes, as well as for on-going monitoring of progress.

Staff turnover has caused variations in the understanding of the core support approach and together with high workloads has resulted in variations in the management of the relations. Further expansion of the programme is not considered realistic. There is no doubt that it is important to extend support to CSOs in the regions, particularly at the present time in Ukraine, but the programme is not of the nature to be necessarily large scale. Should it be considered vital for the Swedish Embassy to "go big", the modality would need to be changed and would need to consider the full donor palette for civil society support in Ukraine where other initiatives are designed to cover the regions.

### *Major recommendations*

With substantive lessons learned it is now time to package the support in a programme framework and develop overall results indicators which can help the programme officers in the monitoring of the support. Internal training and methods support on the modality is needed. Possibilities to adjust Sida's administrative systems to better accommodate the modality and ways to further reduce the workload should be

explored. The programme is recommended to continue and remain a high profile limited programme which affects wider change by playing a catalytic role on others. The evaluation has considered the following three options:

### **1. Invite other donors to share the approach**

The Swedish Embassy could try to convince other donors to join in its approach and to extend core support to some more organisations according to the same model. This would cater for growth and reduce the expectations on the Swedish Embassy. Alternatively, the Swedish Embassy could consider passing on the responsibility for supported core partners to another donor as they enter a second round of core support, freeing capacity for the Swedish Embassy to bring in some new partners and focusing on the sensitive process of internal changes.

### **2. Outsource parts of the work**

The process of support could be further streamlined. By analysing the cycle of core support it is possible to identify batches of responsibilities which could be outsourced, while the programme officers maintain the political and qualitative relation, the monitoring of progress and the specific governmental responsibilities.

### **3. Working through an intermediary**

The model that would reduce the workload drastically would be to pass on the responsibility to one intermediary organisation and maintain it as a programme with only one contribution in Sida's system. The evaluation is reluctant to recommend this model as the relationships created by the Swedish Embassy's programme officers have made this programme unique and particularly effective. A risk is seen that an intermediary could become "a filter" that dims the political sensitivity of the Swedish Embassy at a time when it is more important than ever. A possible solution could be to contract an INGO that has been present in Ukraine for a long time for managing a second phase of core support to the organisations (similar to suggested in alternative one above). However, the evaluation would tend to recommend the first two options.

A final question is how long should a CSO be supported? This programme should be careful to maintain its uniqueness of being catalytic while also being wary of not footing the bill too long. The evaluation team recommends that the Swedish Embassy supports core partners for a maximum of two strategy periods, where the second is for a maximum of three years. The second phase would be conditional on the CSO having been convincingly able to show progress in its strategic results during the first round. Indicators on a programmatic level would make it easier to assess these results.

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION

### 1.1.1 Background

Sweden has supported the Ukraine reform agenda since 1995.<sup>1</sup> Up to 2010 the Swedish reform cooperation with Ukraine was mainly focused on supporting state institutions and working through multilateral organisations. Since 2010 the Swedish Embassy in Kyiv has been mainstreaming support to strategic Ukrainian civil society organisations (CSOs) in the prioritised sectors of Swedish support, i.e. democratisation and human rights and environment and management of natural resources. A core funding modality was conceptualised for this support based on contemporary good donorship principles for long term funding to CSOs<sup>2</sup> and in coherence with the overall objectives for the Swedish policy for reform cooperation with Ukraine for 2009–13. To hold government accountable is crucial for better governance. In line with the needs to build a more transparent and efficient public administration, it was deemed critical that civil society could play a greater role in strengthening the country's democratic processes and societal development. The core support modality was designed to strengthen CSOs in their roles as change agents for increased accountability and democratic development.<sup>3</sup> During the mid-term review of the Swedish cooperation strategy in 2012, this was further specified by adding the following specific objective: *increased opportunity for civil society actors to function as change agents in the areas of democracy and human rights, especially when it comes to gender and independent media.*<sup>4</sup>

The support to civil society presently comprises approximately 25% of the total Swedish budget for reform cooperation with Ukraine.<sup>5</sup> It is to a large extent provided through provision of core support to a limited number of CSOs, complimented with a handful of specific projects. As a precondition for the core support the Swedish Embassy requests that the CSOs prove that they have an adequate governance structure

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<sup>1</sup> Swedish reform cooperation in Ukraine, fact sheet

<sup>2</sup> See e.g. Code of Practice on Donor Harmonisation, Guideline for Operationalisation of Key Principles, and the Key Principles for Harmonisation and Alignment, the Informal Donor Group (Irish Aid chair)

<sup>3</sup> Sida's webb site: <http://www.sida.se/English/where-we-work/Europe/Ukraine-/Our-work-in-Ukraine/>

<sup>4</sup> Terms of Reference for Evaluation of the Sida-Funded Programme of Core Support and Connected projects in Ukraine, Swedish Embassy, June 2014

<sup>5</sup> Interview with Head of Reform Cooperation Ms. Christina Danielsson

and robust internal structures and systems in order to manage the funds appropriately. Therefore a two phased structured model is applied with a pre-core phase for institutional development prior to the actual core support phase. Presently 13 CSOs are in various stages of support through this modality.

In 2014 the Swedish core support model in Ukraine had been piloted for four years. Therefore it was deemed timely and necessary by the Swedish Embassy to commission an evaluation of the model and its results. The results of the evaluation will inform further decisions for the strategic period of 2014 – 2020 regarding Swedish civil society support in Ukraine. The Swedish consultancy firm Indevlop was contracted for the evaluation under its Framework agreement for Sida reviews, evaluations and advisory services. The evaluation was conducted by a team of three international consultants; Cecilia Karlstedt (team leader), Megan Bick and Katerina Stolyarenko during October to December 2014, with field visits in Ukraine during eight days in November 2014.

### **1.1.2 Objectives**

According to the Term of Reference for the evaluation, dated July 2014 the objective is *“to analyse the overall effectiveness, efficiency and impact of the programme of core support to CSOs in Ukraine with the reference to its overall goal of promotion of European standards and effectiveness of partner-CSOs to become mission-based and deliver their own strategies.”* In addition, the five OECD DAC principles should be applied. Furthermore the model’s strength and weaknesses should be analysed and recommendations provided to the Embassy of Sweden for the future.

### **1.1.3 Scope of the evaluation**

The scope of the evaluation should assess results of the Core Support Programme at three levels: 1) the national level, 2) the organisational level of the CSOs and 3) at the level of the Swedish Embassy. At the national level it should reflect perceptions among the donor community, synergies and complementarity between the Swedish core support programme and other donor support models, as well as possible influences the CSOs are having in society. At the organisational level, internal changes in the supported CSOs should be assessed. Finally, the evaluation should also reflect consequences for the Swedish Embassy in managing the support.

### **1.1.4 Brief summary of the context**

The rapid and externally driven expansion of civil society in Ukraine in the 1990s left it insufficiently rooted in mainstream society, which it still suffers from. It quickly became beleaguered by divisions, largely due to a suddenly overcrowded space and competition for project funds. The availability of funding to CSOs made the general public suspicious of their motives. Many CSOs collapsed after donors departed following the Orange Revolution, leaving those remaining working with small constituencies and in a fragmented way. Citizens’ expectations of reforms following the Orange Revolution were not met, despite increased civil and political rights related to elections, media, freedom of association and freedom of speech. The political culture and lack of political will impeded reforms of the public administration and combating corruption and inadequate efforts were made in areas affecting peoples’ everyday life.

Civil society organisations lacked legitimacy and were mainly seen as a complicating factor by politicians, leaving their potential role in reform processes largely unexploited.<sup>6</sup>

Different attempts have been made to bring key civil society actors together to help define a mission for civil society and encourage collaboration. One platform is the EU supported National Civil Society Platform of the Eastern Partnership (EaP) which has since 2009 been a cross-border initiative for civil society from the EaP countries. Another recent example is the annual Capacity Development Forum organised since 2012 by the CSO ISAR-Ednannia and funded by a host of donors which has become a solidifying civil society platform in Ukraine. In 2014 it convened some 700 civil society actors and stakeholders for a broad programme of civil society learning, mission-strengthening and idea-generation. Long term donors to civil society like Open Society/International Renaissance Foundation (IRF), the US Embassy and USAID through its INGO partners PACT and Internews have been instrumental in supporting different CSOs and bringing groups of CSOs together in various civil society programmes.

Following a Communication from the European Commission in September 2012<sup>7</sup> the EU Delegation in Ukraine made efforts to coordinate support to civil society by a collective mapping exercise on civil society to subscribe all donors to work together towards common goals. This was framed in the EU Country Roadmap for engagement for civil society, 2014 - 17, approved by the heads of missions of EU member states. As a member state the Roadmap is embraced by the Swedish Embassy and guides the work. However, there is still a lot to be done to achieve effective collaboration and synergy development within Ukrainian civil society. To quote the executive director of the Resource Organisation Gurt: *“We have some mission-driven organisations but not a mission-driven sector.”*

Sida's core support programme is implemented in the midst of massive transformations within Ukraine. The EuroMaidan protests in December 2013 and the Revolution of Dignity have had far-reaching implications for Ukrainian social activism and mobilisation, and marked the start of a new paradigm for Ukrainian civil society. New actors have appeared with more bottom-up activism and new patterns for social organisation are leading to a rise in social capital and a change in attitude towards the state. The EuroMaidan agenda was about deep systemic transformation through pub-

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<sup>6</sup> Strategy for development cooperation with Ukraine, 2009 – 2013, Government of Sweden

<sup>7</sup> Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, “The Roots of Democracy and Sustainable Development: Europe's Engagement with Civil Society in External Relations, 2014 09 12, European Commission



lic oversight, transparency, accountability and structural reform<sup>8</sup> and resulted in the ousting of president Yanukovich in February 2014. The Russian annexation of Crimea sparked off the separatist insurgency in the Donbas region. War is still ongoing, despite several cease fire attempts, creating huge humanitarian needs for the 5 million people living in that part of the country, as well as for the 500.000 internally displaced persons in Ukraine.

In June 2014, the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement was signed and later ratified in September by the Ukrainian parliament. The agreement is based on the political association between the EU and the Eastern Partnership countries, and is unprecedented in its breadth (number of areas covered) and depth (detail of commitments and time-lines).<sup>9</sup> A new parliament with several members with a recent background as leaders in civil society was elected in October 2014 and a new government was put in place early December 2014. CSOs and their leaders are seen to have played key roles in the transformations of the political scene during 2014. The Revolution of Dignity has increased networking and building coalitions among CSOs<sup>10</sup>. The most important collaborative initiative for further reforms led by civil society is the “Reanimation Package of Reforms” (RPR). The package covers 11 areas for reforms (constitution, anti-corruption, decentralisation, judiciary, taxes and deregulation, law enforcement, media, public administration, energy, health and eurointegration). The RPR is led by a consortium of CSOs and legal experts which is managed by Media Law Institute (MLI). Considerable support is being made available for the package from EU.

The national context is hence still very turbulent and civil society is both playing crucial roles in shaping the future agenda, as well as being forced by local power and capacity vacuums into new roles. The EuroMaidan experience is said to have made many CSOs more self-critical and goal-oriented, demanding a more effective results focus in their relations with donors and supporters<sup>11</sup> while donor have started to emphasise more on CSOs’ legitimacy and accountability towards citizens.<sup>12</sup> The war in the East has also acutely raised new issues of different target groups and a need for broadening the scope of CSOs’ work in the needy and sometimes divided society.

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<sup>8</sup> Civil awakening: the impact of EuroMaidan on Ukraine’s politics and society, K Pishchikova, O. Ogryzko, Fride working Paper no 124, July 2014

<sup>9</sup> [http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/ukraine/eu\\_ukraine/association\\_agreement/index\\_en.htm](http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/ukraine/eu_ukraine/association_agreement/index_en.htm)

<sup>10</sup> Ukraine EU Country Roadmap for Engagement with civil society 2014 – 17, EU Delegation, 2014

<sup>11</sup> Civil awakening: the impact of EuroMaidan on Ukraine’s politics and society, K Pishchikova, O. Ogryzko, Fride working Paper no 124, July 2014

<sup>12</sup> Ukraine EU Country Roadmap for Engagement with civil society 2014 – 17, EU Delegation, 2014



### 1.1.5 Brief description of the core support model

This section briefly describes the Swedish model for core support in Ukraine. The model is more elaborately explained in Annex 5.

#### *i. Basic principles and eligibility criteria*

The core support model was initially conceived based on a set of 10 principles which were developed through a participatory process with reference groups from the Swedish Embassy, civil society and donors.<sup>13</sup> The principles are summarised in the following key concepts:

- Enhanced transparency and accountability
- Support to mission driven CSOs of strategic importance for their respective sectors
- Integrated demand driven capacity development
- Provision of predictable long term core funding for implementation of CSOs' own missions and strategic plans
- Priority to outreach and networking for downwards accountability
- Focus on governance, performance and working according to own procedures
- Continuous dialogue, emphasising gender equality and environment
- Donor coordination
- Complementarity to the EC for support to CSOs in the EU integration

Eight basic criteria for initial assessments of eligibility of potential CSOs for support were defined. The criteria emphasised CSOs' ownership of their own developments in terms of having clear missions, long term plans, financial strategies, clear ideas about their sources of legitimacy and how downwards accountability could be strengthened. They also stipulated the need for adequate governance and management structures systems and routines. The criteria and basic principles are found in Annex 5.

#### *ii. Phases of the support*

The model applies a sequenced process, divided into the following three distinct phases:

#### **Phase 1: identification and selection**

The first phase includes initial contracts, applications and selection of strategic CSOs. Initially, the criteria for eligibility were posted on the Swedish Embassy's website.

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<sup>13</sup> Guidelines for Support to Civil Society Organisations in Reform Processes in Ukraine, C. Karlstedt, A. Ingelstam, V. Houmenyuk, December 2009

**Phase 2: pre-core funding**

The pre-core phase starts with a systems based audit of the CSO's governance and management structures, internal policies, systems and routines. The CSO then undertakes internal improvements to address the weaknesses in accordance with key recommendations. The ownership of the improvement project is with the CSO, which defines its time frames and methods for implementation. Technical assistance by international experts is made available by the Swedish Embassy to be drawn upon by the CSOs. Once the CSO has addressed the weaknesses, a verification mission is followed to recommend to the Embassy if the CSO is ready for core support. A financial audit of the organisation's financial statements, including a management letter and management response, is usually also an element of the pre-core phase.

**Phase 3: Core support**

Once it is confirmed that the systems are in place the CSO enters the core support phase. The basis for the support is the CSO's long term strategic plan, including a monitorable results framework and a corresponding comprehensive budget. These are further operationalised into annual plans and annual budgets, showing income and expenditures from all sources. Annual disbursements of funds are made and the CSO prepares annual results based reports of implementation of the strategic plan. Formal consultation meetings with the Swedish Embassy are typically held annually and in between, both parties are responsible for maintaining a continuous relation and dialogue on progress. The CSO continuously works on its institutional capacity as part of its plan and budget and has full responsibility such a process. Annual financial audits according to international standards are made. At the end of the agreement period, usually around three years, a completion report analysing results achieved is developed by the CSO and discussed jointly with the Swedish Embassy.

The Swedish Embassy requests strict adherence to implementation of key recommendations of the systems based audits prior to approving core support, as well as full compliance with contract requirements, while expecting ownership of the improvement project and the implementation of the core support by the CSOs. Flexibility in use of funds due to emerging needs is allowed after approval of the Embassy.

*iii. Present partners*

Presently 13 CSOs are in various stages of the core support cycle. Support to two CSOs has been terminated. The support to Ecomir Crimea was terminated due to political reasons related to Russia's annexation of Crimea, while the support to ICPS was terminated due to unexpected changes in governance, causing a lack of trust. In addition, one CSO was assessed through the systems based audit as being too weak to sufficiently develop its internal systems and structures and the collaboration did not continue.

Within the present group, one organisation has not yet fully entered the pre-core stage and is supported through project support (Hromadske TV) as preparation for the pre-core support. The following table summarises the situation:

|    | Name                                    | Pre-core | Core support | Completed | 2nd Core | Terminated support | Start | End  |
|----|-----------------------------------------|----------|--------------|-----------|----------|--------------------|-------|------|
| 1  | Mama-86                                 |          |              | •         | •        |                    | 2011  | 2016 |
| 2  | Telekritika                             |          |              | •         |          |                    | 2011  | 2014 |
| 3  | GURT                                    |          | •            |           |          |                    | 2012  | 2015 |
| 4  | Kharkiv HR Group                        |          | •            |           |          |                    | 2012  | 2016 |
| 5  | Media Law Institute                     |          | •            |           |          |                    | 2013  | 2017 |
| 6  | Committee of Voters Ukraine             |          | •            |           |          |                    | 2012  | 2016 |
| 7  | Ecology, Law, People                    |          | •            |           |          |                    | 2013  | 2017 |
| 8  | Ukraine Helsinki Group                  |          | •            |           |          |                    | 2013  | 2017 |
| 9  | Centre UA                               |          | •            |           |          |                    | 2013  | 2017 |
| 10 | Razumkov Centre                         |          | •            |           |          |                    | 2013  | 2017 |
| 11 | Gay Alliance                            | •        |              |           |          |                    | 2014  | 2017 |
| 12 | Hromadske TV                            | •        |              |           |          |                    | 2014  |      |
| 13 | Independent association of broadcasters | •        |              |           |          |                    | 2014  | 2017 |
| 14 | ICPS                                    |          |              |           |          | •                  | 2012  | 2013 |
| 15 | Ecomir Crimea                           |          |              |           |          | •                  | 2012  | 2014 |

The organisations are active in the priority sectors as follows:

|   | Name                        | Democracy and HR             |       |              | Environment |
|---|-----------------------------|------------------------------|-------|--------------|-------------|
|   |                             | Democratic governance/reform | Media | Human rights |             |
| 1 | Mama-86                     | •                            |       |              | •           |
| 2 | Telekritika                 |                              | •     |              |             |
| 3 | GURT                        | •                            |       |              |             |
| 4 | Kharkiv HR Group            |                              |       | •            |             |
| 5 | Media Law Institute         | •                            | •     |              |             |
| 6 | Committee of Voters Ukraine | •                            |       |              |             |
| 7 | Ecology, Law, People        |                              |       | •            | •           |
| 8 | Ukraine Helsinki Group      |                              |       | •            |             |
| 9 | Centre UA                   | •                            | •     |              |             |

|    |                                         |   |   |   |   |
|----|-----------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|
| 10 | Razumkov Centre                         | • |   | • |   |
| 11 | Gay Alliance                            |   |   | • |   |
| 12 | Hromadske TV                            | • | • |   |   |
| 13 | Independent Association of Broadcasters | • | • |   |   |
|    | Total                                   | 8 | 5 | 5 | 2 |

The total budget for the support to the CSOs included in the core support modality is MSEK 76, 46, distributed over a period from 2011 to 2017. The level of financial support per organisation as well as time periods vary among the organisations according to their own needs. As shown, the environmental sector is less represented than democracy, media and human rights. This could be explained by the fact that the latter is a rather wide area and not a specific sector per se.

#### 1.1.6 Other Swedish initiatives for civil society support

In addition, the Swedish Embassy is supporting Ukrainian civil society through two separate initiatives: the Market Place programme run by ISAR Ednannia and IRF's Think Tank Development Initiative. Project support is also provided to two – three CSOs for implementation of specific activities

##### iv. *The MarketPlace*

Started as a USAID initiative, ISAR Ednannia has for 15 years been implementing grant making programmes for civil society. In 2011 a voucher programme for capacity building of civil society called “the MarketPlace” was transferred from the INGO PACT to ISAR Ednannia. The MarketPlace has three components; 1) a website, 2) a voucher system for capacity building of CSOs through technical assistance, and 3) tools for development of “organisational culture in CSOs”. Support for self assessments and capacity development in terms of governance and internal systems, technical capacity, adaptive capacity to change and influencing capacity can be sourced through the demand driven mechanism. Sida supports 1/3 of the voucher pool, the development of the web portal and the promotion of organisational culture. Support is also given for the institutional development of ISAR. The Swedish support is provided as project support with MSEK 5,2 over 2,5 years. This project represents the Swedish response to capacity building and organisational development of Ukrainian grassroots CSOs on a broader scale. It further amplifies the Embassy's concern for proper internal democratic practices within CSOs.

##### v. *The Think Tank Development Initiative*

The IRF is a national foundation which is a part of Open Society. Since 1990 it has been supporting Ukrainian civil society by promoting democratic practises with increasing emphasis on capacities and European integration. Only 4% of Ukrainian CSOs are interested in public policy making according to a recent mapping by the

EU.<sup>14</sup> In order to strengthen civil society's policy analysis in Ukraine an institutional development programme of think tanks was conceived by IRF in close collaboration with the Swedish Embassy. The programme is modelled on Sida's core support programme and has developed its approach, tools and methods with support from Sida's systems based auditors. 30 think tanks were screened in June 2014 and 13 were selected to proceed. 10 are presently working on improvement plans for their governance, internal systems and strategic plans. Financial audits and verification visits to assess improvements will be conducted at the end of 2014 and a second screening will take place to determine which ones will receive core support to implement their strategies. Core support will be given for one year at a time, while the intention is to provide it for two years. Sida is supporting IRF with project support of MSEK 25 over three years for this initiative.

## 1.2 METHODOLOGY

### 1.2.1 Evaluation questions

During the inception phase the objective and scope of the evaluation were operationalised into four key evaluation questions in close collaboration with the Swedish Embassy:

1. Internal transformations of the supported CSOs towards becoming more strategic, accountable, transparent and mission-driven organisations.
2. The relevance and effectiveness of the approach and modality itself, including its strengths and weaknesses, to promote organisational change.
3. Synergies with and complementarily to other donors' support to civil society in Ukraine.
4. Management of the programme by the Swedish Embassy.

These were further specified in the inception report into indicators and operationalised in interview guides. The Inception Report is included in Annex 2.

### 1.2.2 Evaluation process

#### *vi. Inception phase*

During the inception period in October 2014 the focus of the evaluation was further explored with Sida and the Swedish Embassy, resulting in the four evaluation questions. An inception report was drafted, specifying the methodology, the sample, limitations and indicators. It was discussed in Kyiv with the Swedish Embassy and adjustments were made. A sample of eight Sida-supported CSOs was defined and

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<sup>14</sup> "Dialogue for Progress" referred to in Ukraine EU Country Roadmap for Engagement with civil society 2014 – 17, EU Delegation, 2014

agreed with the Swedish Embassy. As a rich flora of documentation exists for each supported CSO, a sample of documentation from one CSO was assessed initially. Based on this, it was agreed with the Swedish Embassy which documentation should be provided for all CSOs in the sample.

#### *vii. Preparations*

Baselines of the eight CSOs in the sample were reconstructed through documentary studies, using the systems based audits as the initial point of reference. Improvements traced through documentation were recorded in separate matrices prior to the field work. A meeting schedule was drafted and confirmed by all involved. Skype interviews were conducted with the two consultancy firms involved in the systems based audits, verification reports and provision of technical assistance to the CSOs. Interview guides were developed and tested jointly by the team and refined. Annex 4 lists documents consulted.

#### *viii. Field work*

From 18-27 November 2014 field work was conducted in Ukraine. Please see Annex 3 for a list of persons met. Eight CSOs were visited in their premises, of which two are based in the regions (in Lviv and Kharkiv). The team conducted separate interviews with the chairpersons and other board members, the executive directors and the financial managers. In some cases other staff also participated. Three focus group discussions were conducted with the executive directors and advocacy staff. All core support organisations were invited to these events and most participated.

Ukrainian auditors of one auditing firm were interviewed. Individual interviews were also conducted with eight donors involved in civil society support in Ukraine. In addition, the consultants participated in two larger donor and civil society events in order to capture current discussions and concerns.<sup>15</sup> Discussions were conducted with the programme officers at the Swedish Embassy, the head of reform cooperation and with the Swedish Ambassador. A debriefing session on preliminary observations was conducted at the Embassy before departing.

#### *ix. Assessing results*

The evidence base (baseline, progress made and comments on various aspects of the transformation) were recorded in matrixes for each of the 8 sample organisations. Data from interview transcripts and focus groups were entered into the baselines and conclusions were drawn. The individual assessments formed the basis for the aggregated analysis and for drawing conclusions regarding the model. A meeting to further

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<sup>15</sup> Civil Society Donor Meeting at USAID, 19 November 2014 and Civil Participation in Decision-Making Evaluation and Strategic Planning meeting at CoE, 24 November 2014

confirm findings was conducted at Sida's head office with the Head of the Department for Reform Cooperation with Eastern Europe. A draft report was prepared and submitted to the Swedish Embassy on December 20, 2014.

### 1.2.3 The sample

The sample of CSOs included 2/3 of the present core partners. It was created based on the following criteria:

- A mixture of being in the different stages of the support cycle
- the geographical locations, including non-Kyiv based CSOs
- representation of CSOs from the different sectors

The following eight CSOs were selected:

|               |                                             |
|---------------|---------------------------------------------|
| Environment:  | Mama-86 and EPL                             |
| Media:        | Telekritika and Hromadske TV                |
| Human Rights: | Kharkiv Human Rights Group and Gay Alliance |
| Democracy:    | Centre UA and Gurt                          |

Views of core partners not included in the sample were collected through focus group discussions. Hence all CSOs involved in the core support programme were invited to participate in the evaluation.

## 1.3 LIMITATIONS

### 1.3.1 Attribution

Many of the supported CSOs are mature organisations which have received donor funding for many years. Some of the expected internal changes are related to processes supported by other donors as well, and therefore not always clearly attributable to Sida support only. This is also in line with the philosophy behind core support, where emphasis is placed on the CSO's realisation of objectives regardless of source of funding.

Data to trace transformations have been collected through documentary studies and interviews. As far as possible the information has been triangulated by interviewing several persons and discussing some aspects jointly in focus groups. Due to the limited time spent with each organisation, findings are based on what has been reported to the team, while actual changes in organisational systems have not been verified by any sort of audits.

### 1.3.2 Impact

The CSOs' influences on national policy and reform processes have been assessed through their own accounts and indirectly through the perceptions of donors and the Swedish Embassy. Likewise the CSOs' increased downwards accountability towards their constituencies have been assessed through their own accounts, individual interviews and in a focus group.

## 1.4 DEFINITIONS

There is no accurate translation for the term “core support” in the Ukrainian language. The common expression is translated as “institutional support”. However this term is also used by many donors for funding of administration, salaries for general staff and general office costs, which is a more narrow definition than core support.

“Core support” is defined in this evaluation as a flexible and substantial funding over several years for:

1. results focused programme implementation as defined by the CSO
2. institutional support (general costs of running the organisation)
3. continuous institutional development/capacity building.

All three components must have been planned for and included in the organisation’s strategic plan and comprehensive budget. They are accounted for in results based annual reports, comprehensive financial statements and through annual audits. As core support focuses on enhancing the organisations’ strategic results, a key aspect is the continuous dialogue on its strategic development and the trustful relationship between the recipient and the donor. Monitoring of implementation of activities is performed by the organisation’s leadership and not the donor.



