

External evaluation report on the project

"Coordinated efforts - Toward new European standards in protection of women from gender based violence"

Summary

Project "Coordinated efforts - toward new European standards in protection of women from gender based violence" (in further text the Action) was implemented by Autonomous Women's Center in cooperation with five partner organisations from Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia and Austria and one Associate organisation. The Action was implemented in the period December 2012 - November 2014. Project was financially supported by European Union within IPA programme – Civil Society Facility Framework Partnership Agreements.

Overall, **the Action strived to contribute to establishing comprehensive legal and policy solutions for protection of women against gender-based violence in the Western Balkans.** Framework for the Action's activities was new Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.

Expected results addressed women CSOs developing knowledge and skills for active participation in public dialogue and impact on decision makers in the field of protection from GBV; establishing dialogue between women's organisations/networks and decision makers on harmonisation of national laws and measures for GBV victims protection with the CoE Convention; strengthening capacities of women CSOs for representing the rights of beneficiaries and monitoring measures of protection from GBV and social inclusion at the local level and establishing system for comprehensive monitoring of implementation of legal and policy solutions related to CoE Convention, by women's CSO networks.

Main **target groups** of the project included: Decision makers (national and local) that include representatives of Governments, national Parliaments, local authorities and state institutions such as police, judiciary and social protection; media; women CSOs; Independent Regulatory Bodies (IRB) for the protection of citizens' rights. **Final beneficiaries** are women, survivors of gender based violence (GBV), included through information sharing as well as a source for data collection and information on institutional procedures.

The evaluation framework is based on Results Based Monitoring and Evaluation System. The purpose of external evaluation was to create independent and objective assessment of the quality of the Action's activities, results and applied methodology. Key parameters of evaluation include: Strategic Coherence&Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency and Sustainability (including replicability).

Methodology included combination of desk research, in-depth interviews and evaluation workshops. Combination of these techniques enabled realistic and reliable insight into the Action and answers to the key parameters and key questions. Evaluation process was conducted in phases: creating inception report, data/information collection and analysis, field work and reporting. The evaluation was conducted in the period of November 2014 - January 2015.

Findings

Strategic coherence of the Action

The Action was strategically well planned and demonstrates coherence, with multilayered approach. Strategically, the planning could have been improved by allowing space for potential unexpected events/delays. Innovative steps that contributed to overall strategic coherence were introduced.

Relevance of the Action

The Action is relevant in terms of the general issues tackled; it is also relevant for all countries involved; selected target groups are relevant. The issue of GBV remains relevant globally, with high prevalence and challenges in the areas of access to rapid and effective protection measures and bringing



reporting and compiling data into a common framework for various countries. The Action is particularly relevant for WB countries where political circumstances are still turbulent, institutions are weak, the available data shows high prevalence of GBV and global challenges - lack of effective protective measures and lack of reliable and comparable data - apply for