## 2 Findings

### 2.1 THE APPROACH AND MODALITY FOR CORE SUPPORT

#### 2.1.1 Relevance

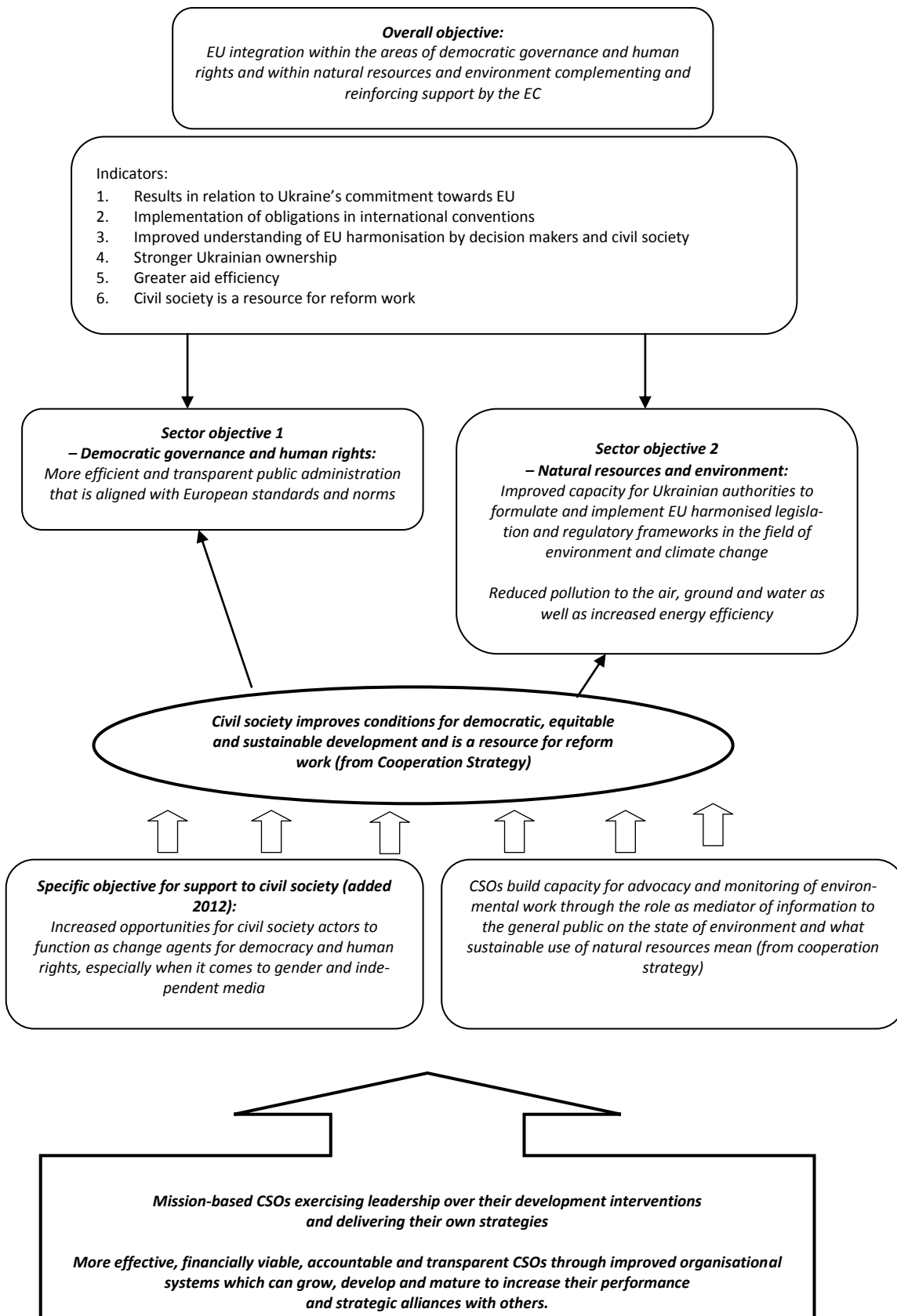
##### *i. Contribution to Swedish reform objectives*

The core support programme was designed as an integrated part of the Swedish strategy for Development Cooperation with Ukraine 2009 – 2013. The illustration on the following page shows the objectives at various levels guiding the programme. The overall objective and sector objectives were specified in the development cooperation strategy.<sup>16</sup> The civil society objective in the centre is also extracted from the cooperation strategy. The specific objective for civil society support (to democracy and human rights) was added in 2012 as a further specification during the mid-term review of the cooperation strategy. The two suggested objectives at the bottom of the figure have been interpreted by the evaluators, guided by formulations in Sida's assessment memos and decision memos for supported CSOs. They aim to capture the theory of change for supporting strategic CSOs in the prioritised sectors.

The objectives of the eight CSOs in the sample have been found to correspond in various degrees to the set of Swedish objectives in the previous cooperation strategy. Gurt, Telekritika, Centre UA and Hromadske TV are aiming to develop of a more democratic society through increased citizen participation. Gay Alliance and KhPG aim to strengthen respect for human rights, while Mama-86 and EPL are working towards environmental reforms, protection of environment and rule of law for the environment. All CSOs were found to work with a rights based approach. Some of the CSOs have specific objectives aiming at supporting EU integration while all have activities that may plausibly contribute to this objective. Several of the CSOs consider themselves as watchdogs and/or dialogue partners with the government and are active in the processes of reforming laws and the public administration.

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<sup>16</sup> Strategy for development cooperation with Ukraine, 2009 – 2013, Government Offices of Sweden



In the present Swedish results strategy for the reform cooperation with Eastern Europe for 2014 – 2020 which includes Ukraine<sup>17</sup>, three overall expected results are stated:

1. Enhanced economic integration with the EU
2. Strengthened democracy, greater respect for human rights and a more fully developed state under rule of law
3. A better environment, reduced climate impact and enhanced resilience to environmental impact and climate change

As the expected results build on the objectives from the previous period, with enhanced economic integration in the EU added, the correlation between the supported CSOs and the expected results under the present results strategy is also considered strong.

*ii. Promoting a vibrant and pluralistic civil society*

The Swedish core support programme in Ukraine was also conceived in line with the Swedish Government's previous Policy for Support to Civil Society in developing countries<sup>18</sup>. The policy was in force until March 2014 when it was superseded by the new Swedish Aid Policy Framework. The policy was conceived in 2008 based on international consensus around the Aid Effectiveness agenda and translated principles of local ownership, alignment, and reduction of transaction costs into funding modalities.<sup>19</sup> Core and programme support to civil society were to be given priority and Sweden should promote representative, legitimate and independent CSOs as “actors in their own right” to promote a vibrant and pluralistic civil society. For strong local ownership capacity development should be based on CSOs' own priorities, support should be based on the partners' planning and monitoring system and internal democracy, independence and performance should be the focus of the support. The core support programme translated these principles into actions. Since 2012 Sida considers core support as the “default mode” for support to CSOs and programme staff needs to argue if decisions are made not to use it.<sup>20</sup>

The recent Aid Policy Framework continues to highlight the importance of a vibrant and pluralistic civil society with CSOs as development actors in their own rights. The framework states that Swedish aid should identify, promote, protect and strengthen democratic drivers of change and human rights defenders through direct support and supporting their collaborations. Democratic reforms initiated by civil society actors

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<sup>17</sup> Results strategy for Sweden's reform cooperation with Eastern Europe, the Western Balkans and Turkey, 2014 – 2020, Government Offices of Sweden

<sup>18</sup> Pluralism - Policy for support to civil society in developing countries within Swedish development cooperation, 2009, Government Offices of Sweden

<sup>19</sup> Interview with Karin Fällman, Senior Policy Specialist, Civil Society, Sida

<sup>20</sup> Interview with Karin Fällman, Senior Policy Specialist, Civil Society, Sida

should be encouraged.<sup>21</sup> The core support programme in Ukraine is assessed fully in line with this long term policy direction.

The selected core support partners are considered as high profile organisations in their respective fields and collectively cover a broad area of critical issues in society, despite the limited number. As such they correspond with the overall ambition of promoting rights based pluralism in civil society. This was further illustrated when the evaluators participated in a donor coordination meeting discussing media and civil society support<sup>22</sup>. While the donor community were discussing different ways to support a range of urgent issues i.e. media watchdogs, dialogue partners in the reform process, how to make information about reforms accessible for citizens, lobbying for new laws, training of journalists, local peace building, monitoring of regional media, experiences from election monitoring, anti-corruption and promoting LGBT rights, the statement by the Swedish Programme Officer demonstrated the relevance of the Swedish support: *“It is easy to be a core support donor, what is good for them is good for us! Most of the CSOs mentioned are Swedish partners and are already supported in doing all this”*. The recognition of this statement by the donors in the room was noticeable.

### *iii. Relevance in the changed context*

Sida can be proud that by introducing a core support programme in Ukraine in 2009 they have cleverly done the right thing at the right time. These CSOs were stronger and prepared to play crucial roles when the opportunity emerged. As the current turbulent situation in Ukraine having made the existence and actions of an effective civil society even more crucial for the development, the support has gained high resonance throughout the sector. Sida being a newcomer into civil society support, has become renowned for focused funding, committed support and high standards of governance and financial management. The support is however not given in isolation. USAID through PACT’s Uniter programme and Internews’ U-media programme created many of the Sida’ supported CSOs and provided them with project and institutional grants prior to and in parallel with the Swedish Embassy. The Mott Foundation has been working along similar lines for many years but in a much smaller scale, providing some of the CSOs with smaller core support grants. Likewise IRF has provided project support to a number of the partners for a long time. Danida started up a regional hub programme with similar aims to Sida in 2013, but the results are so far less visible. Hence, the collective efforts of supporting strategic CSOs should be recognised.

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<sup>21</sup> Government communication 2013/14:131: Aid Policy Framework – the directions of Swedish Aid, March 2014

<sup>22</sup> November 19, Donor coordination meeting at USAid

During a prolonged period of conflict and the central government power vacuum, CSOs have been essential in providing support and direction to their communities with an ever greater role to play now in influencing policy, providing humanitarian aid and mending the fractures in society caused by the conflict. As stabilisation efforts continue, their success in involving disaffected members of society in positive reforms, while also mitigating the unequal effects of the economic crisis, will be vital to the pace, depth and acceptance of these changes. As increasing amounts of donor funding are likely to flow in again, donors need to rely on effective organisations to collaborate with. Having strengthened structures, streamlined procedures and become more strategic, the CSOs who have received core support are in a better state than many to expand their activities where appropriate to their strategic aims. In this way the amount Sida has spent in Ukraine on core support may have a higher impact than could ever have been predicted. In later sections of this report the spreading effects of the support is discussed.

The relevance of the supported CSOs in the present context was confirmed by the Swedish Ambassador who expressed satisfaction with the performance of the CSOs during the dramatic past year: *“It is clear that we are supporting important organisations which have been pushing for sensible and needed reforms in the parliament. They have as a collective force played an important role after EuroMaidan and will continue to be watch dogs of decision makers. Civil society will continue to be very important. I am very proud of this reform cooperation.”* A clear spinoff effect for the Embassy is the extensive network and direct access to leading personalities in civil society which the support has created.

#### iv. Meeting CSOs needs

It goes almost without saying that the core support is considered important for the CSOs. Dependent on where they are in the core support cycle they highlight different aspects of the support as being particularly relevant for them. By emphasising the concepts of governance, accountability, transparency and legitimacy, particularly Sida and USAID are seen by the CSOs to contribute to developing democracy within civil society. Yet effects of this might still only be noted in Kyiv, as mentioned by one partner: *“Sida is setting higher standards for CSOs in Kyiv but they are not yet reaching out to affect the country which we must do!”* The organisations value the breathing space that core funding provides in order to have time and energy for innovation and strategic thinking. *“Project support pushes the agenda of organisations. Sida’s core support is instead monitoring how the organisation implements its mission”*. The flexibility of the funding modality was demonstrated for the CSOs during 2014 when Sida, together with the supported organisations, adjusted plans to increase security and legal protection of those under attack from the previous government.

Below are voices from supported CSOs regarding why they consider core support relevant:

*"The long term core support made us able to plan and develop our human resources. We could invest in staff in a way you cannot do with project funding which does not provide any security. Investing in staff is an investment in our capacity and performance."*

*"Sida gave us the possibility to implement our dreams. Sida is a strict teacher but one who likes her children. Strong, but soft. Independent, but warm. Our policy is the frame and within it we have flexibility. The core support has freed our time to do more useful things!"*

*"Bringing in a gay organisation into the mainstream civil society development is really important. It is a great shared learning and a test of tolerance."*

*"It is the best way of working with NGOs. Nobody can say that Sweden is controlling NGOs. It meets so well our sensitive needs for funding."*

*"Sida's process has strengthened us to be credible and transparent in the reform package process."*

*"It was very tempting to work on a systemic level with no time bound support...Sida gave us a unique opportunity to work on our capacity building."*

Many of the CSOs still have limited experience in the process of implementing their strategic plans. The focus in discussions was therefore largely on the relevance of the pre-core support. While most of the organisations might not have initiated the internal changes without the prospect of receiving flexible, long-term funding at the end, they confirmed the importance of this sometimes difficult preparatory phase after having gone through it. The following comments by supported CSOs regarding the pre-core phase speak for themselves:

*"It is not possible to develop the media field if you don't have procedures. If there is chaos in your organisation it will affect the achievement of the mission."*

*"Sida's support allowed us to form a team and to work in one direction, with one vision and one set of rules."*

*"We saw that we needed to become more effective as more funds came in and we lacked the systems to manage it properly. We saw the need for the Sida support and wanted to go through it. If not for the support there is major risk that the organisation would have split."*

*"Sida is always very careful in giving direction in what you should do. It is always the organisation's processes. Sida's approach is comprehensive and is playing a fundamental role. Sida taught us the whole process of institutional development."*

*"It you at any time need persuasion that this is a worthwhile process, we are happy to give it."*

### v. Reputation and Swedish niche

Meetings with eight donors confirmed that the Swedish Embassy has gained a high reputation through its core support approach. Donors were impressed by:

- The quality of work
- The strategic approach
- A deep knowledge of the reality
- The pragmatism and courage to draw lessons and learning and move on
- The strategic composition of the group of supported core organisations
- The high profile while not pushing its agenda on others

Almost all donors met considered Sida as unique in its approach. Some of the statements about the core support modality deserved to be repeated:

*"This is the model. It is the best way for donors to intervene, to find the local drivers for reform. It is the most sustainable and strategic approach to CS support. Sida has a special niche by providing long term core support. " (USAID)*

*"Sida's support has wonderful and unique features. It is long term, significant in amounts and allowed for general purposes. Project funding is always available but no other donor wants to invest in the organisations. CSOs make a conscious choice of going through this and understand that this is a unique opportunity" (IRF)*

*"It is fantastic that Sida provides such kinds of support which is so hard to get. Long term strategy support is great, not just project support. Sida is very strict in their validation stage. We like that very much. It is a very constructive approach" (Internews)*

*"It is an extraordinary programme. We are very happy with that it starts with the obligatory part to fix the systems and structures. The pre-core part is a must! It is great to build the institutions and not only just focus on the programmes. It is painful for the organisations but they see the real results now. They understand that they are more successful than the others who have not gone through this support" (PACT)*

*"Sida's niche is organisational capacity building. Nobody else is doing it. The core support together with the capacity building and strict requirements are a unique formula which gives results. Some of the topics are not known in Ukraine, like anti-corruption, conflict of interest, governance and need to be brought in by foreigners. It is good that Sida provides international consultants for the assessment and for the improvement work. The broad range of selected CSOs representing different sectors makes Sida unique with a strategic coverage. Sida should continue." (Mott Foundation)*

*"Sida is unique in accompanying the CSOs. Nobody is doing it in this way and for the moment there is nobody else than Sida. Sweden is one of the partners we value the most" (EU)*

The Swedish core support model has hence had a high resonance within the donor community and has attracted interest and attention during the four years of support. The model is consistently praised and Sida is considered unique in its approach and having captured a specific niche for institutional development. However some questions are also raised regarding transparency in selection, a need for clearer success indicators and real effects on some of the more conservative organisations. These are further discussed below. The following quote by George Soros, given in a meeting with the Swedish Ambassador, however captures the high value given to the Swedish core support: *"Among all donor investments here, this one had the best rate of return – congratulations, a great investment"*.

#### vi. Conclusions

The evaluation concludes that there is a good correlation between the objectives of the selected CSOs and the Swedish objectives. The selected CSOs are considered relevant for contributing to the Swedish development objectives in the previous strategy, as well as in the present. The aim to increase sector coherence by supporting government and CSOs in the same sector has been more visible in the environmental sector, while more difficult to make in the area of democratic development as reforms were not forthcoming until recently. Such correlation is presently increasing. The approach of the core support programme was found in line with the previous Swedish policy for support to civil society as well as the new Aid Policy Framework, support-



ing the development of a pluralistic civil society where the CSOs are given the means to be actors in their own right and drivers of democratic change.

Sida's core support was timely and provided a new type of support to CSOs which did not previously exist in Ukraine. The comprehensive and sequenced support emphasising strong ownership, greater accountability, governance, transparency and effectiveness through proper systems, combined with long term financial support is considered unique by the donor community and agreed to be a highly relevant modality by the CSOs. The dramatic developments during 2014 confirmed that the core support was also a relevant modality for providing flexibility for protection and preparing CSOs to be ready to grasp the opportunity to get involved more deeply in political and reform processes. The core support modality is foreseen to remain relevant and needed for the coming years of reforms of the public administration and bridging the gaps in the fractured society.

The core support modality has also shown that it has risks. The terminated support to a think tank due to lack of trust illustrates the risk of supporting a few prominent organisations which could be affected by political interests. Building capacity of a few organisations might also add to further concentration of donor funding. The strategic choice is however confirmed by the EU in its roadmap, stating the importance to focus on developing capacity of the limited segment of CSOs interested in governance and public policy at this stage. Other mechanisms to reach out broader to CSOs in the communities are needed in parallel by the donor community. The Swedish Embassy has addressed this need through its complementary initiatives.

### 2.1.2 Effectiveness

#### *i. Phases in the support*

This section discussed the effectiveness of the modality itself.

#### **Selection**

The initiative began by posting criteria for eligibility on the Swedish Embassy website and using these to assess the first organisations which approached the embassy (Mama-86 and Gurt). Initially the publicly announced programme required that the CSOs made a self-assessment of their organisations before applying. The Swedish Embassy found that Ukrainian CSOs were not used to such exercise and largely ignored it and preferred to ask for a meeting or to send a project proposal. Therefore the process was later changed to a more informal and interactive process of dialogue with CSOs which were considered interesting.



The ambition was to initially support some 5-6 mature organisations to “test the model” and thereafter to spread the support to a range of actors involved in crucial processes. Since in 2010 the force for reforms was not noticeable in government more attention was given to support reform actors in civil society. It was decided to support high profile CSOs which could have an influence on how civil society would develop.<sup>23</sup> The Swedish Embassy felt they had good knowledge of such actors, partly through a mapping study done by the EC in 2009<sup>24</sup>. In some cases they contacted the CSOs and initiated a dialogue, while in other cases CSOs approached the Embassy. Some organisations were cautious in entering the process and afraid of becoming bureaucratised. This is exemplified by how dialogue with the KhPG was conducted for more than one year before the organisation decided to continue. Other organisations exhibited similar prudence and engaged in long, internal discussions before deciding to be part of the process. Organisations hence made a conscious choice of entering a process which they understood would require adjustments in their organisations. For selecting the candidates, the Embassy also collected references on the CSOs from other donors and INGOs.

The first years of practice have shown that Sida was effective in deliberately choosing a group of national CSOs working on the main aspects reflected in the Swedish cooperation strategy. The relevance of the selection was confirmed by all donors interviewed. Sweden is seen to provide added value in being the first donor supporting LGBT rights and it was considered a huge step for Gay Alliance to be brought into a mainstream funding programme rather than having to continue to act separately from the rest of civil society. The lack of an organisation focusing on women’s rights is, however, noticeable. Attempts were made by the Swedish Embassy, but CSOs explored did not prove sufficiently persuasive to influence the Embassy’s choice. Support to CSOs focusing on women’s right is of particular importance at present when some groups are promoting nationalism and archaically-interpreted family rights which reinforce patriarchal values and challenge women’s rights. The conflicts in the east, where women are increasingly exposed to sexual violence, also highlight the importance of attention to women’s rights and violence against women. It is not evident that mainstreaming of gender has been promoted in the supported CSOs but 50% of the executive directors in the sample were women. Gender issues are more prominently addressed the two complimentary projects, i.e. the Marketplace and the Think-Tank Development Initiative, where the results matrices feature specific results for gender related issues. The number of selected environmental organisations is considered comparatively low and more regionally based environmental organisations could be relevant in a future portfolio.

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<sup>23</sup> Interview with Mirja Peterson and Olga Sandakova

<sup>24</sup> A mapping study of civil society in Ukraine, L. Mincheva, O. Vinnikov, 2009, EU/TACIS

The transparency of the selection process has been questioned by a few donors, while most shared an understanding that open calls for proposals would not be practical and realistic given the limited numbers of CSOs to be supported and the limited capacity within the Swedish Embassy to manage such a call compared to the high interest it would yield. As few would be supported, the donors also reflected on the need to respect the required efforts for CSOs to prepare applications. Some suggested that Sida could use limited invitations for preselected organisations, i.e. “competitions by invitations” to increase the transparency. Several donors are willing to share their experience with the Swedish Embassy of using this approach. Two donors questioned Sida’s selection approach and wished to see more transparency in why the organisations were selected. *“We do not understand Sida’s approach to hand pick organisations. It is a value in itself to have an open competition. There is no space for consultations with donors and no coordination with Sida. More consultation and info-sharing is needed.”*

No selection process is fool proof. By comparison Danida/UNDP went through an open call for proposals and a selection process with decision-makers from several funding bodies. Despite this one selected organisation was found to be inappropriate to their requirements and was changed it to another organisation. Likewise, Sida had to terminate one support due to unexpected negative internal changes, as well as selecting one organisation which was insufficiently prepared to go through the process. In both cases investments in terms of systems based audits were done.

### **Pre-core support**

The pre-core phase is considered to be implemented through a systematic and well-structured process. Sida has been strict in its demands for compliance with the recommendations from the systems based audits. Most of the CSOs experienced the pre-core support phase as a demanding phase which required more management capacity than initially expected, despite the insights gained through the extended selection process. This in turn affected and slowed down the organisations’ external work. Those currently in the pre-core support stage and those remembering back to that time, complained that it was hard to find the time to carry out much of their planned operations while undergoing the systems based audits and instituting the recommended changes. A lesson learned is that the CSOs need to be cautioned that planned external work might need to be reduced during this phase to avoid frustration and unmet external expectations. While complex, some organisations were excited by the process as they started to realise the consequences of the internal changes. In chapter 2.2 findings from the internal transformations are discussed.

### *Systems based audits*

The systems based audits were conducted by a Swedish consultancy consortium composed by Professional Management and Swedish Development Advisors (SDA), which was procured through Sida’s framework agreement for systems based audits. It is considered a strength that the same auditors conducted all systems based audits (as well as an additional number of systems based audits for other Sida partners), since they were conducted in a consistent way, applying the same methodology to all. This

consistency made the recommendations more credible for the CSOs. The auditors seemed to have developed a good understanding of the Ukrainian context and national legislation. Nonetheless, some CSOs found that even deeper understanding of the national legislation would have been beneficial. The audits were complemented with group exercises with several CSOs to explain new concepts of governance, external boards and indicators for strategic planning. The systems based audits produced in general some 30+ recommendations for improvements, of which 10 -15 were considered crucial. Full compliance with these has been a condition for core support. The recommendations were presented as in accordance with European standards for NGO management. This was questioned by some of the CSOs as “standards” per se. The rather perceived them as northern European NGO practices compared to more family based style of NGO management in Ukraine and as foreign to Ukraine. The evaluation has found however that the requirements on transparency, accountability, internal systems and procedures, strategic plans and comprehensive budgets are in line with good international practices.<sup>25</sup> The systems based audits have interpreted these principles in accordance with the previous Swedish Government Policy for support to civil society.

The governance and management concepts presented for adoption were to a large extent new for Ukraine. The CSOs confirmed that most challenging were the ideas of creating independent boards of directors, opening up and expanding memberships to create a governance structure of checks and balances and making strategic plans monitorable through results frameworks with indicators. Likewise the concept of downwards accountability was completely new, as witnessed by one general manager: *“The importance of accountability appeared. This changed our understanding substantially. It did not exist before and we did not think about this before.”* Many of the CSOs confirm that the systems based audits became an educational experience and an eye-opener for them. The professionalism, technical competence and coaching approach by the systems auditors were appreciated by the CSOs.

#### *The improvement projects*

Since the concepts were new, it took time for the CSOs to internalise them and develop their own processes of how to address the recommendations. Some CSOs were overwhelmed by the number of recommendations and did not know where to start, while others assumed a more pragmatic approach and worked their way through them in smaller batches. The CSOs took various amounts of time to change their structures,

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25 See e.g. Code of Practice on Donor Harmonisation, Guideline for Operationalisation of Key Principles, and the Key Principles for Harmonisation and Alignment, the Informal Donor Group (Irish Aid chair) and Civil Society and Aid Effectiveness, Findings, Recommendations and Good Practice, OECD, 2010

document existing or develop lacking policies and internal systems. Many undertook comprehensive consultations with their members and networks to change the mind-sets. In general, implementation of internal policies and systems, including financial management systems were considered easier than changing governance structures. In some cases the processes were rushed through to reach the core support, while others worked on them for a long time. Sida applied a hands-off approach and at the same time was seen as accessible and understanding of the CSOs' needs, maintaining a close relation throughout the process. The technical support, extended by the systems based auditors and the Danish consultancy firm COWI during the improvement projects was appreciated and in many cases instrumental. The CSOs were free to draw upon these based on their own needs which proved to be an efficient and practical approach for making relevant technical assistance available. The consultants' coaching approach was seen as useful. While sometimes painful and challenging, all supported organisations confirm that the process was worthwhile and brought the organisation to a new level of maturity. Below are a few of their voices:

*"Sida was a catalyser. They pushed us through this process and we do not regret it"*

*"The struggle is worth the results but be ready for huge work. Sida created conditions to make change happen"*

*"Our goal is to improve the organisational capacity of Ukrainian NGOs. We want to be an example, a good example, and apply the best practise. It is very useful for us."*

*"The financial support is good but we would still like to be part of this even without it. We have received learning."*

*"Donors understand the structure now. We became transparent to other donors. One of the important added values of the support was to put the structures in place."*

### *Verification*

The evaluation found that the verification visit which included the return of the systems based auditors was a crucial step in Sida's approach as it manifests Sida's seriousness towards the CSOs. With the verification visit, Sida showed a demand for results and that it trusted the CSOs to take responsibility and manage their own change processes. The auditors did not only tick the boxes that the work was done, but checked the use of policies and tools. In one case they concluded that recommendations were not sufficiently met and the organisation had to continue its change process and be verified again. This also set a precedent for others. However, while being strict, Sida's programme officers and the consultants were seen as accessible and accommodating in their interactions.

### *Financial audits*

Due to the nature of donor funding most CSOs had mainly relied on project audits before and had never gone through a comprehensive financial audit in accordance with international standards previously. The CSOs confirmed that they were scared of the process. Financial audits according to international standards is an absolute requirement in all Sida support and is not a specific feature for the core support per se. However, through the pre-core support most of the CSOs started their history of audits of full financial statements. This contributed, together with other parallel donor

initiatives (e.g. USAID) to raise the audit standards of CSOs in Ukraine above the national requirements. Since 2012 international audit standards are required by Ukrainian NGO legislation, allowing a transition period of five years. A few of the CSOs had been part of USAID/PACT's "Audit readiness project" which prepared them for the full financial audit. This initiative also increased capacity among auditors in international audit standards. Some of the CSOs experienced difficulties with the differences in audit requirements of USAID and Sida and found it hard to comply with both standards. It also took some time for CSOs to understand Sida's requirements for the audit process itself, i.e. Sida's approval of TOR and the selection of auditors and the CSOs' management response to the auditors' management letters. As one CSO said: *"Auditing was challenging and costly but a worthwhile exercise."*

The Ukrainian audit firm Compass was found to have played an important role as it audited six of the core support organisations for their first time. The mentoring approach used by the audit firm in following up the systems based audit recommendations further reinforced the changes in governance and internal control systems. Compass has continued to raise knowledge on international standards in audits and internal control through a series of monthly round tables for CSOs on governance, financial management and project management. The systems based auditors were invited to one of the events to share knowledge. It is thus seen that there has been mutually reinforcing process between the systems based auditors and the financial auditors for the benefit of the CSOs, which is considered a strength of the approach used.

### **The core support phase**

The core support phase can start once a CSO has completed the verification process and has improved its strategic plan and complemented it with a monitorable results framework. A comprehensive budget should also be in place. Funds are approved for the same period as the strategic plan. For the earlier agreements (Mama-86, Gurt and Telekritika) the funding period was limited to 2 - 2,5 years due to the ending of the Swedish cooperation strategy with Ukraine in 2013. More recent agreements, when the new results strategy was in place, are longer-term. A second phase of core support to Mama-86 was agreed in mid-2014.

The CSOs appreciate the long-term funding through the core support which gives them the stability, space and trust to further develop their work in line with their vision and ideas. *"Sida is sensitive to our ideas and changes, knows our needs and visions, always trust us... We feel the space"*. The comprehensive nature of the core support is regarded as one of its unique features as it encompasses programme funding and institutional costs, as well as funds for continued institutional development. The CSOs have continued their implementation of recommendations from the systems based audits during the core support phase and planned for further institutional development, such as geographical expansion, further delegation of authority to project managers, expansion of memberships or development of human resource systems. Only a few constraints with the funding have been reported (i.e. buying property, some concerns on investments in computers and of an administrative limit of 7%).

*Lack of guidelines*

While flexibility is appreciated it is also found challenging. As the idea is to align with the CSOs' systems, Sida did not provide templates. This way of operating was new for the CSOs being used to donor instructions. Listening to the front runners, a common concern is that they lacked templates and guidelines for applications and reporting during the core phase. The Swedish Embassy tried to address this and asked the systems based auditors to develop report templates. However these proved to be too mechanic and did not fully meet the needs. One of the first organisations to have core support expressed it as they had to “*open up the way with their own forehead*”. The CSOs found it challenging to design their formats for applications and reports and would have appreciated more guidance from Sida of what aspects to include in applications and reports. Sometimes the documents developed were not in line with Sida's expectations and had to be redone, which proved to be time consuming. Clearer instructions or guidelines for applications and annual reports could have reduced this inefficiency.

*Sharing of experiences*

The present partners are pioneers in the core support modality. There is therefore an opportunity to exchange experiences and learn from others being in different phases of the support about how various aspects were handled. New needs for sharing also emerge as the CSOs are focusing more on their external work in the core phase. Unfortunately, there have been fewer joint attempts for learning and sharing in the core phase compared to the pre-core phase.

*Importance of the relationship*

A key aspect is the relation between the CSOs and the programme offices of the Swedish Embassy. As monitoring is not done on activities but on the CSOs' strategic developments a continuous dialogue facilitates monitoring of such results, in addition to the formal consultation meetings. The CSOs are selected as partners because they are seen as strategic and it is also in Sida's interest to have a close relation with them. As will be seen in chapter 2.3, management of the support, to have time for dialogue, be close to the partners and develop a trusting relationship are some of the main challenges in the programme.

*ii. Donors' perception of effectiveness of the modality*

When asked about the effectiveness of the core support, donors highlighted the following results of the Swedish core support model:

- Frees people's minds to concentrate on their missions without interference and placing more focus in the results.
- Allows for strategic thinking among CSOs which is needed to affect government
- Has made long term thinking possible for organisations, allowing for CSOs to expand their areas of work
- Has become a quality standard for supported organisations.



- Has created centres of good practice in different sectors through the deliberate choice of strategic partners
- Has created role models among CSOs
- Has made the organisations trustworthy and serious as they know they are being checked through Sida's close relationship
- Has made the core organisations more attractive for funding and in a better position to receive larger grants
- Has made the CSOs not dependent on only one person as they have become institutions.

The EU country road map for engagement with civil society highlights the importance of focusing on CSO legitimacy and downwards accountability and refers to the work of establishing independent boards as a pathway to legitimacy and transparency as one of the best practises.<sup>26</sup> A commonly referred to example of the effects of the Swedish support was MLI assuming the responsibility on behalf of a broad CSO coalition to manage a large EU grant for the RPR. *“We had not supported MLI before the RPR. They knew they would go through the audit and that they had to pass on the quality. The fact that they were supported by Sida was secure enough for us.” (EU)*

Some donors stated that, while it was more difficult to see effects of the support in human rights organisations due to their specific nature, changes were more visible in many of the others which were becoming leaders for CSO activities and assuming sector leadership roles. However, rightly one donor asked for *“indicators for success for Sida's core support. Is it the internal procedures in place or the external impact?”* This confirms the need for an overall results framework and proper documentation of the support to make it more understandable externally.

### *iii. Conclusions*

It is concluded that the organisations understood fairly well, through the dialogue approach applied in the selection phase, the magnitude and importance of changes which would be required from them. This is seen as strength of the approach and a contributing success factor for the effectiveness, since real changes are only possible if they are wanted and owned by the organisation. It is therefore questioned whether it would have been possible to ensure similar strong ownership for change through an open tender process without the personal interaction.

The pre-core phase has probably had larger effects than one could imagine when the programme was conceived and has become an end itself. It has showed a new approach for institutional development and quality assurance of CSOs. It is concluded

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<sup>26</sup> Ukraine EU Country Roadmap for Engagement with civil society 2014 – 17, EU Delegation, 2014

that Sida used a comprehensive, systematic and appropriate approach to guide the CSOs through this challenging and complex phase, bringing in new knowledge and setting new standards for CSO management in Ukraine, while still maintaining local ownership of the change.

However, the evaluation concludes that there has been insufficient guidance for the partners during the core support phase. While the pre-core support period was seen as very structured, the partners have felt less guidance in applications and reporting by the Swedish Embassy during this phase which has led to some inefficiencies. Due to time constraints the interaction between Sida and some of the partners has been less frequent.

Overall, the evaluation has found that the approach to core support through the sequenced model combined with a close relationship between the donor and a CSO appears to have been effective for achieving organisational changes.

#### **2.1.4 Cost implications**

The model has so far relied mainly on Scandinavian expertise for providing knowledge on contemporary European best practises in CSO management through the systems based audits, the technical assistance and the verification missions. Improved financial management has been developed through the financial audits by Ukrainian auditors who have ventured into the new field of CSO financial auditing. The use of Scandinavian consultants has meant a high cost for the programme compared to the alternative cost of using national consultants and is less sustainable and therefore deserves further considerations. However, it has repeatedly been argued by the CSOs that it was important that the consultants had own experience in the concepts they introduced. Otherwise it would not have been possible to introduce i.e. external boards, accountability, legitimacy and results framework as these were concepts not widely known in Ukraine. Likewise, the mentoring approach used by the consultants has been crucial. It cannot be taken for granted that national consultants would have been able to assume a similar approach without own experience in the content. The total contributions to the core partners have been MSEK 90 and the total cost for technical assistance has been MSEK 8,9<sup>27</sup>. This represents 9% of the total programme cost. As the systems based audits has been the centrepiece of the internal transformations leading to the core funding, and as this function could not have been done during this pioneer phase by national consultants, this ratio is judged as justified.

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<sup>27</sup> According to the Terms of Reference for the evaluation



Another high cost area is provision of a financial audit in compliance with international standards. This is found to have contributed to raising the standards of financial management of the CSOs as well as to the revised national NGO legislation. Although the team has not been able to accurately estimate the additional costs for this compared to audits according to Ukrainian standards the importance of financial audits according to international standards for increasing donors' confidence in the CSOs cannot be overstated. This is also in line with international best practise and Sida's general requirements in all contributions.

#### *i. Conclusions*

The cost of technical assistance as 9% of the programme cost is assessed as justified due to the large impact it has had on the programme and its wider effects through synergies with other programmes. It is unlikely that local alternatives would have provided the same results since new and sometimes controversial concepts were introduced, based on democratic practises within CSO management fostering European values. Likewise the cost of the validation visits is justified, as they played a crucial role in demonstrating Sida's seriousness and an expectation for change. The higher costs of requiring financial audits according to international standards are found to be justified, as this has been pivotal in building donors' trust in the improved financial management capabilities of the CSOs. They are also part of Sida's standard requirements.

## 2.2 INTERNAL TRANSFORMATIONS OF SUPPORTED CSOS

### **2.2.1 Effectiveness**

This chapter presents findings regarding observed changes in the supported organisations in the selected sample.

#### *i. Improved governance*

*"It is hard to initiate change in an organisation from within - it is much easier to justify it when the impulse comes from outside"* as stated by one of the core partners. This is particularly true when change is of a personal nature, involves devolving power from a charismatic founder and long term leader, and when everyone is worried by change and what it may involve. However as one Executive Director mentioned *"once governance had been improved and policies documented, it then made many decisions less personal and easier to make."*

#### **Governing structures**

To change the way how strategic decisions are taken within a CSO presented a challenge to all programme partners. The creation of an external board has proved one of the most difficult areas to tackle for all CSOs, both in terms of identifying members who were willing to serve voluntarily as well as due to founders' fear of losing control. The organisations which Sida has brought into the programme had a

range of structures initially, from a flexible group of journalists or employees making joint decisions and earning a fee, to older organisations with board members carrying out both strategic and operational functions. Some of these have now created truly external boards and others have adapted their existing structures in order to comply. A tendency observed was that the changes were more prominent in younger media organisations and less pronounced in the human rights organisations. This could be due to the latter having longer track records of functioning, as well as the family nature of the organisations linked to the sensitivity and sometimes confidentiality their human rights work. There was some concern raised that the structure for governance introduced was the northern style of NGO structure, bringing in separation of responsibilities between governance and management and a wide range of skills and experience into the boards, while southern European NGOs have more of a family nature similar to many Ukrainian CSOs. This indicates that the governance concepts might not yet fully be embraced. There was also a slight objection to over-bureaucratisation of organisations which makes them more like businesses and takes away from the essence and motivation of solidarity which drives civil society and therefore could stifle creativity.

Most CSOs have mentioned the difficulty of finding reputable and willing board members who know the field and are prepared to give up their time voluntarily for meetings. It is not a role which is part of recent cultural history in Ukraine. One board therefore relies heavily on members living abroad. The boards are on the whole small, with as few as three members, to be compared with common practise in Northern Europe where boards tend to have 10-12 members to have a full complement and a sufficient range of experience to make good decisions. On the whole the board members appeared committed and most have been chosen for their specific skills (medical knowledge, journalist experience, legal background, etc.) while a few have more generic organisational management skills or links with business. Overall the boards are assessed to have grasped their ultimate responsibility for ensuring that the CSO is solvent, well-run and delivering its goals and most were gradually coming to terms with their duties of care, prudence and compliance. *“Now we feel that we have become more strategic and that our board of directors make much better decisions based on realistic assessments of the situation”*

### **Separation of responsibilities**

Several boards include the former leaders of the organisations which increases their understanding of governance and management issues. Frequently there are close relations between the current Executive Directors and the former, now on the board, particularly when they are new in their positions. Some separation of responsibilities has been somewhat symbolic. One chairperson honestly admitted that they virtually rubber-stamp suggestions made by the Executive Director as they trust his judgement completely. However most of the boards in place have taken on a fair amount of decision-making, but there still may be some way to go to functioning as a strategic and oversight body. Continuous developments of the boards will remain a long term capacity development need. To a large extent the boards seem to have embraced responsibility for strategic planning, while financial management appears less well ad-

dressed. It seems to have worked best so far with Gurt, Telekritika, EPL and Centre UA, which is explained by that some already had partly external boards or that the change in governance structure came at the right time and met a need.

The separation between the Chairperson/board and the Executive Director in terms of strategic and management decisions has led to amongst others the following types of improved organisational effectiveness:

- Freeing the Chairperson's capacity for strategic developments;
- Operationalisation of ideas generated at board level by the management;
- Professionalization of the management by being given the responsibility for operations;
- Further internal delegation and more effective internal communication leading to expanded work, which in turn improved the images and reputations.

### **Clear policies and internal rules and regulations**

All organisations developed their internal rules, policies, practices and procedures. In the past many of these had existed in some organisations, but few were written down and so had the potential for being misused or abused. One Executive Director commented that having a policy to refer to on such matters as holiday allowances, time off in lieu, sick leave, etc. made her position easier when dealing with colleagues, who are also friends, as it depersonalises any tough decisions she has to make.

As mentioned, the reform process took away the energy from the CSOs' operational work. However, all those taking part in one of the focus groups agreed that once everything was in place administration became quicker with clearer, more automatic procedures. Some of the CSOs stated that the key to the transformation was Sida's focus on accountability which, when fully understood, started many processes. Hence, internalising the importance of accountability may become a way to safeguard and maintain new routines and systems.

An indication that more delegation is actually taking place is that the team met with more than the Executive Directors, as used to be the case previously when nobody else in the organisations was trusted to meet donors or independent evaluators. Given the extra pressure on organisations to act in troubled times they have seen the benefit of delegation and alongside it clear structures, and what it means in communicating and reporting. Many of the CSOs felt that the next step is further delegation of responsibilities to project managers.

### *Conclusions improved governance*

The evaluation has found that the improved governance through changed structures and internal rules and regulation made the CSOs more effective and found indications that it influenced their performance. Even those organisations claiming to have made few changes to their governance structure have felt that they have become more effective now due to having been "given time to think" about their organisation, their mission, respective roles and administrative procedures once the main systems and

structures are in place. The creation of an external board structure has overall been a positive force for the majority to open up new opportunities. It has helped bring several of the CSOs to a new level of maturity by leading to new ways of functioning and expanding the scope of work.

ii. *Improved strategic management*

**Strategic priorities, plans and results frameworks**

All supported organisations revised their strategic priorities and plans. None had previously developed results frameworks with smart indicators. For some organisations (EPL, Mama-86, KhPG, Centre UA) the review of strategic plans was a painful and long process as it took quite a while to understand, identify and agree upon the best way to put in their energy. Strategic priorities have been clearly defined by Mama-86, Centre UA, Telekritika, EPL, KhPG and Gurt, while Hromadske TV and Gay Alliance are developing theirs. The results frameworks (RAFs) allowed core partners to link overall goals with activities and helped them to concentrate on results of their work rather than activities, as it was before. *“Now we have joint planning in organisation. We think about the achievement of objectives and indicators, we can see where and how we can enhance each other’s work”* Having strategic priorities and results helped the CSOs to improve their performance and understand new opportunities better. *“We decided on strategic directions and selected new board members in line with these directions. As a result we now offer more of our own products, new areas of work, new training, and are moving more to the regional level”*.

The events in Ukraine during late 2013 and 2014 forced all core support organisations to reconsider parts of their long-term strategies for remaining relevant and responding to the context and needs of their target groups. One example is Centre UA whose previous priorities changed drastically after EuroMaidan and the change of the government. This led to the ideas behind the legal reform package, RPR which was not part of their original plan. Another example is Mama-86 which as a membership organisation have members in the war affected regions and in Crimea. At the local level work had to be adjusted to these new situations as well as to address the situation of refugee children in camps in other parts. Their executive director said: *“We have managed to keep our organisation together despite the volatile situation. Sida helped to save the organisation. They gave resources and energy for development.”*

**Result based management**

Some of the core supported CSOs (Mama-86, Centre UA, EPL, Gurt, KhPG) started to work in a more result oriented way, integrating the RAFs into the regular management of operational planning and follow-up. Consequently, a management system based on the strategic plan has been put in place in some. *“We now have a M&E strategy that helps us to keep track our results. We have monthly and annual reporting according to our goals...”* However proper systems for monitoring, reporting and internal communication on performance were still found to be a weakness which was raised by a few as an issue to be addressed. *“We have a M&E policy but no good system to make it accessible and to work with it. We need to integrate M&E into each project activity and have a system to collect information. The practise is not yet main-*

*streamed.*” Such needs are included in the CSOs strategic plans for continuous institutional development during the core support phase.

### **Comprehensive budgets**

None of the CSOs had a consolidated budget prior to Sida’s core support and used only separate project budgets. The consolidated budget was a precondition for core support and all had to develop one. In general it was perceived as a convenient tool for more effective management as it gives a clear picture of the organisation’s financial situation and funding needs, as well as facilitates control over the budget usage. The CSOs which faced financial difficulties in 2014 due to the banks bankruptcy (Centre UA, KhPG), felt the real value of a consolidated budget. Nevertheless, all organisations faced the same challenge of learning how to work with it and to train project teams on how to use it properly.

### *Conclusions improved strategic management*

Overall, the majority of supported CSOs changed their operational planning practises and organisational structure for planning, which allowed them to lift their work to a more strategic level and improve their reputation. They started to use strategic planning as a management tool and revise it according to the changes in the context. Many of them became more result oriented. The improved performance through the operationalisation of the strategic plans has helped most of supported CSOs in their fundraising. The consolidated budget has improved the CSOs’ sustainability, helping to determine funding needs and to handle indirect and administrative costs more systematically. Practical monitoring systems still need to be developed in some of the CSOs and results reporting remains an area for further development.

### *iii. Improved financial management*

#### **Separation of authority**

Separation of authority for internal financial control has been improved in all core support organisations. Some also separated the functions of accounting and financial management by hiring financial managers after the systems based audits. Moreover, the CSOs created and put in practise systems for payment approvals - defining signing stages and responsible persons (initiation of payments, its verification, and preparation of payment orders, approval, and execution of payment). Most of the CSOs found the changes useful as they made them more accountable and transparent.

#### **Financial rules and regulations**

All the core supported CSOs in the sample have appropriate policies and procedures in place to ensure that external financial audits are carried out, that fraud and corruption is prevented and that procurement procedures are open and transparent, that budgeting and financial management is documented and regulated. However, some organisations (Telekritika, ELP, Mama86, KhPG) still need time and support in streamlining and automatisation of these procedures. *“We improved the financial management systems a lot and internal reporting and auditing, but we still need some external support for integrating Programme Managers into financial management and make them more responsible for budgeting and financial planning”.*

### Accounting

Prior to Sida's support almost all the CSOs used manual accounting in Excel databases, developed in-house, and not according to international standards for recoding financial transactions. All of them initiated either installation (KhPG, EPL, Telekritika, Mama86, Hromadske TV, Gay Alliance) or upgrading (Gurt, Centre UA) of accounting software. It allowed the organisations to minimise the manual risks in accounting and handling cash and made it easier to prepare donor reports, since the accounting systems allowed separation of project income and expenditure.

### Budgeting and financial reporting

Prior to Sida's support, none of the supported CSOs had a system for annual planning and budgeting and only used project budgeting following different donors' instructions. Rules for budgeting were developed by all the core-supported CSOs. However, most of them experienced difficulties in changing the approach towards budgeting and understanding how to apply the developed rules in practice. Some of the CSOs (EPL, Mama-86) still use a ledger in Excel where duplicate information is entered on projects in the 1C bookkeeping software. In addition, all of them started to prepare organisational budgets in the Ukrainian national currency, which makes budgeting more difficult due to the fast changing exchange rates and laws regarding foreign currency. All organisations improved their internal financial reporting procedures as they established clear lines of authority and responsibilities for governing bodies and programme management teams related to financial reporting. The effects of the changed practises are felt by the organisations:

*"Before Sida's support financial management in the organisation was built on trust, but now we rely on reliable sources".*

*"All PMs are trained in financial management. We feel the difference! It was a playground before. It is very obvious now that we needed all the structures. The financial manager was going crazy before due to lack of procedures. We have improved so much."*

### Auditing

All supported CSOs conducted financial audits on an ad hoc basis prior to Sida's support, and conducted only projects audits. The only exception was Mama-86, which had previous experiences in financial audits of the organisation's financial statements during an earlier core support in the 2000s. The CSOs also lacked systems and routines for following up of audit findings. Now all the CSOs in the sample have started to conduct annual external audits according to international standards (IFAC) and integrated audits as a management tool for improvements of internal control. All developed a regulation on external audits or an audit policy which stipulates the process of contracting an auditor through a competitive tendering procedure and regulates how a formal management response should address audits recommendations. The benefits with the new procedures were explained as: *"The passage of the annual audit is an argument to deal with criticism of external audience and provide legal protection if the public authorities pose any questions to us."*



*Conclusions improved financial management*

Through the core support (and in some cases in combination with other donor support i.e. PACT and Internews) the CSOs were able to improve the routines of financial management, decision making and internal financial control. The development of financial procedures was considered relevant for all organisations, but especially for those which experienced intensive growth. The CSOs have shifted from manual to automatic accounting packages. The competence of accountants has been upgraded as they also began to apply international accounting standards, which however still remains an area for further development. All organisations started to conduct annual financial audits of their financial statements according to international standards. Together this resulted in improved financial transparency and efficiency in the supported CSOs. A lesson learned is that emphasis on governance and accountability at strategic levels was a good starting point for gradual improvements of financial management and internal control. By creating understanding of the concepts the need for changing systems and developing internal regulations for improved internal control followed rather naturally. Often attempts for change starts at the other end with changing practices and systems without developing a more profound understanding of governance. Another lesson learned is that the most challenging type of policy to develop appeared to be those regarding anti-corruption and fraud which were perceived as an insult to staff and members. The need for such policies needs to be explained and introduced with cultural sensitivity.

*iv. Improved performance***Expanded areas of operations**

There are several examples of how the organisational transformations enabled the CSOs to expand their operations. Helsinki Group and KhPG expanded their work beyond the rights holders who feel their civil and political rights have been violated so much that they are prepared to take action, to a wider range of beneficiaries, e.g. groups of IDPs regarding their living conditions and access to services, thus adding social and economic rights to the scope of their work. Telekritika have begun to monitor Russian propaganda in the media and have created a network of regionally based journalists for monitoring of local media. MLI, Centre UA and Mama-86 are extending their work geographically to include a larger regional component and strengthening their networks, while EPL has initiated monitoring of environmental effects of the war in the East. Hence, the CSOs have used the support to expand their work in a range of relevant areas. The evaluation found that core support could contribute to innovative thinking in two ways; through creating more space for strategic thinking and by bringing in new blood to the organisations as professional staff and new board members.

**Networking and building alliances**

Networking has been the area which has suffered most during the EuroMaidan and the initial stages of the war. When there are so many urgent issues for an organisation to deal with, prioritising networking meetings and forming new alliances is not easy. The increased donor interest in Ukraine at present is an opportunity for national organisations to come together to make the best use of the new funds being allocated to

Ukraine to address the needs of the most vulnerable people they represent in the regions. However, it appears that networking is not a natural strength of Ukrainian civil society. Several good examples of strengthened networks were found amongst most partners. Telekritika considers building relations with non-media CSOs as a strategic priority and has built a regional network of journalists. MLI are coordinating the RPR with several hundreds of actors participating. Centre UA is a campaigning organisation working through networks and labels itself as “a platform of platforms”. Mama-86 is using the second core support to strategically strengthen its regional network of members and develop their institutionalisation. Helsinki Group brought its 29 member groups from all over Ukraine together through the strategic planning process.

In addition, during the evaluation, several organisations mentioned how useful it was to get together as a group of Sida support receivers and requested Sida to organise regular experience sharing events for different groups within the organisations, e.g. board members, executive directors and financial managers to share learning from their respective professional areas.

### **Advocacy**

Over a relatively short time, from an historical background where external participation in policy development was not possible, through a period where CSOs were tolerated at decision-making events, many organisations now find themselves in a situation where their active involvement is seen as essential. Several of the CSOs supported have stepped up to the plate in taking key roles over a range of laws being drafted. This shift from “learning to make yourself heard” to “expecting to be heard” is an important one which has to be accompanied by extending and continuing legitimacy to stay in touch with those whose views they are representing.

Each organisation handles advocacy in their own way. Gurt are deepening their impact at village level in 10 pilot sites in Kyiv oblast’ aiming to get 20% of the population active in local decision-making and working with local authority leaders to build mechanisms of local democracy. They feel that this can help to feed rural opinion into the national framework. The Helsinki Group has helped to put together an Advocacy Campaign Centre. Most of the organisations are involved in policy dialogue with parliamentary committees, ministries and national authorities. MLI has increased its advocacy at a national level and is managing the coalition of CSOs lobbying on the package of draft laws (RPR). Simultaneously they are carrying out more regional consultations to raise political awareness and bring more regional perspectives to national discussions. Centre UA was a member of a Coordination Council during EuroMaidan and participated in the development of more than 20 different laws. Their anti-corruption Chesno Campaign exposed candidates’ sources of funding for election campaigning, which now should be published in the official newspaper “Voice of Ukraine. Mama-86 and EPL participated in the recent formation of the coalition agreement and as a result topics on ecological and environmental issues were included in it. Both also actively participate in the RPR on the issues of ecology and environmental impact assessment. EPL assessed the draft laws on Environmental Impact Assessment and blocked their passage as they did not correspond to the Århus Con-



vention. They now are working on the draft law on hazardous waste. KhPG participated in the revision of the Law on Access to Public Information, prepared a shadow report on Optional Protocol of the Convention against Torture (OPCAT) as a member of the network on fighting torture in Ukraine and presented it in Geneva, as well as developed a network for review of strategic cases. They also prepared a strategy on the Ministry of Interior reform, which was endorsed by the Cabinet of Ministers. There are many more examples of national level advocacy the partners are involved in.

### *Conclusions improved performance*

Evidence is found that the organisations have expanded their operations, piloted new ways of working, increased the networking and to some extent become more effective in advocacy. It should however be born in mind that Sida selected organisations that were already playing advocacy roles prior to the support. Hence much of the advocacy results cannot be attributed solely to the Swedish support. However, going through the process of strategising, defining results and how to measure them, as well as making systems more effective have made the outcomes more strategic and focused. The changed structures free up strategic thinking and delegating authority has released potential. Sida's core support allowed them to invest in development of human capital within their organisations and to concentrate more on implementation of their strategies, rather than permanently searching for project funding.

The focus on accountability and building stronger links in the regions has affected the CSOs to also be more concerned about their relevance on the national level. At a time of hostility between factions within the country bringing a greater awareness of the need for pluralism and inclusiveness gives CSOs a vital role in bringing to the decision-making tables the views of their various constituents. In turn it also heightens CSO understanding of the need for greater legitimacy to voice the perspectives of the various groups they represent. Thus linkages can be seen between Sida's support and improved advocacy capacity. All of the organisations met by the Evaluation Team spoke of change - some willingly and excitedly, others more grudgingly. They all replied affirmatively when asked if they would recommend joining a core support programme to other organisations and despite some minor frustrations none would consider leaving the programme.

### **2.2.2 Sustainability**

Sustainability is a broad concept which goes beyond financial stability. The question of what a 'sustainable' CSO look like was explored in INTRAC's recent webinar<sup>28</sup>. It highlighted the need for an integrated concept of organisational sustainability encom-

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<sup>28</sup> "Building sustainability of civil society, INTRAC, December 4, 2014,

passing legitimacy, civil society space, resourcing, leadership, values, mission and structures. Sida's programme has tackled work on most of these key factors. In Ukraine today space, legitimacy, and values are perhaps the most challenging, the former depending much on the political direction the government takes but also how civil society can encourage more widely the understanding of civil society space and the skills to make the most of it. The recent 3rd Capacity Development Forum organised by ISAR-Ednannia repeated the need to broaden the base of civil society. A USAID funded research by PACT/UNITER <sup>29</sup> showed that Ukrainian citizens, despite the mobilization during the EuroMaidan movement, still have limited engagement with, contribution to and understanding of the role of civil society. Only 1% were engaged as volunteers for civic movements during the past year while it estimated that 20 – 25% of the population is interested in contributing to citizens' engagement.

The following section looks at sustainability in terms of the organisation's ability to manage itself and to interact with its environment, its ability to be transparent and accountable to its stakeholders and thus seen as legitimate, the CSO's reputation and visibility, its financial strengths and ability to be resilient.

#### *i. Reputation and visibility*

Most of the CSOs receiving core support have increased their reputation with donors, as evidenced by wider donor interest or support; with governmental structures, as shown by their involvement in national decision-making forums; and with the public at large, as shown by their regional outreach and usage of new means of communication to reach a wider audience. Everyone spoke of their own organisation with a tone of pride, thus indicating a strong internal reputation. The requests for more networking opportunities also suggest a high amount of mutual respect. However it is still not easy to recruit board members even for these high profile organisations. This indicates that civil society is still lacking sufficiently in reputation for such an offer to be considered as an honour rather than a chore, albeit a good and necessary one.

In addition, greater visibility brings its own risks. By aligning themselves with new assignments and policy projects, the organisation's reputation might suffer if these projects or resultant policies fail. As in the West, there is the danger of governments virtually absorbing CSOs as part of their service provision and thus reducing their ability to be critical. New and returning donors are on public arena now, but may well leave again when other priorities take over. While extending outreach as much as possible, there is still little understanding amongst the general public of what a CSO is. As mentioned in the focus group on sustainability there are widespread views

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29 Sociological Poll for Uniter Project, D Mikanchuk and I. Volosevych, GFK, November 2014

among the general public that volunteers are soldiers or that charities should be dispersing material help rather than lobbying for change. A recent survey published by the Mirror of the Week/Dzerkalo Tyzhnya<sup>30</sup> undertaken by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology demonstrated that the highest levels of trust is given to volunteers (scores 7.3 scores out of 10), while NGO/Public organisational are rated the fifth (6.4 of 10), following the church and the army.

ii. *Transparency and downwards accountability*

Organisations implementing projects for donors ostensibly defer their accountability to those providing the funds: they dictate aims, sometimes methods, indicators and reporting requirements. By receiving core support there is a shift for the CSOs to taking on accountability themselves. Gurt, for example, is currently working on and promoting a nationally acceptable Transparency Index. Introducing clearer structures and systems has improved the organisations' accountability as they can now show to all how they work. By being more open about the way they work, the CSOs are showing greater respect to both their beneficiaries and partners. It is an attractive feature to other potential donors and a good example to government structures, while also being a useful weapon against detractors of the sector. A consolidated budget showing a variety of donors is for example the proof of not being a "pocket organisation".

Within the organisations steps had been made towards increased accountability towards lower level staff and members by boards and management including everyone in strategic planning sessions. As Gurt chairperson said *"It was as much the process as the final result which was the achievement"* after a few days spent away together. The Institute of Broadcasters mentioned how important it was that they gathered all 57 members of the Association together to produce their strategic plan and how useful an exercise was for the smaller groups amongst them who had never been through the process before. A similar approach was used within Mama-86 and the Helsinki group with their members. No matter how challenging a prospect is to develop a strategic plan with useful indicators, the experience of this sample group shows that the temptation to rely on external expertise should be resisted for more inclusive, internal processes which bring better, long lasting results and ownership and is a tool for downwards accountability.

To become more accountable to beneficiaries, Centre UA, for example, emphasises the importance of flexible pre-planning based on monitoring of public attitudes to be seen as a relevant actor in the field. Mama-86 has strengthened its links to the communities with their Eco-schools and institutional development support provided to its

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30 The Mirror of the Week/Dzerkalo Tyzhnya, Issue 50, 2014.12.26

members addressing its local environmental needs at the same time as building local advocacy capacity. This in turn gives the organisation greater legitimacy at the national level by more accurately representing the regional perspective. Telekritika has moved from being a solely Kyiv-based organisation to becoming a national organisation by developing its network of locally based journalists monitoring local media.

There are many examples of each organisation extending their uses of different means of communication to broaden their constituencies. Hromadske TV is organising events, as well as using social media to reach those not online. Telekritika is conducting public hearings and piloting new services based on the results of focus group surveys. KhPG is organising material support to IDPs as well as providing legal advice. Mama-86 is developing the potential of their regional partners to work at local level, in advocacy, public monitoring of environmental policy, awareness raising activities and fundraising. Gurt is using new radio airwaves to broaden outreach. Centre UA has always held public meetings in the regions to listen to citizens in order to stay relevant, and also use Facebook to link up to a younger audience.

### *iii. Legitimacy*

By increasing their accountability the CSOs have also increased legitimacy through broader outreach, increased transparency and closer relations with stakeholders. While in the West legitimacy is often counted in numbers of the organisation's members, this is a less appealing feature in post-Soviet countries. Many organisations are sensitive to this and are looking more broadly at legitimacy issues as ways of ensuring relevance for citizens. Examples are national organisations extending their geographical sphere to include areas and partners where they previously have been less active and internet-based media organisations running regional events to reach out to those less active in the digital sphere. Gurt is perhaps the only one looking towards the possibility of turning users of their web portal into members of the organisation, but their greater focus is on developing skills and confidence to bring about change at a local level. Telekritika and Mama-86 have taken genuine steps to expand their memberships based on what is seen useful for the organisations.

### *iv. Organisational capacity*

There is no denying that the internal housekeeping of making sure that all policies and procedures are in place, the lifting of strategic decisions from the shoulders of executive directors, and the reducing of anxiety of how to cover institutional costs have freed all the organisations to increase their capacity to become more creative, extend their areas of work and function more effectively. Particularly, having a streamlined accounting procedure has enabled them to take on more varied funding sources. Recently, in Sweden, the executive director of the CSO Charity Rating, fo-

cusing on transparency and control of Swedish CSOs, argued in one of the major Swedish daily newspapers<sup>31</sup> that funders' narrow concern about administrative costs and labelling of costs as project costs risk impeding CSOs' long term development as it prevents them from investing in their future and finding possibilities for growth. Instead *"CSOs should promote greater openness in its work so donors more easily can see the results of their contributions."* The core support programme has created such an opportunity for Ukrainian CSOs to show results and become more sure of their core strengths. This is a healthy contribution towards a vibrant civil society.

v. *Financial sustainability*

In the present Ukrainian context, it is not yet possible for CSOs to become self-sustaining. Membership subscriptions can only be nominal; the continued lack of a growing middle class means that few people can make high level donations; local businesses are struggling in the economic crisis and international businesses are slow to invest before the country has settled down. Meanwhile the commissioning of services from CSOs by the government is a lower priority against the backlash of the war in the east and major political and economic challenges. Government funding on the whole tends to focus on social policy implementation and service provision and does not support institutional development of any kind, nor advocacy or human rights work. Donor funding is however expected to increase for the short term at least. One of the CSOs said: *"It should be obvious to all that core support is essential and has to continue as there are no other realistic sources of funding from national or local government or businesses."*

Any funding relationship brings with it a certain amount of dependency. Core support is likely to increase such dependency as it provides substantial and long term funding. From the start Sida therefore insisted on that partners should develop financial strategies for how to broaden their donor bases before receiving core support. As the CSOs gain in reputation as credible partners, their financial dependency on Sida has decreased, but after having received so much moral and institutional support from Sida, the dependency on the connection is greater than just a financial one.

The evaluation has found that Sida's support has increased the attractiveness of CSOs towards other donors, especially among the younger organisations. Many donors have approached the CSOs and started to offer cooperation. The CSOs through their more strategic approach to fund raising based on fundraising plans have also been more successful in calls for proposals (EPL, Telekritika, Centre UA, Mama-86). Having gone through the pre-core phase is regarded as a "litmus test" by other donors and

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<sup>31</sup> Dagens Nyheter Debatt, 2014 12 13, "90-konton är ingen garanti för att hjälpen faktiskt når fram", Gerda Larsson, Charity Rating.

seen as a guarantee that the organisation is capable and trustworthy with proper internal systems. As one chairperson said: “*It has been a green card for us with other donors*”. Among the CSOs it is found (1) a substantial increase in the number of projects implemented by all supported organisations and (2) a systematic increase in annual budgets during Sida’s core-support by other donors apart from Sida (Telekritika, Centre UA, EPL, KhPG, Mama-86). In some organisations the number of institutional grants also increased (Telekritika, Centre UA, EPL, KhPG).

vi. *Resilience in turbulent context*

Sida has added to the resilience of the CSOs at a time when it was needed to cope with crisis and change. As INGOs take a long time to become effective in an area of conflict, the existence of strong national CSOs with regional outreach is crucial for both handling humanitarian assistance as well as bringing divided communities back together again. There have been varying reactions from donors to the crisis. Some regular funding lines have been interrupted, as EPL mentioned in a focus group, there were some who decided to wait and review their policy for Ukraine until the situation became clearer. With an increase in demand for action to bring together society, support those in need, get accurate information out as widely as possible, the partner receiving core support during this period felt the benefit of having unrestricted funds to be able to act flexibly and appropriately.

The Revolution followed by a war lasting longer than most could have expected have brought into question the need to have a strategic plan which requires future predictions when in fact the future is unpredictable. KhPG did include the revolution in their strategic plan but did not anticipate quite the increased workload this and the continuing conflict near to Kharkiv would bring.

vii. *Conclusions*

The supported CSOs were found to have increased their sustainability owing to a number of factors; through improved governance and putting systems in place, paying greater attention to accountability and transparency, strategising and improving their performance. Core support has given the CSOs an opportunity to think about increasing their legitimacy, rooting their organisations more and extending their appeal. Even those long-lived and deeply rooted CSOs formed by dissidents in the 1970s are now working more broadly to help those whose social and economic rights are being infringed due to the war. Sida’s core-support has raised the image of the CSOs within the donor community and increased trust in them as reliable partners. In many of the organisations donor funding increased substantially. A good lesson learned is that the Swedish Embassy insisted on that the CSOs should work on reducing their donor dependency already from the start.

## 2.3 MANAGEMENT OF THE SUPPORT

While this evaluation has predominantly found strengths with the core support model externally, its weaknesses are found internally within the Swedish Embassy. In its plan for reinforcement of Sida’s decentralised structure for 2010-14 Sida stated that:

*“The implementation of the Paris Declaration requires a strong field focus. With strong local presence opportunities for expanded partnership, a deepened dialogue, better monitoring and a focus on results in the development cooperation are created. It is critical for a stronger field presence to have increased delegation, high competence and increased staff, both in terms of expatriates and locally recruited national programme officers (NPOs). The latter category is particularly important as the NPOs link thematic competence with deep knowledge of the local context.”*<sup>32</sup> This statement encapsulates some of the challenges experienced. For the core support to function as intended, it is dependent on the understanding, competence, commitment and time of the programme officers (POs) who are the managers of the relations with the CSOs.

### 2.3.1 Close relations and trust

The programme has been built on a specific characteristic in its management, i.e. to build close relationships with the supported CSOs based on high levels of trust. The importance of the quality of relations is also emphasised by the Swedish Ambassador, the Director of Eastern Europe and the Head of reform cooperation. This feature makes it stand out among other donor programmes for civil society. However, it is a good example of operationalisation of Sida’s official values. The policy document “A Renewed Sida” (2012)<sup>33</sup>, states that the following values should guide Sida’s work: 1) Perceptiveness and respect, 2) Courage and engagement and 3) Close and trusting relations. The programme officers are demonstrating to various degrees, that they are “living these values”.

Building trusting relations requires time to meet, listen and interact. The relationship cannot be created only through the formal, contractually stipulated interactions. It requires that both the CSOs and the POs take initiatives for creating and maintaining an on-going dialogue through various means; attending events, regular phone calls, informal meetings, e-mails and use of social media. Through this, the POs can follow progress and continuously monitor the performance of the CSOs which makes results reporting at the end of the year less demanding. It should also be borne in mind that the core partners are considered strategic for the Swedish Embassy and close relations and dialogue are in the interest of the Embassy for this reason. The evaluation found variations in the closeness of relationships among the POs. A correlation was seen between how long they had been involved and to what extent they had understood how to work with core support. Within the group of POs both a fully internalised understanding of the modality, as well insufficient clarity of the reasoning behind the support and how to work with the modality were found. The POs felt a need to better

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<sup>32</sup> Promemoria, Sidas plan för en förstärkning av fältbemanningen 2010 – 2014, 2010 03 01

<sup>33</sup> Ett förnyat Sida, vår vision – en helhetssyn, 2012, Sida



understand the overall vision with the programme and long term expected strategic results. Some attempts to manage the core support like project support were also noted, e.g. trying to monitor parts of strategic plans as project with corresponding project budgets or stipulating ratios for administrative support. Some POs expressed a feeling of being uncomfortable with not being able to have full control of all aspects of the implementation. It was also clear that in one or two cases only formal consultations were followed, resulting in lower levels of trust due to limited information and contact.

### 2.3.2 Learning by doing

POs who had been part of the core support programme from the beginning described the process as a positive learning experience, despite having received no training or orientation on the modality by Sida. *“We started walking in the dark but now lights in the end of the tunnel are flickering. It has been a painful joy. ... Such a learning process! I have a gut feeling that this is the right way of supporting CSOs. The changes are so profound at the heart of the CSOs.”* Some POs, lacking previous experience of civil society work, felt that they learned together with the CSOs about the meaning of governance, while at the same trying to work as mentors. Therefore quality control was experienced as difficult. *“I didn’t really feel confident, how would I know? There was no handbook on do’s and don’ts. We cooked it up to the best of our experiences”.* They particularly found it difficult to manage the audit requirements for CSOs and a training need is felt in how to read audit reports. Variations in management approaches of the core support therefore exist. One PO is acknowledged as having played a major role of leading her colleagues “through the maze” and supporting them to understand the management of core support. In the long run it is, however, a management responsibility to ensure that all staff has appropriate orientation, guidance and conditions to manage their responsibilities.

Sida’s head office confirms that there is no specific internal training or support package available yet responding to the demand from the POs for how to manage core support, apart from a brief instruction for the programme based approach. However a tool kit for “good civil society support” is being developed by Sida/Civsam for its advisory support towards embassies as an integrated component in methods support for management of the results strategy cycle.<sup>34</sup>

### 2.3.3 Time constraints

The main challenge found amongst the POs is their message of being overburdened. With support to 13 CSOs the programme has reached its limit in term of management capacity at the Embassy. Initially it was assumed that the Swedish Embassy should

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<sup>34</sup> Interviews with Sida Civsam



develop support to six to seven strategic CSOs. As the will for government reform was lacking during the past strategic period, the support to civil society was instead increased and the number had doubled. When Sida changed its audit requirements during the process this added on to the work load. The turbulent environment during the last year and the economic crisis have further added on to the work load of the POs as many of the CSOs requests several disbursements instead of one per year, each one requiring administrative adjustments in the systems. The POs suffer from not having time for more continuous dialogue with the CSOs and therefore some tend to rely only on the formal reporting for monitoring, missing out developing a sense of CSOs progress. *“We would like to be up to date with their issues, broader and deeper, be able to assess if they are doing ok and play a coaching role”*. The evaluation found that the level of frustration is high and solutions are needed to adjust the scale of the programme to the embassy’s human resources.

#### **2.3.4 Administrative systems**

The POs experience a mismatch between Sida’s contribution management system, the financial system and the nature of core support. Extensive work is done with tracking timely submission of reports and recording of budget adjustments in the systems, while the change processes which are seen as key in the core support are not supported by the contributions system. As small contributions require the same amount of work as large programmes and the POs experience that they are *“becoming statisticians and not programme managers. The system is eating their time completely.”* Clearer instructions on how to manage budget adjustments are needed. This has been accentuated by the turbulent environment which is escalating administrative demands.

#### **2.3.5 Changed nature of work**

As stated in Sida’s field vision, the nature of the work of programme officers has changed over the past years. Core support to strategic partners requires deep understanding of ongoing political processes, political sensitivity, a long term perspective and an understanding of changing roles of civil society in relation to public attitudes in the local context. In addition, building appropriate relations is central. The POs have also experienced that the nature of their work has changed towards deeper policy analysis while this might not yet be fully recognised. The Swedish Ambassador confirmed that the approach used at the embassy, where all POs manage both support to the state and CSOs, is regarded as adequate as it both deepens their knowledge and helps them to be on top of what is going on, while ensuring relevance in the dialogue with both sides.

#### **2.3.6 Swedish responsibility?**

The short but turbulent recent history of core support in Ukraine has showed that civil society support may quickly change character depending on the political situation. In early 2014 when all partners were active in the EuroMaidan the core support became more or less support to the political opposition when violence escalated after the government accepted new Anti-Protest Laws of the 16<sup>th</sup> January 2014 and after February 20<sup>th</sup> when more than 100 people were killed. In order to listen to their views on the development and better understand the exposed situation of CSOs the Embassy invited all partners to a meeting in late February to explore what support and protection

could be offered. One of the CSOs faced criminal charges because of its involvement in the revolution and hired advocates with the Swedish funds. Core partners were assisted to safeguard the security of documents, while personal safety was found more challenging to support. This highlighted issues about how far the Swedish responsibility for security and protection could be extended and showed the political sensitivity required by the POs in the relations to partners and in the management of the support.

#### *i. Conclusions*

Weaknesses with the core support programme were exposed at the Swedish Embassy due to the demands placed on the POs with limited time for the wide range of responsibilities. Since limited guidelines and no training on the management of core support exist for new staff, they differ in their understanding and management approaches of the core support. Administrative requirements in Sida's contribution management system not fully compatible with the core support modality appear to be a particularly heavy constraint. These findings contradict the general assumptions that core support is a way to ease administration and reduce the work loads of POs. The need for greater political analysis and analytical skills coupled with demanding administrative systems simply adds to the frustration. Since Sida is promoting core support as the main modality for civil society support, this has consequences for Sida's allocation of resources, administrative requirements, contribution management systems, methods support and capacity development of staff.

## 2.4 SYNERGIES AND INFLUENCES ON OTHER DONORS' SUPPORT MODELS

### **2.4.1 Complementarity with other programmes**

The Swedish core support is one piece in the donor puzzle for civil society support in Ukraine. The Swedish exclusive approach to a few elected organisations complements several other donor models available for emerging new organisations and different parts of civil society.

#### *i. Support the unsupported*

The newcomer to the donor market is EED, European Endowment for Democracy. It is complementary to the Swedish support in that it “supports the unsupported”, i.e. local actors for democratic change among CSOs, movements and individual activists regardless of size or formal status, reflecting the situation, the specific context and the needs of its beneficiaries.<sup>35</sup> Many donors mention that Sida and EED complement

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<sup>35</sup> <https://www.democracyendowment.eu/about-eed/>

each other completely in the respective nature of the support and spectrum of civil society where they operate.

ii. *Going regional and below*

While the Swedish Embassy is mainly supporting national and Kyiv based organisations (with two exceptions of regionally based partners), Danida through UNDP as an intermediary, is supporting eight regional CSOs/hubs working in the fields of democracy and human rights. It supports institutional development of these hubs, as well as building their capacity to manage re-granting. It uses a similar definition as Sida for core funding to support the hubs to implement their missions and strategic plans. A similar approach to Sida's pre-core support is used with organisational assessments (governance, financial management, membership, and networking, refining constitutions). While this support is only one year old, it addresses the much needed aspect to bring financial support to lower levels in the regions. This programme appears to be a good complement to Sida's focus on national level organisations and more collaboration between the two programmes should be sought.

iii. *Paving the way*

The US has been a consistent and long term donor to civil society in Ukraine through the US Embassy Grant programmes and USAID's re-granting programmes through PACT and Internews and has laid the ground for donor support to civil society. The Swedish Embassy is supporting several organisations that USAID, through its intermediaries PACT/UNITER and Internews, has either created, supported or still is supporting with institutional grants (which covers parts of what is included in core support). Internews e.g. provides 20% of the programme budget for capacity building and institutional support to 12 media CSOs. ISAR-Ednannia, running the Market-Place was created by USAID and long-time supported by Pact. Through the complementarity between the US and Swedish funding these CSOs have been able to further mature grow. *"Sida picked CSOs that USAID prepared through Internews and Pact. Sida picked the sectoral anchors. We worked on their systems and then Sida came on board. We are paving the way for each other in a good way" (USAID).*

In turn Sida is paving the way for EU and other donors by developing the CSOs' internal capacities to manage large scale project grants. *"Sida's support is seen as rubber stamping that the organisations are good" (UNDP).* EU provides large scale project support, including administrative support and is moving towards programme funding. However it does not yet provide core support, awaiting further clarifications from Brussels. The 16 September 2012 Communication from the Commission states that EU may consider all funding modalities, including core funding.<sup>36</sup> It would be a

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<sup>36</sup> Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, "The Roots of Democracy and Sus-

very positive development if EU would join Sweden in providing core. EU's Technical Fiche on Aid Modalities no. 1, Core funding/operating Grants further elaborates how EU could provide core funding.<sup>37</sup> The complementarity between the Swedish support and the EU is documented in the EU Country Roadmap where the supported CSOs are seen as being prepared to implement EU-funded projects through the Swedish support.<sup>38</sup> It was also stated during the evaluation that: *"if we know that an organisation is supported by Sida we consider this when we value their proposals. We know someone will work with them and fix what is needed. It is very precious for the whole donor community that Sida can accompany the CSOs in this way. The organisational approach is clearly complementary to EU. We have similar strategies but different instruments and we are very happy for this complementarity"* (EU). The Swedish Embassy is subscribing to implement the roadmap and has fully endorsed it as a member state. Therefore parts of its priorities and indicators could be included in a programme results framework for the core support.

iv. *Differences in size and funding periods*

While Sida's core support is substantial, Mott Foundation is providing smaller scale core support called "general purpose grants" to national organisations focusing on community development and philanthropy. Five of the core partners have previously been supported by Mott Foundation. The support is in average 50.000 USD per year and support may be extended to the same organisation for about ten years. Mott Foundation has no presence and works from a regional office in London with a local consultant doing ground work, monitoring and reporting. Capacity building is not provided but always encouraged. Mott Foundation's core support is hence more limited than Sida's but core support from several donors is only positive and important in order to manage gaps between agreements. *"Mott has always been a cushion."* (Mott Foundation)

v. *Similar but different target groups*

IRF is also another long time donor for civil society in Ukraine and has supported many of the core partners prior to Sida. The Think Tank Development Initiative implemented by IRF with Sida project funding is focusing exclusively on support to think tanks with their special needs and conditions. It is a direct complement to Sida's core support programme and was modelled on it. When the support to a think tank was terminated due to a hostile internal take over Sida decided to support IRF in developing this initiative paying special attention to challenges in this type of CSO, often centred on a charismatic founder and family. It was also decided that no more

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tainable Development: Europe's Engagement with Civil Society in External Relations, 2014 09 12, European Commission

<sup>37</sup> Structured Dialogue for an efficient partnership, technical sheet – Aid modalities, 1. Core funding/Operating Grants, 2012

<sup>38</sup> EU Country Roadmap for engagement with Civil Society, 2014 - 2017

think tanks were to be included in the core support programme. IRF had been supporting policy research in think tanks but did not see sustainable effects and were exploring why policy research by think tanks was not demanded by government. Hence a targeted effort to strengthen the capacity of think tanks to develop themselves through higher self-imposed standards by using the experience of Sida was conceived.

#### vi. *Conclusions*

The evaluation has found that Sida's core support programme is playing complementary roles to several other donor initiatives for civil society support in Ukraine in terms of outreach, size, type of CSOs supported, and timing of the support and nature of the support. There is a demand from the donor community that the Swedish Embassy should continue its core support programme in the way it is done.

#### 2.4.3. Influences on other support models

Through its serious approach the Swedish core support programme has influenced other donors' programmes, while unfortunately nobody seems ready yet to engage in core funding. As reported EU is moving in the direction of core support with larger and longer grants and its policy work seems to be in place for it. IRF will soon pilot core support to think tanks with Sida's support.

According to the 2013 Sustainability Index for Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia donor organisations in Ukraine paid more attention to internal management of organisations during 2013. *“Donors require written internal management policies and procedures from CSOs seeking institutional support. Organisations that have undergone organisational audits better understand the needs and benefits of internal management rules.”*<sup>39</sup> This is an example of the waves Sida's core support has stirred within the donor community. Furthermore the Sustainability index reports that financial management had improved and leading CSOs undergo audits of their management and financial systems which increased the transparency of CSOs. USAID is rightly given credit for this according to the index, referring to its audit readiness programme, but it is also an effect of Sida's core support programme. Sida has also elevated the discussions on how to sustainably support CSOs' institutional development through its distinct approach. *“Donors recognise the importance of systems now. Sida's pre-core support made organisations think about the inside. Now there is a demand for results. Donors see that the supported organisations are more transparent and better organised” (PACT).*

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<sup>39</sup> 2013 CSO sustainability Index for Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia, USAID, June 2014

In addition, synergies between the core support programme and other initiatives have been found. The most obvious is the Think Tank Development Initiative, which was developed based on the core support programme, using the Swedish systems based auditors as mentors. During six months learnings were transferred into tools and guidelines for the programme. The systems based auditors were also conducting trainings for the think tanks and IRF. *“It transferred us from programme oriented planning to results based planning”* (IRF). Through this initiative Sida and IRF managed to join the efforts and support transformations of a critical group of CSOs.

Similarly, the MarketPlace mechanism operated by ISAR Ednannia is supporting CSOs to take responsibility for their own development by providing pooled donor funding for capacity building. A lot of interaction has taken place among Sida, PACT and ISAR Ednannia to further develop the approach of the MarketPlace *“Sida brought in the culture of organisational development into the Marketplace Programme for us to understand what organisational development is all about”*. The Swedish system based auditors worked with ISAR, while doing a systems based audit of it and contributed to their institutional development tools. Parts of the systems based audits were developed into a self-assessment tool. Sida also brought in how to work with gender in organisational development.

Finally, PACT has close collaboration with the Swedish Embassy and is supporting many of the core partners with institutional support (excluding programme costs). Consultations and professional interactions took place with Sida’s systems based auditors for PACT’s Audit readiness programme and for making a certification of service providers for the MarketPlace mechanism.

#### vii. Conclusion

The core support programme has contributed to leading the donor community towards a more comprehensive approach for institutional development which recognises the needs for ownership, governance, transparency, participation, accountability and proper systems. Greater attention is now paid to CSOs internal systems and procedures. The programme has also had direct influences on several specific initiatives which have borrowed components and made use of the expertise of the systems based auditors. It can thus be seen that the core support programme has had wider effects reaching outside the supported organisations.

#### 2.4.4 Donor coordination

Donor coordination for civil society takes place during bi-monthly donor meetings co-chaired by USAID, the EU and Canada. The meetings are mainly based on information sharing. Sida’s core support programme is not seen as having had any major influence on increased donor coordination. Progress has not been made in donor harmonisation of funding conditions or reporting. Likewise the evaluation encountered few attempts by CSOs to coordinate their donors. Only three organisations (Hromadske TV and Centre UA, MLI) were gathering donors to discuss their priorities. A recently developed Code of Practice on Donor Harmonisation by the Informal Donor Group, chaired by Irish Aid, in which Sida has played an active role,

might be a useful package for the donor community in Ukraine as a tool to further advance coordination and harmonisation.

#### **2.4.5 Wider influence on Civil Society**

The Swedish core support is now known among CSOs. As stated by USAID: *The word is out now. There is a demand. Many CSOs are ready to develop their systems to get core. There is an interest in audits and in getting ready for audits, knowing that it requires lots of work*.” Another spread effect is reported through the management of the RPR coalition. MLI and the other core partners in the coalition are expected to transfer the internal rules and regulations to the other CSOs participating in the coalition. *“In the RPR, Sida’s partners are clear on not having a double standard. Since it is a consortium these standards will be pushed on the others in the consortium. This is a test! (EU)”*. Through these examples it is found that the rather limited core support programme is starting to have wider influences indirectly in civil society.



## 3 Conclusions

### 3.1 RELEVANCE

The Swedish Core Support Programme is found relevant in relation to the Swedish results strategy aiming for enhanced European integration, strengthening democracy and greater respect for human rights, increased rule of law and a better environment. Supported strategic CSOs are contributing as change agents by pushing agendas, drafting legislation and engaging in policy dialogue in all areas. Though the number of supported CSOs is limited, the choice of partners is concluded as relevant.

The core support programme is also found to be relevant in relation to Sweden's aims for promoting a pluralistic and vibrant civil society. The evaluation concludes that the support strengthens CSOs' ownership over their own agendas by helping them to realise their strategic objectives and long term plans. The core support modality has placed ownership for organisational change within the CSOs and provided the means for organisational development during all stages of the support. By emphasising on more accountable and transparent organisations, Sida is together with likeminded donors contributing to changed attitudes and practises within civil society, which in the long run may make civil society more legitimate in the eyes of the general public. However, relevance in relation to the Swedish aim of mainstreaming, as well as specifically targeting gender equality remains weak.

High relevance is found among the supported CSOs in meeting their needs, particularly in the present context with high levels of uncertainty in Ukraine. The model's sequenced approach has created organisational capacity to manage and capture opportunities in the present political context, enabled the organisations able to adjust to new issues, including humanitarian needs and social and economic rights of vulnerable groups, to be relevant for the society. It has also supported the CSOs to focus on long term directions, be innovative and work towards realisation of their missions, thus making them more strategic. The comprehensive and sequenced support emphasising ownership, proper governance and transparency, greater accountability and effectiveness through proper systems and better linkages, combined with long term funding is concluded to be a tough but relevant approach for support by the CSOs.

Risks found with the model are high investments in time and money during the selection and assessment process which may result in some sunk costs, a risk of the support becoming politicised, an initial concentration of funding to a few, more capable high profile organisations and high demands on human resources for management of the support. It could lead to that Sida becomes a "capacity development donor" while others reap the benefits at a later stage. This should however rather be regarded as an added value of Sida. A recent compilation of lessons learned in capacity development



by Indevalop<sup>40</sup> concludes that Sweden is well placed to assume a unique position as a champion of capacity development based on the aid effectiveness agenda. The findings of this evaluation confirms this conclusion.

## 3.2 EFFECTIVENESS

The Swedish support requires commitments towards substantial internal changes and in two cases the Swedish Embassy realised that the selection was found not adequate. Despite this, it is concluded that the Swedish Embassy has been effective in selecting a range of well-respected CSOs which are considered as leaders and agents of change in their different sectors. However, a weakness was found with the transparency of the selection process where the criteria, methods and results were not sufficiently communicated publicly.

The strict and structured pre-core support is concluded to be an effective approach for creating organisational change. The combination of comprehensive systems based audits introducing concepts and making recommendations, the self-owned internal change projects, the explicit expectations for change realised through verification missions and the financial audits according to international standards, all guided and nurtured through the close interaction with the Swedish Embassy, proved to be an effective approach to institutional development. It is concluded that Sida has played a catalytic role for the developments of the CSOs and within the donor community. The pre-core support is valued as an end in itself.

The degree of actual change was found to depend on the commitment of each CSO, the variations in starting points where some are more institutionally developed initially compared to others, the internalisation of the new concepts introduced, the timeframe the CSOs are able and willing to devote to internal transformations and the management capacity to assume ownership. The professionalism and mentoring attitude of the systems auditors and financial auditors contributed greatly to create acceptance of the concepts.

The way the financial core support is extended through long term, substantial and flexible funding for programme costs, administration and institutional development according to the CSOs' long term plans and budgets is considered effective. It has created space for strategising, investment in staff capacities for the future, expansion and piloting of new areas of work, as well as networking and has positively affected the CSOs' performance.

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<sup>40</sup> Capacity development, Lessons and reflections from a literature review, I. Christoplos, Indevalop, 2014

The effectiveness of the core support phase can increase by providing more guidance to the CSOs on expectations regarding applications and results reporting during the core phase, facilitation exchange of learning between supported CSOs and more interaction between the programme officers of the Swedish Embassy and the CSOs for improved monitoring and dialogue. To help CSOs to maintain the standards achieved, verification visits and technical assistance could be made available during the core support phase as well.

While the core support model is found effective in promoting change in CSOs and hopefully in society, a weakness lies in its limitations for expansion. It will not become a large scale civil society development programme due to the managerial attention it requires. The programme's strengths are in its consistent promotion of CSO ownership, long term focus and its depth, providing a unique combination of strictness and flexibility. Through the exclusivity, visibility and hopefully long term results, the programme is playing a catalytic role on other civil society support. The Swedish Embassy has effectively used methods and learning gained through the core support programme to develop complimentary mechanisms for further support of civil society. The combination of the Think Tank Development Programme, the support to the MarketPlace Mechanism and the core support programme is considered effective to reach different segments in Ukrainian civil society.

### 3.3 IMPACT

The supported CSOs have become more strategic and mission driven through both the internal changes and strengthened governance, as well as by freeing up of time and energy to focus on the work instead of hunting for projects. By being able to focus on implementation of their missions, the CSOs have gained higher reputations for their performances. This, together with their increased transparency and improved governance, has helped the organisations in their fundraising.

The focus on accountability and legitimacy has made the CSOs more concerned about being rooted in society. Many of them are network organisations and have done strategic planning with all their members. Others are expanding their work into the regions, placing more importance on networking and finding means to better listen to citizens' concerns. This has in turn contributed to some of the CSOs' national level advocacy. While they were all active in advocacy prior to Sida's support, some evidence was found that the core support had contributed to the CSOs' ability to engage more in high level national advocacy and reforms. The most prominent example is the RPR, coordinated by MLI and with active participation of several core support partners.

Evidence indicates that the core support programme is starting to have wider effects in civil society sector through the core partners mentoring others within their networks to strengthen their internal systems.

The Swedish Embassy has gained a reputation as frontrunner in institutional development in civil society. The core support programme is considered addressing CSOs' needs in a more profound way than it was previously done. The approach and the competence of the programme officers managing it are highly respected within the donor community. Increased transparency, better documentation of the programme and clear results framework with success indicators for the programme could contribute to creating further understanding and dissemination of the approach. Some priorities and indicators of the EU roadmap could be integrated into such a programme framework.

The core support programme is judged to be complementary to what a number of donors are doing in terms of outreach, size, type of CSOs supported, duration and nature of support. Complementarity is particularly found with Danida's support to regional hubs through UNDP and the EED's "support to the unsupported". In addition, complementarity and close links are found with USAID and EU which fund many of the same organisations with both project and institutional grants. The Swedish support is considered by them to be a quality guarantee for an effective organisation.

While harmonisation of donor requirements is not imminently visible in Ukraine the Swedish core support programme has contributed to influence the donor community. The reputation attributed to core supported organisations could be seen as an informal harmonisation of requirements where donors are placing greater importance on internal rules and procedures, proper financial audits according to international standards and increased governance as conditions for funding. This trend was also noted in the CSO sustainability index 2013 where Sida and USAID are seen as leading such developments.

The holistic composition of the core funding (encompassing funding of operations, institutional costs and funding for institutional development) has influenced some in the donor community. Tendencies to move towards more comprehensive funding have started to emerge. However, the evaluation team unfortunately found no other donor yet ready to share the responsibility of providing core funding with Sweden. The most likely prospect is the EU.

The evaluation concludes that the core support programme has had a direct influence on a number of specific initiatives where components have been borrowed and the expertise of the systems based audits used. Thus the core support programme has had wider effects beyond the supported organisations.

## 3.4 SUSTAINABILITY

The evaluation has found evidence that the supported CSOs have become more sustainable. With improved governance and putting systems in place as the starting point, the CSOs have started to pay more attention to downwards accountability and

increasing legitimacy. This, together with taking time for strategising and budgeting for clearer directions, their performance and reputation have improved. Altogether, the organisations are currently considered more capable and had attracted more donors funding. The freer core support made them more resilient during turbulence and able to shift operations to remain relevant to fast changing circumstances.

While dependency on Sida is evident, many of the supported CSOs have broadened their funding base. The evaluation found awareness among the CSOs that the Swedish support should be regarded as a unique opportunity that must be used to the utmost as it might not reappear.

### 3.5 MANAGEMENT

A characteristic of the Swedish core support programme is its basis on a close and trusted relationship between the supported CSOs and the programme officers at the Swedish Embassy. This quality relationship is deemed critical for helping and leading the CSOs through the complex change process, providing encouragement, strengthening CSO ownership, as well as for the continuous monitoring of results.

While this approach is a strength, it is also a weakness of the modality. Staff turnover has caused variations in the understanding of the core support programme and together with high workloads has resulted in variations in the management of the relations.

The development of the core support programme has been a joint learning process for Sida with the partners and some degrees of experimenting for solutions have led to some inefficiency.

The evaluation finds that programme officers are overworked, illustrating the limits of the modality. Further expansion of the programme is not considered realistic. There is no doubt that it is important to extend support to CSOs in the regions, particularly at the present time in Ukraine but the programme is not of the nature to be necessarily large scale. Should it be considered necessary for the Swedish Embassy to “go big”, the modality needs to be changed. While making such considerations it is important to consider the full donor palette for civil society support in Ukraine where other initiatives are designed to cover the regions.

### 3.6 LESSONS LEARNT

Many lessons can be learned from the Swedish Embassy's and the supported CSOs' experiences from being part of the core support programme. Below are some of them:

1. The Swedish Embassy has showed how to operationalise the Aid Effectiveness principles into core funding and has captured a special niche in civil society support based on it.

2. Core support encompasses long-term funds for three areas: operations, institutional costs and organisational development, all planned for in the CSO's own strategic plan and comprehensive budget. The comprehensiveness of this funding has been experienced as unique by the CSOs and donor community.
3. Each CSO's ownership of all processes has been fundamental. Tools and means for internal change processes have been provided, results expected and checked but without directing the CSOs. The Swedish Embassy's willingness to understand and support, while being firm in its requirements, has created mutual respect and trust.
4. The future content of the Swedish bilateral support is decided by the selection of partners as the CSOs decide on their own areas of operations. The Swedish Embassy has stood firm in trusting "what is good for them is good for us". Ownership of the agenda is key to successful performance.
5. Since the core support programme has high visibility within civil society the choice of partners sends out messages to it regarding importance of rights based approaches, non-discrimination, governance and accountability. It is an added value for Sweden to be the first donor to support LGBT rights.
6. To let go of power is challenging. The change of governance structure in the CSOs means a change in power relations. Confidence in the Swedish Embassy's good intentions, trust in their understanding of the reality and the "carrot" of core funding have been decisive factors in initiating change. The changed structures has made the CSOs less dependent on individuals and more institutionalised.
7. The core support programme has shown good initial results in institutional development, increased sustainability and improved performance. These are all long-term processes however, which require time and consistent commitment to prove real sustainability.
8. Core support and the institutional transformations have freed strategic and management capacity in the CSOs which has been used to build more human resources, expand operations and improve performance.
9. The CSOs have experienced the effects of the changes and started to advocate for similar developments among their members and partners. Through this, the programme is having effects beyond the group of supported organisations. This shows that a programme with limited numbers of partners can have wider catalytic effects.
10. Systems based audits have been powerful tools for initiating change, but overwhelming in their comprehensiveness. The Swedish Embassy's encouragement, cautious approach and interaction has been important for maintaining the CSOs' commitment to change.

11. The use of the same systems based auditors in all studies has ensured consistency and facilitated acceptance of the recommendations. The financial auditors further reinforced and followed up the recommendations during the financial audits and created a good synergy between the two processes.
12. The approach to make technical assistance available for CSOs to draw on based on their needs was an efficient approach for CSO led organisational development.
13. Potential CSOs entering the programme need to be made aware that the internal transformations during the pre-core phase require substantial management capacity and reduce the capacity for external operations while on-going.
14. The sequenced approach used by the Swedish Embassy works well for both more mature and younger organisations since flexibility in time, resources and processes for change is given based on each organisations' needs. Commitment to change is more important than organisational maturity.
15. The modality works for CSOs based in the regions but the relation between the CSO and the Embassy risks being less close than with those in the capital possibly affecting degrees of trust.
16. It takes time to internalise new concepts, but once done, they are powerful tools for transformation. Understanding of governance prior to developing internal systems and regulations made the need for internal changes logical and less frightening. Internalising understanding of accountability has in some cases had far reaching consequences for the CSOs' external relations, outreach, planning and operations.
17. It has been a heavy workload for the Swedish Embassy to support 13 organisations through the pre-core support stage. Less energy has thereafter been given to support the CSOs during the core phase. Some needs based capacity development and support to exchange of learnings is equally needed during this phase.
18. Alignment to CSOs' monitoring and results reporting systems was challenging as the CSOs to a large extent lacked such systems prior to the core support. Therefore more guidance was needed.
19. The management of the core support cycle requires understanding of CSO management, of the situation and actors in civil society, key concepts and their importance for structures and operations, implications of different funding modalities on CSOs, understanding of audit standards and of strategic indicators at higher levels than project indicators. Programme officers with little background in civil society development need better orientation and methods support when being introduced to the management of core support for strategic CSOs.

20. The core support programme is both an institutional development programme and promotes change in society through the work of the partners. Programme results indicators need to capture both dimensions.
21. Since core support is the priority modality for Sida, consequences of the modality for systems, support and resources should be assessed and adjusted to accommodate it properly.
22. Understanding the full picture of donor support and the complementarity between initiatives is essential when deciding on strategies for expansion.
23. Swedish core funding provides CSOs with an opportunity to mature and develop internally and externally. The support should be given long enough for CSOs to capture such benefits fully. After that, other donors may step in to fund operations while the Swedish Embassy can provide the opportunity to another CSO. A slow process of “graduating” CSOs will create opportunities for more CSOs to benefit from the Swedish Embassy’s special added value.
24. By showing results and explaining the modality the Swedish Embassy has affected other donors’ support to civil society.

# 4 Recommendations

## 4.1 SIDA AND THE SWEDISH EMBASSY

### 4.1.1 Overall option for enhancing Sida's management and expansion

With substantive lessons learned it is now time to package the support in a programme results framework and develop overall results indicators which can help the programme officers in the monitoring and reporting of the support. Training on the modality is needed to increase the confidence and homogenous management among the programme officers. Possibilities to adjust Sida's administrative systems to better accommodate the modality and ways to further reduce the work load should be explored. The programme is recommended to remain a high profile limited programme which affects larger change by playing a catalytic role on others. The evaluation has considered the following three options:

#### 1. Invite other donors to share the approach

This would be the preferred option. The Swedish Embassy could try to convince other donors to join in its approach and to extend core support to some more organisations according to the same approach. This would hence cater for growth and reduce the expectations on the Swedish Embassy. Alternatively, the Swedish Embassy could consider passing on the responsibility for supported core partners to another donor as they enter a second round of core support, freeing capacity for the Swedish Embassy to bring in some new partners and to focus on the sensitive process of internal changes. Presently it is not obvious if this would be possible as no other donor is engaged in core support as a modality apart from Mott Foundation on a smaller scale. The most likely donor is the EU, where further explorations in Brussels are needed, while policy documents open for this possibility.

#### 2. Outsource parts of the work

Assuming that the most difficult phase is now over as the system has been established, models have been put in place and good examples can be shown in detail rather than being described, the process of support could be further streamlined. By analysing the cycle of core support it is possible to identify "batches of responsibilities" which could be outsourced while the programme officers maintain the politically and qualitative sensitive relations, the monitoring of progress and the specific governmental responsibilities. Examples of areas to outsource are:

- Identification of possible partners and initial assessments
- The systems based audits and verification visits (as now)
- Technical assistance during both the pre-core and the core phase
- Facilitation of regular experience sharing among core partners



- Deeper monitoring of specific aspects across partners, e.g. the functioning of the boards, maintaining the standards, the quality of results reporting, strategic planning practises, etc.

If found feasible by Sida HO to adjust the requirements of the contribution management systems to better accommodate core support, more time could be freed for the quality dialogue. Since the dialogue is found to have wide importance for the embassy in general, efforts should be made make it possible for the programme officers to have time for it.

### **3. Working through an intermediary**

The model that would reduce the workload drastically is to pass on the responsibility to one intermediary organisation and maintain it as a programme with only one contribution in Sida's system. The evaluation is reluctant to recommend this model as the close relations with the partners created by the Swedish Embassy's programme officers have made this programme unique. A risk is seen that an intermediary could become a filter that dims the political sensitivity of the Swedish Embassy at a time when it is more important than ever.

It is not easy to find a suitable intermediary for this support and many problems could arise if the wrong choice be made. There is limited capacity among Ukrainian organisations. Since new and sometimes challenging concepts are introduced the intermediary should preferably be a European organisation firmly rooted in the tradition of European civil society but also with knowledge of the region. Contracting Swedish consultants or bringing a Swedish CSO with limited experience is seen as a short term, expensive and inadequate solution given the political context. A possible solution could be to contract a foreign CSO long term present in Ukraine for managing the second phase of core support to the organisations (similar to suggested in alternative one above). However, the evaluation would tend to recommend the first two options.

A final question is how long should a CSO be supported? This programme should be careful to maintain its uniqueness of being catalytic while also being wary of not footing the bill too long. However it is apparent that the organisations would need a second round of core support to fully benefit from the opportunities it creates and ensure that the systems and structures are properly absorbed and maintained. The evaluation recommends that the Swedish Embassy supports the core partners for a maximum of two periods, where the second is maximum three years. This second phase would be conditional on the CSO having been convincingly able to show progress in its strategic results during the first round. Results indicators on a programmatic level for the Swedish Embassy would make it easier to assess this.

#### 4.1.2 Specific recommendations

##### **Regarding continuation and growth:**

1. Continue the core support programme according to the approach developed.
2. Agree to support core partners with a second funding cycle of maximum three years on condition that they have convincingly shown substantive progress in achieving their strategic results. Be cautious to maintain the programme as catalytic.
3. Include a Women's Rights organisation as a core partner. Provide support to the CSOs to mainstream gender equality in their organisations and operations.
4. Consider including one or two more CSOs based in the regions, possibly in the environmental field, when capacity for managing new partners emerge.
5. Do not have ambitions to expand the programme further. Focus instead on achieving a slow rotation of partners through it.
6. Explore possibilities within the donor community for other donors to join in the Swedish approach.

##### **Regarding conceptualisation, documentation and development of manuals:**

1. Develop an overall programme results framework with strategic results indicators for the core support programme covering expected results in terms of organisational transformations, increased legitimacy, influences from advocacy at different levels and effects on civil society. Use the EU roadmap and samples from other Swedish Embassies as basis for developing this.
2. Develop a short presentation material of the of the core programme for new staff, CSOs and interested donors.
3. Refine the eligibility criteria based on experiences. Communicate criteria, selection approach and selected partners clearly on the Swedish Embassy website.
4. Engage with Sida Civsam regarding training needs for methods support to programme officers on core support to ensure a more homogenous management of the support.
5. Share lessons learned to be integrated into the tool box for management of core support linked to the results strategy cycle being developed by Sida Civsam for Sida and its field staff.
6. Develop instructions for core funding for CSOs to clarify expectations on applications and reporting and facilitate collaboration. The Swedish Embassy could "borrow back" some of the guidelines developed for the IRF Think Tank Development Initiative which were modelled from the core support programme.
7. Since the core support modality is promoted by Sida as the main modality to use in civil society support it is likely to be introduced in other countries in Eastern Europe. Capitalised on the programme officers' knowledge and experience and recognise them as experts in transferring their experiences to other Embassies and Sida HQ.

**Regarding selection of CSOs:**

1. Explore directed competitions by invitations as a means to increase transparency in selection and learn from other donors' experiences of using this approach.
2. Do more initial assessments prior to the systems based audit to avoid sunk costs. Consultancy support could be used for this.

**Regarding reducing the work load of programme officers:**

1. Repackage the management of the core support and identify areas for outsourcing to reduce the burden on POs. Maintain the qualitative relations with partners and core Sida functions in the management of the support at the Swedish Embassy.
2. Outsource "packages of functions" related to work with partners. Explore if Sida's framework agreements would be possible to draw upon.
3. Explore possibilities with Sida/VU to adjust administrative requirements in Sida's contribution systems to better accommodate the core support modality.
4. Use CSOs in the core phase as mentors for newcomers. The front runners could for example have some funding over the next nine months to be mentors for the new comers.

**Regarding financial aspects:**

1. Due to the current economic situation and the rapid devaluation of Ukrainian Hryvnya, allow CSOs to prepare budgets in the currency in which they receive funding from Sida.
2. Consider the possibility to allow CSOs to make budget revisions within set limits for adjustments between budget lines.
3. During the emergency situation in the country continue to make more frequent disbursements of funds to CSOs to avoid any loss of funds due to the weak banking system.

**Regarding facilitation of experienced based learning:**

4. Support facilitation of regular and increased interaction among supported organisations and create a community of practice to exchange the experience among the supported CSOs in all phases of the support.
5. Contract the systems based auditors to conduct the audits in pairs with national consultants or auditors to build Ukrainian capacity and increase the knowledge of Ukrainian tax rules and regulations. This would make systems based audits as a tool for transformations more accessible for CSOs and further strengthen the civil society environment in Ukraine.
6. Procure consultancy support for undertaking deeper "issue based monitoring" in areas of specific interest for the Swedish Embassy across the spectrum of partners.

## 4.2 PARTNER CSOS

1. Utilise the opportunity of the Swedish core support to the maximum to build capacities and strengthen downwards accountability. Consider and treat the support as a special opportunity for sharpening the strategic focus of the CSO.
2. Promote increased governance and development of internal rules and regulations among partner CSOs and members according to the same approach and principles for institutional development.
3. Embrace peer-to-peer learning and volunteer to act as mentors for newcomers into the core support group.
4. Take initiatives to share experiences within the group of supported CSOs.
5. Take responsibility for building and maintaining a close relationship with the designated programme officer in the Swedish Embassy.

## 4.3 THE DONOR COMMUNITY IN UKRAINE

1. Join forces with Sweden and provide long term flexible funding to CSOs in line with the comprehensive Swedish core funding approach. Explore if some partners could be transferred from Swedish funding to another donor as they enter the second funding cycle.

# Annex 1 Terms of Reference

## TERMS OF REFERENCE

### for Evaluation of the Sida-Funded Programme of Core Support and connected projects in Ukraine

July 2014

#### Introduction

Before 2010 the Embassy of Sweden in Ukraine could only report on a few project-support interventions involving NGOs or think-tanks. At that time Sida support to NGOs was largely maintained through the Swedish international organization ForumSyd, which provided small grants to Ukrainian NGOs for project implementation. On the basis of resources available, the Swedish Embassy programme focus was on cooperation with state institutions in the prioritized thematic areas at the central level or through multilateral organisations such as World Bank, IFC, IOM, OSCE. Although the Swedish Government Strategy for Ukraine in 2008-2013, inter alia, mentioned assistance to civil society, it was not until the mid-term review of this strategy that the shift of the programme's focus towards strengthening civil society and importance of cooperation with non-state actors occurred. The strategy review came up with an extra objective: *increased opportunity for civil society actors to function as change agents in the areas of democracy and human rights, especially when it comes to gender and independent media*. The results for the two successive assignments of the Jarlskog consultants in the end of 2009 established a conceptual foundation of and prepared the guidelines to engage with civil society (please see Annexes 1,2,3,4). In line with development trends at the time and the lessons learnt by development practice, the guidelines argued for core support mode of assistance, a long term engagement, division of civil society portfolio among all programme officers in the Embassy of Sweden in Kyiv, good donorship and closer links with other donors. The modest expected result, as planned in early 2010, was to create 5-6 partnerships between Sida and CSOs in Ukraine by the end of the then Strategy in 2013. This was outdone twice.

The Regional Results Strategy for Sweden's Reform Cooperation for 2014-2020 (Annex 9) in its Result 2 .2 focuses on increased enjoyment of human rights and greater opportunities to exercise democratic influence:

- More pluralistic civil society, including political parties with strengthened popular support
- Improved conditions for democratic accountability to the people and participation in political processes, including the promotion of free elections
- Freer and more independent media

- Partner countries better fulfil their international and national commitments on human rights, gender equality (including the EU's strategy for equality between women and men) and non-discrimination
- Women and men have, to a greater extent, the same power to shape society and their own lives
- Increased trust between the parties in protracted conflicts.

In the light of this formulation of the Strategy objectives, it is clear that the Government of Sweden consistently pays its continuous attention to SC support to build capacities of CSOs in Ukraine.

## **Background**

### **Objectives of the Core Support Programme**

The objective of Ukraine's Core Support Programme was to pioneer a new strategic type of support (institutional/core support) to 5-6 mature and advanced CSOs in the areas of democratization and human rights and environment by upgrading their internal systems and enabling them implement their own organizational strategies against RAF. In other words, the programme aims at transforming project-focused NGOs carefully observing donors' trends in funding into mission-based SCOs working through implementation of their strategies.

One of the by-products and outputs of the core-support contributions is a Phase One process of the internal organizational transformation, when CSOs are in the process of updating their strategies, setting up their external boards in accordance with the European practice, tidying up their structures, processes and policies. In this way, core support is not only the end in itself but also the means to the end. It makes the organization mission-based and functional.

## **Methodology**

### ***Phase One.***

Selection. Given the specific nature of Swedish support with a limited number of potential partners and challenging demands to a partner organization, the programme does not utilise a competitive approach for selection. It is rather searching for matching the criteria, defined by the assessment tool (Annex 3) using a rather small selection of mature CSOs with a long track record and with capabilities and willingness to meet the donor's stringent requirements.

Initial System-Based Audit. Swedish Development Advisers, a consultancy specialized in system-based audits procured through the Sida Framework Agreement undertakes an audit in an organization. ToRs for such audits are attached (Annex 5). The audit's aim is to provide an overall organizational diagnosis to organizational health and the level of development and to give clear recommendations re systems improvement in the order of priorities as well as advising on the process of further systems building. The priority recommendations constitute the basis for an initial improvement project to fix the most critical problematic zones in institutional development. As a rule, they embrace such issues as governance, strategy and its RAF with SMART indi-

cators and financial control systems, audit history as well as procurement and anti-corruption policies.

Pre-Core Support Improvement Project. On the basis of the Priority Recommendations the CSO submits a so-called costed Improvement Plan. The budget usually includes the costs of a European standards financial audit. After the negotiations Sida signs an Agreement with the organization for a tentatively defined duration of the strategy varying from 2-5 years and the overall budget, where the first disbursement covers the pre-core support/improvement project. Further into implementation, tentative allocations, duration and the overall budget can be subject to amendments. During the Improvement Project implementation, CSOs are supported by consultants and their learning and organizational transformations are accompanied in an number of ways: a few workshops and learning events have been organized either by SDA, SDA/Professional Management Consortium, or by COWI, a Danish firm which was specifically procured to accompany CSOs on their learning curve during pre-core phase. The organisations are encouraged to network and to learn from each other by exchanging their policies or solutions. Individual “surgeries” or “clinic consultations” on governance issues for CSOs were provided twice to customize organizational solutions for specific profiles of organisations.

Verification Visit of SB Auditors. The completion of the Improvement Plan signifies the end the Pre-Core Support phase. A verification visit of SB Auditors bridges one phase with the other, certifying the improvement changes recommended previously by the audit. The audit also comments on the quality of the Strategy and its results assessment framework, which should be SMART for meaningful follow-up. The verification report gives the recommendations to Sida and to the organisations as to how to proceed. As a rule, there may be some untied ends or unfinished business in priority recommendation, which can be done during the core phase, therefore, Sida usually proceeds with the next phase.

## **Phase Two**

Core Phase. The length of this phase and amounts of disbursements vary, depending on the organisation’s confidence and maturity. The longest programmes include 4-5 years, the shortest two years. There are specific issues to be borne in mind while evaluating the programme:

Engagement between Sida and CSO. During the core phase, POs in charge of a particular CSO, follow the activities and attend some of the events, arrange meetings or visits to the organizational offices, invite organisations for learning events. Our own assessment is that the programme officers, would need to do more of such meeting/visits, but given the workload, it is not possible. For formal follow-up there are Annual Meetings followed by the agreed minutes.

Audits. Financial annual audits undertaken in accordance with European standards (IFAC) is not only a means of checking the financial control functions, but a development objective on its own right. A high quality financial



audits and an audit history (which CSOs have to start at Sida demand) provide for financial overview, often for the first time (as compared with project audits). The organisations require a considerable preparation, flexing up financial rules, procedures, manuals, software, which in their totality lead to a different level of management and transparency. To follow up this direction, the Swedish Embassy developed Annual Audit ToRs for Core Supported Organisations (Annex 6).

**Reporting.** To unify the reporting patterns of core supported organisations, the Professional Management/Swedish Development Advisers Consortium developed specific templates to keep the focus of the organisations and to minimize the reporting burden. The Templates are attached (Annex 7).

### **Method and Expert Support**

**Consultancies.** To make the programme happen, the Embassy relied on the expertise which came from consultancies procured from the Framework Agreements.

- Swedish Development Advisers: Pre-Core CSO Assessments. Contribution ID 53060028. Budget SEK 2,974 442. Duration: 201007 - 201306
- Swedish Development Advisers CS Support Facility, Contribution ID55070025 .Budget SEK 1,477 185; Duration: 201209 – 201310
- COWI, Consultancy to Accompany Core-Supported CSOs, Contribution ID 55070012. Budget SEK 1,826 499; Duration: 201106 – 201310
- Professional Management/Swedish Development Advisers Consortium, Contribution ID 55070054; Budget SEK 2,600 000. Duration: 201310 – 201503

Total costs of supporting professional expertise for the programme over 4 years constitute **SEK 8, 878 126**

**Partners: (dated 2014-06)** The list including a more detailed information can be found in Attachment 8.

| <i>name of CSO</i>                                    | <i>Budget SEK</i> |
|-------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Mama-86                                               | 5,400 000         |
| Telekritika                                           | 4,100.000         |
| GURT                                                  | 5,100.000         |
| Kharkov Human Rights Group                            | 9,722.700         |
| Media Law Institute                                   | 10,780.000        |
| International Centre for Policy Studies <sup>41</sup> | Disbursed         |
| Original budget 8,000.000                             | 3,500. 000        |

<sup>41</sup> The contribution was terminated during the first phase of core support due to an unexpected change in management and governance and the resultant evaporation of trust.



|                                |                   |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| Crimean ECOMIR <sup>42</sup>   | Disbursed         |
| Original budget 4,600.000      | 1,200.000         |
| Committee of Voters of Ukraine | 4,300.000         |
| Ecology, Law, Citizen          | 6,200.000         |
| Ukr Helsinki HR Group          | 10,700.000        |
| Centre UA                      | 10,935.000        |
| Razumkov Centre                | 14,950.000        |
| Gay Alliance                   | 3,300.000         |
| Total: SEK                     | <b>90,187.700</b> |

### Expanding Swedish Core Support Model

To multiply the benefits and effects of enhanced NGO capacities to bridge the gap of wide-spread and rather typical organizational deficiencies, often the result of unavailable funds from donors for core grants, the Embassy negotiated and entered into agreements for two complementary programmes:

(i) Marketplace Mechanism for Civil Society Development. The project is being implemented by the local Ukrainian CF ISAR-Ednannia with a budget of SEK 5,200 000 over 2.5 years. The programme enables local NGOs, most of them are regional, some grassroots, and local service providers to meet on the marketplace, which exists both offline (organizational development fairs) and on-line, utilizing a special Marketplace platform. A voucher pool of finances set up initially by USAID-funded PACT/UNITER project covers the costs of learning opportunities for NGOs. ISAR-Ednannia has a system of applications screening, when their expert board oversees the selection according to the designed rules. In addition, ISAR maintains an on-going educational campaign throughout Ukraine, explaining and promoting the agenda for organizational growth and capacity development. The most popular topics for organizational development have proved communications, strategic planning, communications, advocacy plans, organizational capacity assessment, volunteers' management, project management, procurement, monitoring and evaluation. From the project start in November 2012 through October 2013, Sida funds covered 116 vouchers/mini-grants issued for the purposes of organizational development.

(ii) Think-Tanks Development Initiative seeks to contribute to Ukraine's transformations into a successful, inclusive and accountable European democracy by creating the conditions for independent think tanks to grow organizationally and strengthen their voice in the policy process, making their outputs relevant for key stakeholder groups in Ukrainian society, and enabling them to make stronger impact on policy-

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<sup>42</sup> The contribution had to be terminated after Crimea's occupation by the Russian Federation because of impossibility of financial follow-up.

making. The programme, which is a combination of project and core support, was devised in partnership with the IRF (Soros) Foundation and the Think-Tanks Fund of the Open Society in Budapest. Its duration is from Jan 2014 through July 2017 with a budget of SEK 25,000 000 of which SEK 13.000 000 will be utilized for institutional development/core support of Ukrainian think-tanks. TTDI considerably draws on Sida's model and methodology applied in the programme of CSOs core support. However, it will be implemented largely by local staff with some Swedish targeted expert support to IRF Project Officers.

(iii) The Embassy of Sweden applied some of the tools applied by the CSP for individual NGOs while resorting to project-support mode (e.g., Kherson Pivden Association of Journalists was advised to pass an organizational audit, develop internal policies. Similar approach has been taken to cooperate with ISAR-Ednannia, the Institute for Economic Research, the Convictus projects, where a system-based audit was undertaken and institutional recommendations given).

### **Objectives of the Review**

The Swedish Embassy wishes to analyse the overall effectiveness, efficiency and impact of the programme of core support to CSOs in Ukraine with the reference to its overall goal of promotion of European standards and effectiveness of partner-CSOs to become mission-based and deliver their own strategies.

The primary **audience** for the Evaluation is the Embassy of Sweden team to make decision on continuation, modification and adjustments of the programme. The evaluation report will also be relevant to the Department for Europe and Latin America, the Divisions of Eastern Europe and thematic support, as well as the Department of Partnerships and Innovation, Division of Support to Civil Society. The results of the Evaluation have also a broader distribution to CSOs and other donors.

In accordance to OECD DAC principles the Embassy expects to get an evaluation embracing five essential criteria, such as

- **Effectiveness**
- **Impact**
- **Relevance**
- **Sustainability**
- **Efficiency**

**Specifically**, the conclusions of the evaluation report

(i) Should be grounded on clear understanding of the Core Support Programme effects at various levels:

1. country level changes: impact (if any): relevance, recognition, influencing national policies (policy dialogue), influencing partner and other actors, policy outcomes, policies of donors, changing donor-CSOs relationships, innovation; occupying a specific Swedish niche, comparative advantage, perceptions, aligning and harmonization;

2. CSOs transformations: benefits vs efforts and costs, what change has been brought about, are the indicators for measuring outcome appropriate, benefits to CSOs target audience/constituencies; ownership, dependency, tensions with sustainability; experiences: difficulties, specific issues, lessons learnt, what could be done differently or better; unintended consequences.
3. The Embassy level: administration: problematic areas; value added, lessons learnt.

(ii) Should assess the development pros and cons (enablers and limitations) of the CSP model as implemented in Ukraine:

- Does this framework allow for tangible change to be achieved?
- Does the model realize in earnest the argued benefits of core support versus project support mode?

(iii) Should provide Sida with practical recommendation regarding e.g., administration improvements in monitoring, control, data capturing, learning inputs to CSOs, reporting templates, trust and rapport building between PO staff and CSOs.

### **Methodology and Team**

The proposed methodology should be a combination of evaluation techniques, including

- a desk study of the existing documents and reports
- field visits to familiarize in-depth with at least 6 out of 12 organisations plus TTDI and the Marketplace programmes, while the rest can be reached through interviews, questionnaires, and/or focus groups.
- stakeholders' interviews: donors, other CSOs, Embassy staff, Sida HQ staff, the Department of Partnerships and Innovation, Division of Support to Civil Society, consultants involved in the programme implementation, etc.
- as far as possible, a participatory approach should be consistently applied to make the evaluation a learning experience for all parties.

Limitations should be clearly spelled out as is reliability and validity of the data. Attribution is an issue to be discussed in the report.

CSOs under evaluation will provide assistance and facilitate evaluation logistics, communication and orientation. Translation and interpretation costs should be covered by the evaluation budget. CSOs will provide all the necessary organization-specific documents/materials/information upon request. The costs of travel to the regions, such as Lviv and/or Kharkiv (possibly, but not necessarily) are to be part of the evaluation exercise budget. The Embassy of Sweden, on its part, will support the review financially and will provide the general CSP documentation and liaise with the Team throughout the assignment.

An initial contact with the Swedish Embassy in Ukraine should be arranged before starting the review in Kyiv to finetune the exercise and clarify any out-

standing questions. The contact person in the Embassy is Olga Sandakova, Programme Officer.

### **Time Schedule**

The review will take up no more than 60 consultancy days in Ukraine and in Sweden and will start from 1 October 2014. The assignment will involve no more than 3 field visits to Ukraine, and an extra visit to present the report's findings at the completion of the Evaluation at the Embassy. Wherever possible, field visits should be designed in a way to ensure savings.

### **Reporting**

The final version of the review shall be submitted in English by 10 December 2014. The draft should be sent to the Swedish Embassy, to allow elimination of any factual errors and for Sida to assess if the draft has reached an acceptable standard in relation to the Terms of Reference. The final version should be submitted in Word format to the commissioner and through the Embassy to other interested stakeholders.

The format of the report should include:

- Observations
- Analysis
- Conclusions
- Lessons Learnt
- Recommendations (to Sida and to the organisations, to the field and to the HQ.)

The presentation at the Embassy should be organized before 20 December 2014 after the final submission of the evaluation report to the Embassy of Sweden in Kyiv.

### **Report-Writing Guidance**

Recommended length is 40 pages max in plain English without attachments, with an Executive Summary of 2 A4 pp.

### **Timeframe**

A five-months contract: 2014-09-01 – 2015-03-01

### **Required Expertise**

The Consultant/s shall have:

- In-depth expertise in evaluation and review of development cooperation interventions focused on civil society and CSOs operations. Clear understanding of CSOs internal systems and their governance, trends in development support to civil society.
- Fluency in oral and written English
- Knowledge of Sida, its themes and policies.
- Knowledge of Ukraine, its context and civil society is desirable

### **Costs**

The total budget for the assignment shall not exceed SEK 800 000 to cover all the possible expenditure mentioned in the present ToRs.

**Annexes:**

1. Cecilia Karlstedt and Anders Ingelstam's Report *Possibilities and consequences for Ukrainian civil society in the EU integration process*
2. Cecilia Karlstedt and Anders Ingelstam's Guidelines for Support to Civil Society Organisations in Reform Processes in Ukraine
3. Assessment Tool for the Guidelines for Support to Civil Society Organisations in Reform Processes in Ukraine
4. *The Good Donorship Paper*
5. *ToR for a System-Based Audit*
6. *ToRs for Annual Audit of Core Supported CSOs*
7. *Reporting Templates for CSOs*
8. *List of core-supported CSOs with contact details*
9. *Results Strategy for Sweden's reform cooperation with Eastern Europe, the Western Balkans and Turkey, 2014-2020*

# Annex 2 Inception report

## 1. Assessment of Scope of the Evaluation

### THE PROGRAMME AND ITS CONTEXT

#### ***The core support programme***

The Swedish core support programme, developed in 2009 by the Swedish Embassy in Ukraine, aims to transform project focused NGOs into mission based CSOs working through implementation of their strategies. Presently, 13 CSOs are in various phases of the core support cycle developed for the programme. Some have gone through a full strategic planning period with core funding, while others have just started the intensive process of internal organisational strengthening in preparation for receiving core support. A third group is in the middle of the implementation of their strategic plans.

The core support cycle is divided into the following phases and steps:

#### **1. Pre-core funding phase:**

- a. Selection
- b. Initial system-based audit
- c. Improvement plan for pre-core support based on priority recommendations
- d. Agreement for improvement project and core support
- e. Implementation of improvement project for internal transformations accompanied by external support and learning events
- f. Verification visit and report by system based auditors

#### **2. Core phase:**

- a. Implementation of strategic plan
- b. Monitoring and facilitation of learning by Sida
- c. Annual meetings
- d. Annual reporting
- e. Annual financial audits

Extensive external support is provided during the pre-core funding phase mainly through international consultants. During the core phase the support is, to a large extent, provided by the Programme Officers at the Swedish Embassy in Kyiv and through external financial audits.

#### ***Additional support to civil society***

To further support capacity development of Ukraine's civil society and disseminate more widely tools and approaches from the core funding programme, Sida is contributing to three other initiatives incorporating some of the tools used i.e.:

1. The Market Place Mechanism for Civil society development
2. The Think Tank Development Initiative (still in the initial stage)

3. Project based support to a handful of additional CSOs, where the projects themselves are considered crucial, i.e. Kherson Pivden Association of Journalists, ISAR-Ednannia, the Institute for Economic Research and Convictus' projects.

Components of the core support approach have been applied in these collaborations.

### ***The context***

While the primary focus is on the supported CSOs and the expected internal changes that they have gone through as a result of the support, the programme is implemented in the midst of massive transformations within Ukraine's society. Beginning with the EuroMaidan protests in December 2013 there have been far-reaching implications for Ukrainian social activism and mobilisation, the period marked the start of a new paradigm for Ukrainian civil society. New actors appeared with more bottom-up activism and new patterns for social organisation leading to a rise in social capital and a change in attitude of much of society towards the state. The EuroMaidan 'agenda' was about deep systemic transformation through public oversight, transparency, accountability and structural reform.<sup>43</sup> The uprising resulted in the ousting of president Yanukovich in February 2014. Soon afterwards Russia annexed Crimea, which in turn sparked off the separatist insurgency in the Donbass region. Armed conflict is still ongoing, creating huge humanitarian needs for the 5 million people living in that part of the country, as well as for the many people who have had to move to more peaceful areas of Ukraine.

In June 2014, the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement was signed and later in September ratified by the Ukrainian parliament. The agreement is based on political association between the EU and any of the Eastern Partnership countries, and is unprecedented in its breadth (number of areas covered) and depth (detail of commitments and timelines).<sup>44</sup>

A crucial transformation process which civil society is leading is the so called "reanimation package of reforms". The package compose of 11 areas for reforms (constitution, anti-corruption, decentralisation, judiciary, taxes and deregulation, law enforcement, media, public administration, energy, health and eurointegration). Revised legislation is proposed by civil society to the parliament. Some have already been implemented, while the main part will continue after the parliamentary elections.

The national context is hence extremely turbulent and civil society is both playing crucial roles in shaping the future agenda, as well as being forced by the local power vacuums into new roles. The EuroMaidan experience is said to have made many CSOs more self-critical and goal-oriented, demanding a more effective results focus in their relations with donors.<sup>45</sup> It has

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<sup>43</sup> Civil awakening: the impact of EuroMaidan on Ukraine's politics and society, K Pishchikova, O. Ogryzko, Fride working Paper no 124, July 2014

<sup>44</sup> [http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/ukraine/eu\\_ukraine/association\\_agreement/index\\_en.htm](http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/ukraine/eu_ukraine/association_agreement/index_en.htm)

<sup>45</sup> Civil awakening: the impact of EuroMaidan on Ukraine's politics and society, K Pishchikova, O.

also raised more acutely new issues of different target groups and a need for broadening the scope of CSOs' work with different groups in the needy and sometimes divided society. Hence, it is a very challenging time to undertake this evaluation, but also particularly relevant as there might be need for adjustments in the programme due to the changed context for civil society today as compared to in 2009 when the programme was initiated.

## THE ASSIGNMENT

### ***The objective of the evaluation***

According to the Terms of Reference for the evaluation the objective is to:

*Analyse the overall effectiveness, efficiency and impact of the programme of core support to CSOs in Ukraine with reference to the overall goal of promoting European standards and effectiveness of the partner-CSOs to become mission based and deliver their own strategies.*

In addition, the evaluation should embrace the five OECD/DAC evaluation criteria: i.e. *relevance; impact; effectiveness; efficiency and sustainability*.

The evaluation is considered a rather complex one as it covers transformations and influences on a large number of actors while being implemented in the turbulent context of present day Ukraine. It has a broad scope as it is expected to capture internal transformations of the CSOs supported, their possible influences on national policies and processes, influences of the Swedish core support model on other civil society programmes and on other donors, as well as the ability of the Swedish Embassy to manage the support.

The evaluation team is composed of three evaluators with complementing backgrounds and experiences. They will work at distance from their home countries studying programme documents and conduct joint field studies in Ukraine over eight days to cover the central areas of the evaluation. It should, however, be said that not all aspects and perspectives will receive the same attention. The evaluators will have to be clear on the focuses and priorities of the assignment. This inception report defines further the scope and priorities, the evaluation questions framing the assignment and the limitations on what will be possible. In addition it elaborates further the approach and work plan for the assignment.

### ***Users of the evaluation***

The evaluation is intended to serve as a basis for the team at the Swedish Embassy in Kyiv to make decisions on continuation, modification and adjustments of the programme. The second target group of users is the managers of the CSOs themselves. The donor community in Ukraine supporting civil society is also seen as a potential user of the findings in the report for



their future programming. These three groups of users will be actively involved in the evaluation and special presentations of the findings will be made for them.

A final target group are staff at relevant departments and divisions at SIDA in Stockholm who would benefit from the findings for similar programmes elsewhere. No special presentation for them is, however, included.

## 2. Relevance of Evaluation Questions

### SPECIFIC EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The evaluation questions in the Terms of Reference are presented and discussed in the following sections along with some recommendations for revision. The three evaluation questions read as follows:

1. *Conclusions of the evaluation should be grounded on clear understanding of the Core Support Programme's effects at various levels, namely:*
  - a. *Country level changes:* i.e. impact, relevance, influencing national policies, influencing partners and other actors, policy outcomes, policies of donors, changing donor-CSOs relationships, innovation, occupying a specific Swedish niche, comparative advantage, perceptions, aligning and harmonisation
  - b. *CSOs transformation:* i.e. benefits vs efforts and costs; what change has been brought about?; are the indicators for measuring outcome appropriate?; benefits to CSO's target audience/constituencies; ownership; dependency; tensions with sustainability; experiences; difficulties; specific issues; lessons learnt; what could have been done differently or better?; unintended consequences.
  - c. *The embassy level:* i.e. administration, problematic areas, value added, lessons learnt.
2. *Discuss development pros and cons (enablers and limitations) of the core support programme model as implemented in Ukraine*
  - a. Does the framework allow for tangible change to be achieved?
  - b. Does the model realise argued benefits of core support versus the project support mode?
3. *Provide Sida with practical recommendations regarding e.g. administration, improvements in monitoring, control, data capturing, learning inputs to CSOs, reporting templates, trust and rapport building between POs and CSOs.*

The evaluation questions are wide in scope and broadly formulated. Therefore the consultancy team engaged in a communication process, both in writing following Indevelop's proposal and through meetings with Sida and the Swedish Embassy staff to further clarify the questions and Sida's expectations on the evaluation. Through this process it was agreed that the evaluation should focus on the following four, slightly reformulated, key areas:

1. Effects of the support to the CSOs in terms of internal transformations towards becoming more strategic, accountable, transparent and mission-driven organisations.
2. The relevance and effectiveness of the approach and modality itself, including its strengths and weaknesses, to promote organisational change.

3. Influences on, synergies with and complementarity to, other donors' support to civil society in Ukraine and for increased donor coordination/harmonisation.
4. Consequences of the programme for the Swedish Embassy and its ability to manage it.

In all key areas lessons learnt should be captured.

In accordance with the Terms of Reference the evaluation should as far as possible relate to the five OECD/DAC evaluation criteria. The key areas encompass *relevance* and *effectiveness* of the support, *sustainability* of the changes and to some extent discussions around *efficiency* of the core support programme. Specific evaluation questions related to these areas are further outlined below and in annex 1. However, the scope of assessing results at *impact* level will be limited. As the gist of the evaluation will be on the CSO level it will mainly focus on results in terms of outcomes. The challenges of assessing possible impact of the CSOs' advocacy work towards national policy and decision makers, which may only be partly attributed to internal changes, were discussed already in Indevelop's proposal. In light of the turbulent national context and as decision makers have been and still are shifting, it was agreed that the evaluation should be limited to capture possible influences on policies or national processes and address this only indirectly through discussion with the CSOs and as witnessed by donors. Hence, the dimensions mentioned under country level changes affecting policy in the ToR are understood as a guide to the evaluators when assessing CSOs' results framework, rather than to be used for taking stock of results.

Below the implications of the suggested revised key areas are discussed in relation to each evaluation question.

### ***The core support programme's effect on various levels***

**At the country level** expected results according to the ToR concern possible *influence on national policies and on donors*. Influences on **donors** are highlighted in the proposed **key focus 3**. Such influences of the Swedish support (or not) could be found on other donors' policies, programmes, relationships with civil society, in any harmonisation attempts taken within the donor community and in terms of perceived synergies with the Swedish support. In particular, the evaluation will assess if approaches and tools used by the core support programme have been adopted by others and been integrated into their programmes. More specifically, adaptations of approaches, tools and methods in the Marketplace mechanism and the Think Tank Development Initiative will be assessed. Furthermore, the evaluation will capture to what extent the core support programme is seen as complementary to other donors' support to civil society and why they see it as such. If the Swedish embassy is seen to have any specific comparative advantages and thereby being able to capture a special niche in civil society support will be assessed through the lens of the other donors.

Evaluating influences of the **CSOs** on the country level in terms of affecting national policies, will *not* be a major focus of the evaluation as discussed above. Such effects which could partly be a result of the internal transformations of the CSOs, as captured in key area 1, will be covered indirectly.

**The CSO level:**

The main focus of the evaluation will be on the **CSO level**, (**key area 1**) with the primary aim of assessing to what extent supported CSOs have become more mission driven and strategic. Changes in the following dimensions will be captured:

- *Governance* (increased understanding of governance, existence of external board of directors, more effective composition and functioning of boards, strategic decision making, increased separation of powers, improved executive management and transparent decision-making),
- *Strategic management*, (more mission-driven, stronger results-based management with clearer priorities and indicators in strategic plans, fulfillment of strategic plans, ability to respond to emerging needs, threats and opportunities, improved networking, more resilience for coping with the changing context, increased openness),
- *Improved financial management* (changed accounting practices using software, improved budget forecasting, commissioning audits according to international standards, understanding of audit requirements and procedure, use of management letters, relations with the auditor),
- *Increased sustainability* (ownership and sustainability of the transformations, resilience/flexibility, dependency, attractiveness towards other donors, changed donor relations and coordination, improved stakeholder involvement).

According to the evaluation questions at the CSO level the evaluation should also include possible effects of the programme on the CSOs' constituencies, i.e. members and rights holders. This aspect was discussed in the tender, where it was explained that the evaluation would require a different approach and be an evaluation of its own at this level if such impact was to be captured. It was hence agreed with the Swedish Embassy to limit the study to *perceived influences* on the relevant constituencies as seen by the CSOs themselves. The evaluation will therefore only be able to account for possible effects for rights holders as described in the CSOs' annual reports and as stories of change that stakeholders present in the consultations of a more anecdotal nature.

A major focus at the CSO level will also be **key area 2**, the relevance and effectiveness of the modality itself, see further 2.1.2 below.

**Swedish Embassy level:**

At Embassy level, **key area 4**, the issues mentioned in the Terms of Reference did not cause any specific concerns. Consequences of the core support programme will be discussed in terms of:

- Effect of increased sector coherence for programme officers
- The internal management and administration of the programme and its challenges
- Positive and negative spin-off effects, both expected and unexpected.
- Lessons learnt regarding the embassy's management, monitoring and continuous facilitation of learning.
- The CSOs internal transformations as observed by the programme officers
- The relevance and effectiveness of the support as observed by the programme officers

- The influences of the Swedish model on the donor community as observed by the programme officers.

### ***Pros and cons of the model as implemented in Ukraine***

The evaluation should assess if and how the modality has assisted tailored organisational development to occur at CSO level, influenced the Swedish Embassy's external relationships within Ukraine (state and civil society) and or influenced parts of approaches used by other donors for supporting Ukrainian CSOs. The assessment of the modality itself is captured in **key area 2**. Allowances will be made for the difficult working conditions of the past year while looking at how earlier organisation strengthening made the target CSOs more effective in coping with the fast changing situation.

The assessment will include:

- The *relevance* of the approach given the turbulent context and changing needs of Ukrainian civil society, i.e. discussing the flexibility which core funding allows, providing possibilities for replanning of operations, its focus on building systems instead of persons as well as Sida's restrictions on the CSOs extending support to the regions.
- As part of relevance, the pros and cons with the approach for selection of partners will be discussed; i.e. the focus on older and more mature CSOs instead of supporting emerging new groups. This will be particularly relevant in relation to the changed civil society following the EuroMaidan revolution
- The *effectiveness*, relevance and lessons learnt in each step in the core support programme cycle, including the appropriateness of the external support provided for capacity development.
- The usefulness of specific tools and formats developed
- *Efficiency* of the approach will be discussed in terms of the costs of external support and if lower cost alternatives are available. However, as no comparative alternatives are available to benchmark with the discussion will be limited.
- Possibilities for the programme to *influence* civil society more broadly due to its limited size
- *Influences* of the model on other Swedish project support
- Synergies and complementarities with other programmes
- Possible tensions between principles and Sida's systems
- Discussion on attribution and contribution to results when CSOs have multiple funders.

The modality will be assessed through discussions with all groups of stakeholders. Lessons learned will be captured at all levels.

### ***Practical recommendations on the administration of the support***

According to the Terms of Reference the Swedish Embassy is interested in receiving practical recommendations regarding the work of the Programme Officers in terms of administration, monitoring, control, capturing results, facilitation of learnings as well as regarding the tools applied by the Embassy for managing the programme. The extent to which the evaluators can explore individual PO's work is very limited. Some evidence-based advice could be provided but the extent of this will vary according to what data can be gathered and at this point this is presumably unclear. Further clarification is needed on the expected levels of detailed recommendations the evaluation will be able to provide.

## RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING EVALUATION QUESTIONS

We propose that the evaluation questions are reformulated and framed in terms of the the four key areas. Within the scope of the key areas more specific questions and indicators will be used. Please see further the table in annex 1 which will be the basis for elaboration of the specific interview guides. It is recommended that the table will be discussed during the inception meeting to assure that the gist of the evaluation questions have been adequately addressed prior to elaborating the interview guides.

As the aim of the evaluation is to capture changes within the CSOs, influences on the donor community and on two other CSO programmes (the Market place and the Think Tank Development Initiative), and consequences for the administration and management of the support baselines will be important. As for the CSOs, the most important baselines will be the systems audits, the improvement plans, the verification reports, the annual audit reports and the management letters during the pre-core funding period, as well as the annual results reports, minutes from annual consultations, audit reports and management letters during the core funding period. The Swedish Embassy has already made parts of extensive records of documentation available for the consultants. However, for assessing influence on donors and consequences for the embassy, this will be based on perceptions of the stakeholders and through triangulation of findings. To some extent the initial programme documentation from 2009 could be used to construct a baseline.

### 3. Proposed Approach and Methodology

#### APPROACH

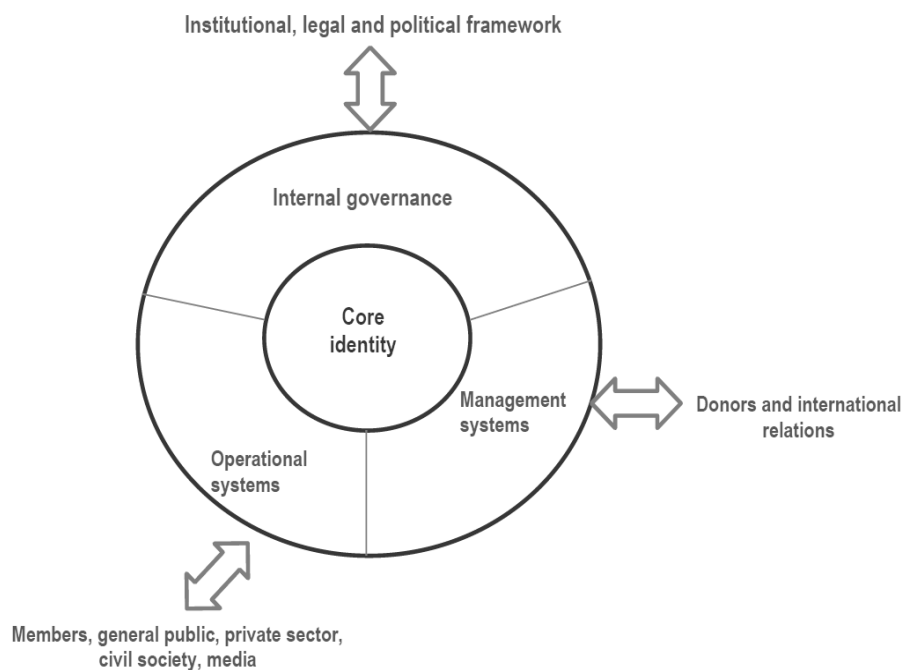
The chapter provides a discussion on how results can be judged and captured for organisational development, programme relevance in relation to a changing context assessed, as well as influence on other stakeholders and efficiency of the embassy.

Assessing organisational developments will depart from **OECD's definition of capacity development** as: *"The process of which ... organizations... develop, enhance and organize their systems, resources and knowledge; all reflected in their abilities, individually and collectively, to perform functions, solve problems and achieve objectives"*<sup>46</sup>.

There are many tools for conducting organisational assessments. Commonly the tools capture organisations according to the following dimensions:

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<sup>46</sup> OECD, 2006, DAC Guidelines and Reference Series Applying Strategic Environmental Assessment: Good Practice Guidance for Development Co-operation, OECD, Paris



Furthermore, organisational capacity can be understood in terms of eight interrelated areas:<sup>47</sup>

1. The strategic leadership: leadership, strategic planning, niche management
2. Organisational structure: governance and operational structure
3. Human resources systems and processes
4. Financial management
5. Infrastructure
6. Programme management: planning, implementing and monitoring
7. Process management: problem solving, decision making, communication, M&E
8. Interorganisational linkages: partnerships and networking

A key motivating factor is the organisation's mission in the core, shaping the organisation, uniting it and giving it a purpose and direction.

The evaluation is *not* a capacity study or systems audit per se and will not have the means to address all areas of strengthened organisational capacity. As its focus is on the effectiveness of the support for *strategic capacity development* the evaluation will aim to capture improvements in areas 1, 2, 4, 6, 7 and 8. above The present situation in these dimensions will be evaluated against the situation described in the systems audits, how it was suggested to be changed through the transformation project and thereafter verified in the verification report. For

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<sup>47</sup> Organisational Assessment, A framework for improving performance, Lusthaus, Adriene, Andersen, Carden and Montalván, Interamerican Development Bank, 2002

assessing improved financial management the present situation will be evaluated against the first audit report and management letter, supported by interviews with auditors. In addition the programme documentation from 2009 will be used. All stakeholders will be asked to identify “the most critical change” in the organisation’s transformations and asked to explain how these critical changes have influenced the organisation’s external performance, innovations and relations. The CSOs’ results frameworks will be assessed to evaluate if indicators capture such change.

Increased *sustainability* of the CSOs will be assessed through:

- If the organisations have increased their sources of funding
- If they have built more reliable funding sources over time
- Their increased attractiveness to generate new funding

The *relevance* of the core support modality given the context will be assessed by searching for answers on:

- How well the programme is meeting the needs of the CSOs today?
- To what extent these needs have changed over time since 2009?
- To what extent the CSOs have been able to change their operations to meet the needs in their new context with the Swedish support?
- The reputation of the programme among CS and donors? Has it changed?
- The reputation of the selected CSOs? Is the selection relevant as judged by other donors?

The programme’s influence on other stakeholders will be judged by identifying evidence in programming and terms of tools and methods adapted by them. Several of the main donors are represented by the same persons today who held similar positions in 2009 when the programme started. By interviewing these persons on the programme’s influences evidence of influence on the donor community will be traced and triangulated.

The embassy’s ability to manage the programme effectively will be assessed by interviewing staff at different levels separately; i.e. the Ambassador, the Head of Reform Cooperation and the programme officers and triangulating the findings.

## DESCRIPTION OF THE EVALUATION PROCESS AND TIME FRAME

**The inception phase** included familiarisation with some of the rich set of data available. An initial desk review was done, team meetings conducted as well as a meeting at Sida and with parts of the team at the Swedish Embassy over Skype with the purpose of further clarifying the understanding of the assignment. The dialogue and communication with the responsible programme officer at the Swedish Embassy has helped the team to frame the evaluation questions. Limitations were discussed and agreed upon.

Based on this, the team developed its understanding of the programme and the approach. The evaluation questions were reformulated into the four key areas and discussed with the Swe-



dish Embassy. Thereafter the team, in consultation with Indevelop, developed the proposed methods for the evaluation.

The inception phase will conclude with an inception meeting in Kyiv on October 21. Thereafter comments will be forwarded by the Swedish Embassy to the consultants by October 27. Based on the inception discussion and other comments the interview guides will be developed and communicated with the responsible programme officer.

**The collection of data** will be carried out from November 3 to December 1. The first part of the data collection will be to conduct a desk study of the eight selected CSOs. This will happen during November 3 to 14. The Embassy's assessments of how the CSOs met the initial selection criteria as well as the systems audits for each organisation will be used to reconstruct baselines. In addition, the initial project plan for meeting priority recommendations and the verification reports will add on to the baseline for each organisation. For assessing financial management, the initial audit reports will be studied. While reconstructing the baselines, key areas of change, challenges, lessons learnt and examples of possible evidence for internal transformations will be identified. The documents for the eight organisations will be assessed individually by the team members prior to the field work.

In addition, Skype interviews will be conducted with the two Scandinavian consultancy firms which provided external support services during the pre-core phase.

**The field work** will start with an initial interview with the head of the reform cooperation and the contact programme officer to discuss the programme's main contributions, limitations and influences. Thereafter an initial workshop will be conducted with the executive directors of all supported CSOs and the POs to validate initial observations from the desk study.

As indicated, one of the CSOs will be assessed by all three consultants in order to test and refine the evaluation tools and create a common frame of references within the team. Thereafter case studies of additional seven CSOs will be conducted. The premises of the CSOs will be visited and separate meetings will be conducted with the chairperson of the board and other board members, the executive director and the financial manager. Two CSOs will be assessed jointly by Cecilia and Katerina due to language reasons, three will be assessed individually by Megan and two individually by Katerina. The team members will share findings and observations at the end of the days for identification of commonalities. The team will maintain a continuous communication with the contact person at the Swedish Embassy, Olga Sandakova.

Three focus group discussions will be conducted with:

- The POs at the Swedish Embassy
- The executive directors and advocacy staff of all CSOs
- The executive directors of all CSOs

In addition, individual interviews will be conducted with Swedish Embassy staff, other donors, external service providers (auditor) and the management of the two additional civil society programmes. The field work will be concluded with a summing up meeting presenting initial findings at the Swedish Embassy.



**Analysis and presentation of findings:** Findings from the desk reviews, interviews, stakeholder consultations and validation sessions with stakeholders will constitute the basis for the overall analysis. The material will be analysed to draw findings, conclusions and make recommendations. This will take place during the period of December 1 – 15. A draft report will be submitted on December 20. Feedback on the draft report is due on January 12, 2015. Thereafter the final report will be prepared and submitted by January 19, 2015. Final presentations of the evaluation will be done on January 23, 2015 in Kyiv. The format for the presentations will be agreed upon with the Swedish Embassy.

### ***Central perspectives***

The team will apply a human rights based approach (HRBA) in their understandings of the expected transformations of the CSOs. This implies that the internal transformations of the CSOs' are expected to make them able to better represent their different constituencies, engage more with them and involve their members and other groups of citizens more directly to ensure that their advocacy is based on their needs. A possible effect of the transformations could hence be a reinforced legitimacy of the CSOs. A gender perspective will be applied throughout the evaluation.

### ***Quality Control***

The evaluation team will adhere to the requirements of the DAC Quality Standards (DQS) for Development Evaluation.

DQS assesses evaluations completed for the agency using seven quality assessment criteria, addressing issues such as the structure and clarity of reporting, design and methodology, and findings and analysis. The evaluation team will attempt to ensure that the evaluation meets the expectations associated with these criteria, which provide another benchmark against which the evaluation report can be judged.

Upon receipt of written comments from Sida about the draft evaluation report, the evaluation team will correct all documented factual errors and inaccuracies and make changes related to the report's structure, consistency, analytical rigor, validity of evidence, and requirements in the TOR. After making the necessary changes, the evaluation team will submit a final evaluation report.

### ***Conflict of Interest***

The evaluation team members have no known or potential conflicts of interest that would affect their judgment or ability to provide a credible and independent evaluation. One of the evaluators previously participated in the development of guidelines and tools for Sida's Support to Civil Society Organisations in Reform Processes in Ukraine while the other two evaluators have no prior involvement with the programming-setting. The evaluation team members have no vested interest in the outcomes of the evaluation.

## SELECTION OF SAMPLE CSOS

The programme is composed of 13 partner organisations which are in various stages of preparing or implementing their strategic plans. In addition, support to two organisations has been terminated: one in Crimea after the Russian annexation and one due to unforeseen inter-

nal changes. Unfortunately it will not be possible to include these directly in the evaluation due to circumstances related to the termination of the support. However lessons learnt from these cases will be thoroughly discussed with the team members in the Swedish Embassy as important learning could be gained.

Time will not allow for assessment of all 13 CSOs and a sample will be selected. The criteria used for CSOs selection are as follows: (1) stage of pre-co-funding implementation (completed pre-co-funding, implemented pre-co-funding and newly started) and (2) geographical location (capital, region). The following sample of 8 CSOs is suggested:

- *Centre of United Action* will be used as a *joint case* for all three team members to calibrate the evaluation guide and questions.
- All CSOs which have gone through a full support cycle will be included; i.e. *Mama 86*, *Telekritika* and *Gurt*.
- The two rights based CSOs outside Kyiv will be included; i.e. *Ecology* (Lviv) and *Kharikv Human Rights Group* (Kharkiv).
- *Hromanske TV* and *Gay Alliance* will be included as newer partners.

The remaining partners: i.e. Media Law Institute, Committee of Voters, Ukraine Helsinki Group, the Razumkov Centre and the Independent Association of Broadcasters will be invited to the focus group discussions while they will not be assessed per se. Their documentation might be consulted but will not be studied in depth.

## POTENTIAL KEY INFORMANTS TO BE CONSULTED

Stakeholders to interview are found within four groups, namely:

1. Within the supported CSOs;
2. Swedish Embassy and Sida staff;
3. External support providers;
4. Other donors.

The following organisations and persons have been identified to be included as informants in the evaluation:

### **Within the eight selected CSOs:**

Members of the board of directors/Chairperson  
 The executive director  
 The financial manager  
 Advocacy staff

### **External service providers:**

Swedish Development Consultants: Åsa Königson  
 Cowi: Henrik Brade Johansen and Alben Shuyska  
 Compass Audit and Consulting: Larysa Shkurka

### **The Swedish Embassy in Kyiv:**

The Swedish Ambassador: Andreas von Beckerath  
 The head of section for reform support: Christina Danielsson

Programme officers managing the support

**Sida:**

Head of reform cooperation with Ukraine: Mirja Peterson

Head of Civsam: Charlotte Norrby

**The two complementary CS programmes:**

The management of the Market Place Mechanism for CS Development: Volodymyr Sheyhus, ISAR Ednannia

The management of the think tank programme: Inna Pidluska, IRF

The management of Kherson Journalist Organisation

**The donor community:**

EU Delegation: Colombe de Mercey and Stas Topolnytskyy

USAID: Victoria Marechenko

PACT/Uniter: Roland Kovac and Irina Bilous

Mott Foundation: Svitlana Souprun

UNDP: Yulia Shcherbinina

Internews: Wayne Sharp and Oksana Maydan

***Approaches for the different key informant consultations***

Semi-structured interviews following a common interview guide will be used for most consultations. The focus of each interview will depend on the actor interviewed. As far as time allows, triangulation of data will be done. Meetings will be organised both as group meetings and individual interviews. Three focus group discussions and one workshop are planned to be included.

## DIVISION OF RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE TEAM AND WORK PLAN

The team members will work closely together throughout the evaluation process. The team leader Cecilia Karlstedt has the overall responsibility for communication with the Swedish Embassy, methods development, data collection, analysis and report writing. However as the two other team members. Megan Bick and Katerina Stolyarenko are very experienced evaluators the process will be highly interactive to capture on everybody's expertise. All three team members are used to assess CSOs. Katerina will manage the setting up of the programme as she is based in Ukraine. Since Megan is fluent in Russian she will undertake some of the assessments of CSOs independently, while Cecilia and Katerina will work together with two organisations for language reasons. Katerina will assess the two organisations outside Kyiv independently during and after the main period of the field work. Cecilia will focus on interviewing donors.

### Annex 1 – Evaluation Matrix 1; Effects on CSOs – Relevance, internal transformations, external influences, relevance and effectiveness of modality

The evaluation matrices were developed to address the issues and themes outlined in the ToR, based on the evaluation criteria. The evaluation matrices expand on the ToR questions, and thus provides a wider interpretation of the issues. The matrices also indicate the proposed data source (assuming this is available and accessible) and the specific evaluation methodologies (document review, key informant interview, etc.) to address each evaluation topic. The matrices will also serve as a means of verifying whether sufficient evidence has been gathered for each evaluation criterion. Finally, the matrices attempt, where possible, to provide a set of measurable performance indicators/standards of performance/benchmarks against which the attainment of results will be assessed.

| Questions raised in ToRs / Reformulated evaluation questions                                                                                                                                          | Indicators to be used in Evaluation                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Methods                                                                                                       | Sources                                                                  | Availability and Reliability of Data /comments                                                                                              |
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| <b>Key area 1: Relevance and effectiveness of the support for CSOs as in terms of internal transformation towards becoming more strategic, accountable, transparent and mission driven</b>            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                               |                                                                          |                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>Relevance</b>                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                               |                                                                          |                                                                                                                                             |
| Relevance of programme objective in relation to needs of Ukrainian CSOs:<br><i>Is the programme more or less relevant now for supported CSOs than it was when it began given the changed context?</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Existence of clear links between the CSOs overall objectives and the new Swedish overall objectives</li> <li>Documented examples where Swedish requirements have made the CSOs more resilient to negative external changes</li> <li>CSOs attitudes towards the Swedish support</li> </ul> | Documentary studies of CSOs results frame-works<br>Annual reports<br>Minutes of annual meetings<br>Interviews | Swedish Ambassador & Head of reform support<br>Supported CSOs<br>POs     | Huge and fast changes within the national context over the past 12 months may have rendered certain approaches ineffective or less relevant |
| <i>Is the support flexible enough for the CSOs to manage the changing context?</i>                                                                                                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Possibility to balance using support for developing capacity vs funding operations</li> <li>Documented cases of requests for adjusted budgets and reasons</li> <li>Documented cases where CSOs</li> </ul>                                                                                 | Interviews<br>Improvement plans<br>Annual reports<br>Minutes of annual meetings<br>Formal requests            | Supported CSOs<br>PO & Head of reform support<br>Other donors<br>Auditor |                                                                                                                                             |

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|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>have reformulated their missions and overall objectives</li> <li>• Documented cases of innovations in operations of supported CSOs</li> <li>• Documented cases where CSO have been able to capture rapidly emerging opportunities to influence national policies</li> </ul> |                                                                                  |                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                             |
| Have the CSOs results frameworks enabled the CSOs to demonstrate achievements of results?                                                                                                                                                                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examples of applied RBM</li> <li>• Existence of results based reports</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                          | Documentary studies of CSOs results frameworks and results reports<br>Interviews | Supported CSOs<br>POs                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                             |
| Has the type of support provided (governance ws, clinics, Strategic plan ws, peer support) been relevant for the needs of the CSOs?                                                                                                                                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expressions of satisfaction/dissatisfaction with external consultancy support</li> <li>• Identified examples of continuous use of formats provided</li> </ul>                                                                                                             | Desk studies of annual meeting minutes, annual reports<br>Interviews             | CSOs supported<br>POs<br>Consultants<br>Auditor<br>Other donors                                             |                                                                                                                                             |
| Are the selected CSOs seen as representative for the people they represents?                                                                                                                                                                                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examples of greater downward accountability to members/rights holders</li> <li>• Examples of greater transparency towards constituencies</li> </ul>                                                                                                                       | Desk studies of annual meeting minutes, annual reports<br>Interviews             | BOD members<br>Executive director<br>POs<br>Donors supporting the same organisation<br><br>Advocacy persons |                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>Effectiveness of core support programme</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                  |                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                             |
| <i>Internal transformations in supported CSOs as direct consequences of the Swedish support:</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved governance in supported CSOs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More effective boards of directors</li> </ul> </li> </ol> | Board level; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased understanding of governance</li> <li>• Existence of external boards</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                     | Documentary study; systems audits, verification reports, mgt letters, minutes    | BOD members<br>Executive directors<br>Financial managers<br><br>Donors supporting the                       | The findings will be triangulated as far as possible by interviewing others knowing the same CSO, but will mainly rely on respondents' per- |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Improved executive management,</li> <li>○ Improved financial management:</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More effective composition of BOD,</li> <li>• Evidence of well function external BODs</li> <li>• Increased separation of powers</li> <li>• Clear division of responsibilities</li> <li>• Documented cases BOD's decision making</li> </ul> <p>Executive mgt:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaboration/division of roles with BOD,</li> <li>• increased RBM</li> <li>• clear lines of accountability</li> <li>• more devolved decision-making,</li> <li>• clear organisation/division of responsibilities while allowing for flexibility</li> <li>• well established reporting practices,</li> <li>• increased openness towards constituencies</li> </ul> <p>Financial mgt:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• adequate bookkeeping system</li> <li>• improved forecasting</li> <li>• regular financial reporting to BOD and management</li> <li>• commissioned audits according to international standards</li> <li>• use of audits for improvement and learning</li> <li>• Relation with auditor</li> <li>• improved long term funding strategy</li> </ul> | <p>annual meetings</p> <p>Interviews</p>                             | <p>same CSOs</p> <p>POs</p> <p>Consultants</p>                                                         | <p>ceptions</p> |
| <p>2. Improved Strategic management</p>                                                                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• more mission driven - clear links between the mission and operations,</li> <li>• improved strategic &amp; results based planning with clearer indicators for</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | <p>Documentary studies of CSOs' core documents</p> <p>Interviews</p> | <p>BOD members</p> <p>Executive director</p> <p>Donors supporting the same CSOs</p> <p>Consultants</p> |                 |

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|                                                                                                                                              | change,<br>• Degree of implementation of SP<br>• Improved internal policies,<br>• More clearly defined priorities,<br>• Improved networking and building alliances, openness towards external actors<br>• Increased recognition of the importance of the CSOs within the donor community<br>• % of recommendations from systems audits fully implemented |                                                                                                  | POs<br>Auditor                                                                                      |  |
| 3. CSOs perceived improved performance /influences on:<br>a. national policies and legislation<br>b. reform processes<br>c. Public awareness | • Reported cases of influence on changed legislation, better implementation of national policy, influence on reform agenda, or increased national awareness created<br><br>• CSOs perception of greatest successes to date due to core funding (most critical change)<br><br>• CSOs attribution of internal changes if at all to these successes?        | Focus group<br><br>Documentary studies of Annual reports<br>Annual meeting minutes<br>Interviews | Advocacy persons<br><br>BOD members<br>Executive director<br>Donors supporting the same CSOs<br>POs |  |
| <b>Key area 2 Relevance and effectiveness of the approach and modality itself (as perceived by the CSOs)</b>                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                  |                                                                                                     |  |
| 1. Adequacy of approach and process for Swedish core funding support (effectiveness of the steps in the cycle)                               | • CSOs' perception of the usefulness of the steps and phases in the core funding approach<br>• lessons learnt from each step                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Documentary study<br><br>Interviews                                                              | BOD members<br>Executive directors<br>Financial managers<br>Auditors                                |  |
| 2. Appropriateness and quality of external support pro-                                                                                      | • Perceived quality of technical                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Interviews                                                                                       | BOD members                                                                                         |  |



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| vided?                                                                                                        | assistance, coaching, training and auditing services provided? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perceived relevance of the external support (above) in relation to organisational needs?</li> <li>• CSOs perceived ownership of their capacity development</li> </ul> |                                             | Executive directors<br>Financial managers<br>Auditors                  |                                                                                         |
| 3. Usefulness of tools and formats                                                                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Degree of provided tools and formats used by CSOS</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                         | Documentary study<br>Interviews             | Executive directors<br>Financial managers                              |                                                                                         |
| <b>Efficiency</b>                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                             |                                                                        |                                                                                         |
| 1. Could the money for external support have been better spent to support these groups with the same results? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Less costly and more sustainable/credible local alternatives</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                              | Interviews<br>Analysis of financial data    | CSOs<br>POs<br>Other donors<br>Consultants                             | As proper benchmarks are not available this will to a large extent rely on common sense |
| <b>Sustainability</b>                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                             |                                                                        |                                                                                         |
| 1. CSOs' ownership and commitment towards internal transformations made?                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vision and plans for the future</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                           | Interviews<br>Strategic plans               | Board members<br>Executive directors                                   |                                                                                         |
| 2. CSOs' improved resilience to manage their mission in the present context                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perceptions of CSOs' increased durability and stability</li> <li>• Changed ability to manage staff turnover</li> <li>• Funding levels</li> <li>• % of strategic plan implemented</li> </ul>                                          | Interviews<br><br>Focus Group Exe dir       | Board members<br>Executive directors<br>Financial managers<br>Auditors |                                                                                         |
| 3. CSOs' perceived increased/decreased dependency on the Swedish embassy?                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changes in number of and diversity of funding sources</li> <li>• Changes in national fund raising</li> <li>• Perceived closeness of relation</li> </ul>                                                                              | Interviews<br><br>Focus Group Exe directors | POs<br>Executive directors<br>Financial managers<br>Board members      |                                                                                         |
| 4. Increased attractiveness of the CSO for other donors                                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contacts made by new donors</li> <li>• New donors proving support during core phase</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                       | Interviews                                  | Financial managers<br>Other donors                                     |                                                                                         |
| 5. Changed ratio between core funding/project funding                                                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• % of total budget shifted from</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                            | Interviews                                  | Financial managers                                                     | Impact of the humanitarian                                                              |

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| within supported CSOs,                                                                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>from project to core funding?</li> <li>Responses to the humanitarian situation</li> </ul>                                                                                                                   |                                                |                                    | crises on other donors willingness to provide long term development funding |
| 6. Increased donor coordination around a CSO and changed relations between the CSOs and the donors? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prevalence of joint donor meetings, joint reports to donors, joint audits</li> </ul>                                                                                                                        | Interviews<br><br>Focus Group<br>Exe directors | Executive directors                | Donors' willingness to extend core support given the humanitarian crises?   |
| 7. Stronger links with the CSO's constituency:                                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have new people/groups benefitted from CSO's more strategic approach?</li> <li>Broadened areas of appeal (geographic, age, ethnic etc)</li> <li>Have the rights holders received better support?</li> </ul> | Desk study – strategic plans                   | Executive directors<br>BOD members |                                                                             |

**Evaluation Matrix 2: Influences of Core support programme on Swedish bilateral support, other projects and programmes, on other donors, relevance and effectiveness of modality, consequences and ability to manage the support at the Swedish Embassy**

| <b>Key area 4. Consequences of the programme for the Swedish Embassy and its ability to manage it.</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |            |                                             |                                                                      |
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| <i>Influence on the Swedish bilateral support:</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has increased sector coherence and improved quality of policy dialogue been gained by the POs?</li> <li>Can any broader influences from the core support programme be noted on the Ukrainian civil society</li> </ol> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Perceived increased sector knowledge among POs</li> <li>Perceived changed quality of relations between state actors and CSOs due to POs' facilitation</li> <li>Perceived interest in the core support programme from CSOs</li> </ul> | Interviews | POs<br>Ambassador<br>Head of reform support | Programme documents from 2009 could contribute to construct baseline |

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|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Influence of the core support programme on other Swedish project and programmes:</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Complementarity and synergies with TTDI/MarketPlace?</li> <li>2. Influence on project support to CSOs outside the core support programme</li> </ol>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explained linkages between programmes from a Swedish perspective</li> <li>• Cases of approaches, tools and formats borrowed and adjusted</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Interviews<br>Programme documents from other projects and programmes | Head of reform cooperation<br>POs<br>Management of market Place and TTDI           |                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <i>Consequences of the core support programme on internal management of the support at the Embassy:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• POs ability to meet administrative requirements</li> <li>• Negative effects and other solutions due to lack of time</li> <li>• Perceived Swedish niche or Swedish comparative advantage</li> <li>• Strategies for expansion of the support</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perceived ability to be a competent dialogue partner,</li> <li>• Experienced successes and challenges</li> <li>• Lessons learned from terminated support</li> <li>• Perception of usefulness of tools applied</li> <li>• Examples of compromises made</li> <li>• Examples of cases where a comparative advantage has been experienced</li> <li>• Flexibility/ constraints from Sida HO</li> </ul>         | Interviews                                                           | Swedish Ambassador & Head of reform support<br>POs                                 | Individual work styles of POs will not be assessed                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Key area 3. Influences on, synergies with and complementarity to, other donors' support to civil society in Ukraine and for increased donor coordination/harmonisation.</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                      |                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <i>Influence of the core support programme on other donors' support to civil society:</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Changes in modalities, adaptation of programmes, changed policies for civil society support and use of tools by other donors influenced by the Swedish core support programme?</li> <li>2. Changes in interpretation of "core funding"?</li> <li>3. Improved coordination, sharing among donors around CSOs supported, harmonisation attempts?</li> <li>3. Closer links with the main donors supporting CS?</li> </ol> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reported cases of what has been adopted, adapted or rejected?</li> <li>• Restrictions from HOs to change approaches?</li> <li>• Variations in definitions core funding used</li> <li>• Examples of reports and observations shared among donors</li> <li>• Perceived linkages and synergies between core funding programme and Market Place and TTDI programmes from other donors' perspective</li> </ul> | Interviews<br>Programme documentation from other donors              | Other donors supporting the same CSOs<br>Management of market Place and TTDI<br>PO | Impact of the humanitarian crises on other donors' willingness to provide long term development funding. Due to this, the influence of the Swedish model might be difficult to discern |

|                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                          |                                                           |                                                                                         |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 4. Synergies/complementarities between supports?                                                                                        | spective, common tools used, adaptations influenced by core funding programme?                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                          |                                                           |                                                                                         |
| <b>Key area 2. Relevance and effectiveness of the approach and modality itself (as perceived by other donors and service providers)</b> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                          |                                                           |                                                                                         |
| 1. Adequacy of approach and process for Swedish core funding support ( effectiveness of the steps in the cycle)                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changes observed in CSOs attributed to Swedish support?</li> <li>• Perceived relevance of approach in Ukraine context</li> <li>• Limitations observed</li> <li>• lessons learned</li> </ul>                                                              | Documentary study<br>Interviews          | POs<br>Other donors<br>Consultants<br>Auditor             |                                                                                         |
| 2. Appropriateness and quality of external support provided?                                                                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perceived quality of technical assistance, coaching, training and auditing services provided?</li> <li>• Perceived relevance of the external support in relation to organisational needs?</li> <li>• Availability of lower cost alternatives?</li> </ul> | Documentary study<br>Interviews          | Consultants<br>POs<br>Other donors<br>Auditor             |                                                                                         |
| 3. Usefulness of tools and formats?                                                                                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perception of % of provided tools and formats used by CSOS</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                    | Documentary study<br>Interviews          | POs<br>Consultants<br>Management of market Place and TTDI |                                                                                         |
| <b>Efficiency</b>                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                          |                                                           |                                                                                         |
| Could the money for external support have been better spent to support these groups with the same results?                              | Less costly and more sustainable/credible local alternatives                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Interviews<br>Analysis of financial data | POs<br>Other donors<br>Consultants                        | As proper benchmarks are not available this will to a large extent rely on common sense |
| <b>Sustainability</b>                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                          |                                                           |                                                                                         |
| CSOs' ownership and commitment towards internal transfor-                                                                               | Perceptions of Vision and plans                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Interviews                               | Consultants                                               |                                                                                         |

|                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                  |            |                                               |                                                                                                        |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|-----------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| mations made?                                                          | for the future                                                                                                                                                                                   |            | Auditors                                      |                                                                                                        |
| CSOs' perceived increased/decreased dependency on the Swedish embassy? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changes in number of and diversity of funding sources</li> <li>• Changes in national fund raising</li> <li>• Perceived closeness of relation</li> </ul> | Interviews | Consultants<br>POs<br>Other donors<br>Auditor |                                                                                                        |
| Increased attractiveness of the CSO for other donors                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contacts made by new donors</li> <li>• New donors proving support during core phase</li> </ul>                                                          | Interviews | Other donors                                  | Impact of the humanitarian crises on other donors willingness to provide long term development funding |

| Phase                                                                                           | Evaluation Team Members |       |          |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------|----------|
|                                                                                                 | Cecilia                 | Megan | Katerina |
| <b>Inception phase</b>                                                                          |                         |       |          |
| Start up meetings internally and with the Swedish Embassy                                       | 0,5                     | 0,5   | 0, 5     |
| Interview at Sida; Mirja Peterson                                                               | 0,5                     |       |          |
| Study of basic documents and framing the assignment                                             | 1,5                     |       |          |
| Preparation of inception report                                                                 | 2                       | 1     |          |
| Inception meeting in Kyiv                                                                       | 1                       |       |          |
| Developing evaluation tools                                                                     | 1,5                     | 1,5   | 0,25     |
|                                                                                                 |                         |       |          |
| <b>Data collection (Nov 3 – 14)</b>                                                             |                         |       |          |
| Documentary studies to establish the baseline                                                   | 3                       | 2     | 2        |
| Skype interviews with SDC and COWI                                                              | 1                       |       |          |
|                                                                                                 |                         |       |          |
| <b>Field work</b>                                                                               | 8                       |       | 8        |
| <b>Nov 18</b><br>Initial interview with PO and Head of reform coop                              | 0,25                    | 0,25  | 0,25     |
| Workshop: Prel. observations with exe. Dir.s and POS                                            | 0,5                     | 0,5   | 0,5      |
| <b>Nov 19</b><br>Team interview with Centre UA                                                  | 1                       | 1     | 1        |
| Refining tools and method                                                                       | 0,25                    | 0,25  | 0,25     |
| <b>Nov 21 - 22</b><br>Interviews in two teams with:<br>Mama 86, Telekritika, Gurt, Gay Alliance | 2                       | 2     | 2        |
| <b>Nov 24</b><br>Focus group 1: CSO Advocacy persons/executive directors (10.00 – 13.00)        |                         | 0,5   | 0,5      |
| Interview with Market Place Programme                                                           | 0, 25                   |       |          |
| Interview Auditor: Compass                                                                      | 0,25                    |       |          |
| Focus Group 2: POs (14.00 – 17.00)                                                              | 0,5                     | 0,5   | 0,5      |
| <b>Nov 25</b>                                                                                   |                         |       |          |
| Interview Hromaske TV                                                                           |                         | 0,5   |          |
| Interview Ecologia                                                                              |                         |       | 1        |
| Donor meetings; EU, USAID, PACT                                                                 | 0,75                    |       |          |
| Interview Swedish Ambassador and head of reform support (11.00 – 12.00)                         | 0,25                    |       |          |
| <b>Nov 26</b>                                                                                   |                         |       |          |
| Interview with Internews                                                                        |                         | 0,5   |          |
| Interview: Mott Foundation, TTDI / IRF                                                          | 0,5                     |       |          |
| Focus group 3 on sustainability: exec dir (10.00 – 13.00)                                       | 0,5                     | 0,5   | 0,5      |

|                                                                          |             |           |           |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-----------|-----------|
| <b>Nov 27</b>                                                            |             |           |           |
| Conclusions, summing up meeting Embassy (10.00 – 12.00), travel (CK, MB) | 1           | 1         | 0,5       |
| <b>Nov 28</b>                                                            |             |           |           |
| Interview Kharkiv: Kharkiv HR Group                                      |             |           | 1         |
|                                                                          |             |           |           |
| <b>After the field work</b>                                              |             |           |           |
| Interviews at Sida: Mirja Peterson and Charlotta Norrby                  | 0,5         |           |           |
| Interview Kherson Journalist Organisation                                |             |           | 0,25      |
|                                                                          |             |           |           |
| <b>Analysis and reporting</b>                                            |             |           |           |
| Drafting report and internal meetings                                    | 6           | 5         | 2         |
|                                                                          |             |           |           |
| Finalisation of report after comments                                    | 2,5         | 1         |           |
| Presentation of final report in Kyiv for Sida, donors and CSOs           | 2           | 2         | 1         |
|                                                                          | <b>29,5</b> | <b>21</b> | <b>14</b> |

## LIMITATIONS

### *Limitation of scope*

The scope of the evaluation is very wide, while the nature of it is qualitative. Hence much of the available data is likely to be anecdotal, generated through interviews and meetings. The data will to a large extent be perceptions of the interviewees. There will not be time to go back to interviewees for validation of findings. Triangulation with different respondents will be used to verify the data, while caution will be needed in drawing generalised conclusions.

The following limitations are proposed:

1. The evaluation will indirectly assess effects of the CSOs advocacy on national policy through discussions with the CSOs and the donors.
2. The evaluation will indirectly assess effects on members and rights holders as results of organisational changes through discussions with the CSOs and the donors.
3. The evaluation will not assess the detailed work of each Programme Officer and suggest recommendations on all tools used. Common challenges and concerns at the Swedish Embassy will be captured.
4. Due to the wide scope, combined with many partners and stakeholders the time for each interview will be limited. This affects the depth that the study will be able to go into. The is not a systems audit and will not be able to evaluate the changed systems per se.

***Assessing contributions/ Questions of Attribution***

It is always a challenge to assess the contributions to identified results. In this case even more so, due to the turmoil in the context. The team will continuously discuss this to gradually develop a common understanding.

Both Organisational development (OD) and capacity building (CB) are non- linear and long term processes which can be contested as any change within organisations and/or individuals happen as a result of complex interactions. There are no sector wide accepted practice/standards around M&E of OD and a review of the literature indicates that the theory of change work for OD is not yet well developed while the links are well understood in practice. With this evaluation, we will try to see if there is evidence of the core support programme's 'footprints' especially if these 'footprints' are in areas where we know that this CSO had no history of using such approaches before. The changing local situation across an extreme spectrum (powerful local authorities to a power vacuum, disillusioned passive society to an active, angry, empowered society) may have led to greater advocacy roles or improved work with marginalised groups as opposed to improvements in the organisation's core functioning. However, we will attempt to identify the probability/ plausibility of whether or not certain tools, formats or direct activities had possibly contributed to these changes. We will also explore perceptions about what would have happened in the absence of this programme's interventions.

***Representativeness of the selected cases***

Eight out of 13 CSOs supported have been selected for the evaluation. Each CSO is unique with its own internal challenges and possibilities. Generalisation of findings regarding the modality will pose no problems, while generalisations of internal transformations will have to be handled with caution.



# Annex 3 List of persons met

## **Swedish Embassy in Ukraine**

Andreas von Beckerath, Swedish Ambassador  
Ms Christina Danielsson, Counsellor, Head of Reform Cooperation Section  
Ms Olga Sandakova, Programme Officer  
Mrs Sophie Fyrk, Reform Support Officer  
Mr Andriy Parinov, Programme Officer  
Ms Iryna Skaliy, Programme Officer  
Ms Svitlana Revenok, Controller

## **Sida head office**

Mirja Peterson, Head of Eastern Europe  
Charlotta Norrby, Head of Civil Society Unit  
Karin Fällman, Senior Policy Specialist, Civil Society Unit

## **Mama 86**

Anna Golubovska-Onsimova, Chairperson  
Olena Touros, Board Member  
Zoriana Mishchuk, Executive Director  
Mariya Polyanska, Financial Officer

## **Centre UA**

Oleh Rybachuk, Head of Organization  
Inna Borzolo, Executive Director  
Marina Savina, Financial Officer

## **Telekritika**

Natalia Ligachova-Chornolutska, Chairperson  
Irina Chemeris, Board Member  
Diana Doutsik, Executive Director  
Roman Shutov, Programme Director  
Iryna Skrynnik, Financial Officer

## **Gurt**

Oleksiy Meleschuk, Chairperson  
Bogdan Maslych, Executive Director  
Tetyana Danyliv, Board Member  
Lyudmyla Bezsonova, Financial Officer  
Maryana Zaviyska, Department Director

### **EPL**

Olena Kravchenko, Executive Director  
 Hanna Khomechko, Development Director  
 Iryna Vaselakiy, Chief Accountant  
 Iryna Voytiuk, Member of the Board  
 John Bonine, Chairperson

### **Gay Alliance**

Stanislav Mishchenko, Chairperson  
 Taras Karasiichuk, Executive Director  
 Oksana, Financial Officer

### **Hromadske TV**

Ilya Raeovsky, Executive Director  
 Solomiya Borshosh, Financial Director  
 Konstantyn Gomma, Marketing Director

### **KhPG**

Vsevolod Rechytsy, Chairperson  
 Olga Bogolei, Board Member  
 Irina Rapp, Board Member  
 Yevhen Zakharov, Executive Director  
 Nelly Fursova, Financial Director  
 Svitlana, Financial Officer

### **Helsinki HR Union**

Boris Zakharov, Advocacy Officer

### **Independent Association of Broadcasters**

Olga Bolshakova, Head of Advocacy Centre

### **Media Law Institute**

Tetyana Semiletko, Head of Development

### **Razumkov Centre**

Anatoly Rachok, Executive Director

### **Donors**

Victoria Marchenko, Civil Society&Media Support, USAID  
 Iryna Bilous, Deputy Country Director, PACT  
 Yulia Yesmukhanova, PACT  
 Yulia Shcherbinia, Democratic Governance, UNDP  
 Svitlana Suprun, Mott Foundation  
 Colombe de Mercey, Civil Society Sector, EU Delegation  
 Inna Pidluska, IRF  
 Wayne Sharpe, Internews

Oksana Maydan, Internews

**ISAR Ednannia**

Volodymyr Sheygus, Executive Director

Andrey Donetsk, Capacity Development Officer

**Compass Audit and Consulting Group**

Larysa Shkurka, Managing Partner

Natalia Naumenko, Director-Partner

**Systems based auditors and technical advisors**

Åsa Königson, Swedish Development Advisors

Anders Persson, Swedish Development Advisors

Albina Shuyska, COWI A/S

# Annex 4 Documents consulted

## **Swedish Strategies and Policies**

Strategy for Swedish Development Cooperation with Ukraine 2009-2013

Results strategy for Sweden's reform cooperation with Eastern Europe, the Western Balkans and Turkey for the period 2014–2020, Government Offices of Sweden

Pluralism - Policy for Support to Civil Society in Developing Countries within Swedish Development Cooperation, Government Offices of Sweden, 2009

Government communication 2013/14:131: Aid Policy Framework – the directions of Swedish Aid, March 2014

## **Sida documents**

Swedish reform cooperation in Ukraine, fact sheet

Sida's webb site: <http://www.sida.se/English/where-we-work/Europe/Ukraine-/Our-work-in-Ukraine/>

Terms of Reference for Evaluation of the Sida-Funded Programme of Core Support and Connected projects in Ukraine, Swedish Embassy, June 2014

Project List in Ukraine, May 2014

Promemoria, Sidas plan för en förstärkning av fältbemanningen 2010 – 2014, 2010 03 01

Ett förnyat Sida, vår vision – en helhetssyn, 2012, Sida

## **EU documents**

Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, the Roots of Democracy and Sustainable Development: Europe's Engagement with Civil Society in External Relations, Brussels, 12 September 2012

Structured Dialogue for an efficient partnership, technical sheet – Aid modalities, 1. Core funding/Operating Grants, 2012

Ukraine EU Country Roadmap for Engagement with Civil Society, Head of Delegation and Heads of Missions of EU Member States, 31 July 2014

Council conclusions on the roots of Democracy and sustainable development: Europe's engagement with Civil Society in external relations, 3191st Foreign Affairs Development Council meeting Luxembourg, 15 October 2012

[http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/ukraine/eu\\_ukraine/association\\_agreement/index\\_en.htm](http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/ukraine/eu_ukraine/association_agreement/index_en.htm)

<https://www.democracyendowment.eu/about-eed/>

A mapping study of civil society in Ukraine, L. Mincheva, O. Vinnikov, 2009, EU/TACIS

## **Studies and articles**

Civil Society Organizations in Ukraine: The State and Dynamics (2002-2011), CCC Creative Center Ukraine, Kyiv, 2013

In Search of Sustainability Civil Society in Ukraine, Mridula Ghosh, June 2014

Civic Awakening: The impact of Euromaidan on Ukraine's Politics and Society, N°124, Fride, Kateryna Pishchikova and Olesia Ogryzko, July 2014

Sociological Poll for Uniter Project, D Mikanchuk and I. Volosevych, GFK, November 2014

2013 CSO sustainability Index for Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia, USAID, June 2014

Final Report "Possibilities and Consequences for Ukrainian Civil Society in the EU Integration Process", C. Karlstedt, A. Ingelstam and V. Houmenyuk, December 2009

Code of Practice on Donor Harmonisation, Guideline for Operationalisation of Key Principles, and the Key Principles for Harmonisation and Alignment, the Informal Donor Group (Irish Aid chair)

Civil Society and Aid Effectiveness, Findings, Recommendations and Good Practice, OECD, 2010

Dagens Nyheter Debatt, 2014 12 13, "90-konton är ingen garanti för att hjälpen faktiskt når fram"

### **Core Funding Documents**

ToR for Annual Audit in a Core Supported Organization (Kyiv, Ukraine 2012-12-04)

Assessment Tool for the Guidelines for Support to Civil Society Organizations in Reform Processes in Ukraine

Proposal to Sida's Team Ukraine Guidelines for Support to Civil Society Organizations in Reform Processes in Ukraine, C. Karlstedt, A. Ingelstam and V. Houmenyuk, December 2009

### **CSOs Documents**

Systems Based Audits, SDA (Centre UA, EPL, Gay Alliance, Gurt, Kharkiv HR, Mama 86, Telekritika)

Consultancy to accompany core-supported CSO's in Ukraine, Progress report 1 July to 31 October 2013 and Completion report, COWI

Management Response on Recommendations (Centre UA, EPL, Gay Alliance, Gurt, Kharkiv HR, Telekritika, Mama-86)

Improvement plans, Organizational Projects/Applications (Centre UA, EPL, Gay Alliance, Gurt, Kharkiv HR, Mama 86, Telekritika)

Verification Reports, SDA responses (Centre UA, EPL, Gurt, Kharkiv HR, Mama 86, Telekritika)

Sida's Assessments Memo, Note to the files/decisions (Centre UA, EPL, Gay Alliance, Gurt, Kharkiv HR, Mama 86, Telekritika)

Strategic Plans including Results Framework (Centre UA, EPL, Gay Alliance, Gurt, Kharkiv HR, Mama 86, Telekritika)

Agreement on Project and Core Support (Centre UA, EPL, Gay Alliance, Gurt, Kharkiv HR, Mama 86, Telekritika)

Audit Reports (Gurt, Kharkiv HR, Centre UA, EPL, Mama 86, Telekritika)

Management Letters (Centre UA, EPL, Gurt, Kharkiv HR, Mama 86, Telekritika)

Management Responses (Centre UA, EPL, Gurt, Kharkiv HR, Mama 86, Telekritika)

Overall Budgets (Centre UA, EPL, Gay Alliance, Gurt, Kharkiv HR, Mama 86, Telekritika)

Minuters annual Meetings (Centre UA, Gay Alliance, Gurt, Kharkiv HR, Mama 86, Telekritika)

Annual Progress Reports (Centre UA, EPL, Gurt, Kharkiv HR, Mama 86, Telekritika)

Risk Assessments (Centre UA, EPL, Gay Alliance, Gurt, Kharkiv HR, Mama 86, Telekritika)

M&E Frameworks (Gay Alliance, Kharkiv HR)

Self-assessments Organizational Capacity (Gay Alliance, Kharkiv HR)

Sida statements on Performance (Gurt)

Sida statements on Plan and Budget (Gurt)

Sida statements on Audit (EPL, Gay Alliance, Gurt, Mama 86)

Sida statements on Annual Report (Gay Alliance, Kharkiv HR)

# Annex 5 Brief description of the core support model

This section briefly describes the Swedish model for core support in Ukraine.

## Basic principles

The core support model was initially conceived based on the following set of 10 principles which were developed through a participatory process with reference groups from the Swedish Embassy, civil society and donors:<sup>48</sup>

1. Actively strengthen the capacities of the Government and CSOs to interact by applying a *coherent approach* in supporting the public administration and CSOs working in the same sectors, focusing on *transparency* and active interaction from both sides.
2. Provide substantial support to a limited number of CSOs which were considered *strategic* for the sector as an integrated part of sector support. The effects and power of good practise of working with a few selected *missions driven* CSOs in a new way were believed to be greater than the number of organisations supported.
3. Applying the principles of *Good Donorship*, emphasising that *accountability* can only be demanded by actors representing citizens. CSOs were seen to need better preconditions for building accountability by having *long-term, predictable core funding* for the *implementation of their own missions and strategic plans* in which *capacity development* was an integrated component.
4. CSOs' continuous relations with citizens and proofs of *legitimacy* were considered fundamental starting points for the support. Sida requested CSOs to *demonstrate* their legitimacy, representing citizens' interests, which would give them the right to have a voice to influence public policy and demand accountability from the government.

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<sup>48</sup> Guidelines for Support to Civi Society Organisations in Reform Processes in Ukraine, C. Karlstedt, A. Ingelstam, V. Houmenyuk, December 2009

5. Prioritise CSOs with an *outreach* to regional and municipal levels which could affect citizens' lives and local power structures. CSOs with branches or which *network* closely with CSOs at other levels were to be given priority.
6. Pay attention to CSOs' internal *governance* and *performance* for credibility. Support CSOs that were *accountable* to their own constituencies. It should be ensured that they work according to their statutes, codes and internal rules and regulations, could set their own target and work in a strategic results-based manner, thereby contributing to the sector objectives.
7. Facilitate *demand-driven capacity development* and *networking* between CSOs at their initiatives as an integrated part of the support.
8. Hold a continuous dialogue on *gender equality* and *environment* in all relations.
9. Be *transparent* in Sida's support to CSOs, its priorities, principles and criteria for support. Facilitate enhance *coordination*, information sharing and transparency within the donor group. By continuously bringing up the *principles* for support in discussions with other donor Sida hoped to contribute to gradually improve the conditions for CSOs.
10. Collaborate closely with the EC Delegation to *strengthen the roles of civil society in the EU integration agenda* and involve broader sections of civil society in a more systematic manner in its programming and policy setting.

#### **Criteria for eligibility:**

The following eight criteria for initial assessments of CSOs were initially defined:<sup>49</sup>

1. Be legally registered and have written statutes
2. Be non-partisan and not politically affiliated
3. Be active in the sectors prioritised by Sweden and contribute to the reform processes
4. Be mission-driven with a long-term plan showing what it wanted to change and how
5. Have a strategy for how it would gradually develop a diverse financial base
6. Be able to show results in processes building a more informed citizenry, monitoring public performance, advocacy and policy dialogue

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<sup>49</sup> Guidelines for Support to Civil Society Organisations in Reform Processes in Ukraine, C. Karlstedt, A. Ingelstam, V. Houmenyuk, December 2009

7. Be able to explain its sources of legitimacy and how it represents public interest.
8. Have outreach structures or strong collaborations with others reaching out to different levels and parts of the country
9. Have adequate governance and management structures, systems and routines (governance according to its statutes, a functioning board of directors, separate authorisation of expenditure and payments, a comprehensive annual budget and financial statements and adequate accounting system compatible with international standards).

### **Phases of the support**

The core support model applies a sequenced process divided into the following three distinct phases.

#### **Phase 1: identification and selection**

The first phase composes of making initial contracts, applications and selection of strategic CSOs. Initially, the criteria for eligibility were posted on the Swedish Embassy's website.

#### **Phase 2: pre-core funding**

The second phase is composed of the following steps:

1. Systems based audit
2. Internal improvement project for strengthening internal systems and governance
3. External technical support
4. Verification of improvements
5. Financial Audits according to international standards

This phase starts with a thorough systems based audit done by Swedish experts of the CSO's internal structures, management systems and routines. The CSO then undertakes internal improvements to address the weaknesses in accordance with key recommendations. The ownership of the improvement project is with the CSO, which defines its time frames and methods for implementation. Technical assistance by international experts is made available by the Swedish Embassy to be drawn upon by the CSOs. Once the CSO has completed the improvement project a verification mission by the same Swedish experts is made to recommend if the CSO is ready for core support. A financial audit of the organisation's financial statements with a management letter and management response concludes the pre-core phase.

#### **Phase 3: Core support**

1. Provision of flexible and multi-year funding linked to a clear and measurable strategic plan, results framework and comprehensive budget
2. Continuous institutional development as an integrated part
3. Close relation, dialogue and problem solving with the Swedish Embassy
4. Focus on progress and achievement of strategic results



Once it is confirmed that the systems are in place the CSO enters the core support phase. The basis for the support is the CSO's long term strategic plan with a monitorable results framework and a corresponding comprehensive budget. These are further operationalised into annual plans and annual budgets, showing income and expenditures from all sources. Annual disbursements of funds are made and the CSO prepares annual results based reports of implementation of the strategic plan. Formal consultation meetings with the Swedish Embassy are held biannually and in between both parties are responsible for maintaining a continuous relation and dialogue on progress. The CSO implements continuous institutional development as part of its plan and budget and has full responsibility for leading this process. Annual financial audits are made. At the end of the agreement period, usually three years, a completion report analysing results achieved is developed by the CSO and discussed jointly with the Swedish Embassy.

The Swedish embassy requests strict adherence to implementation of key recommendations of the systems based audits prior to approving core support, as well as full compliance with contract requirements, while placing the ownership of the improvement project and the implementation of the core support with the CSOs. Flexibility in use of funds due to emerging needs is allowed after approval of the embassy.





## Evaluation of the Sida funded Programme of Core Support and connected projects in Ukraine

This evaluation assesses the relevance, effectiveness and impact of the Swedish Core Support to Ukrainian civil society organisations (CSOs) as well as the programme's synergies and complementarities to other current donor initiatives for civil society support. Findings indicate that the three phased approach applied by the Swedish Embassy is an effective model for organisational change, improved performance and increased sustainability of the supported CSOs and Sida have captured a niche for capacity development based on the aid effectiveness agenda.

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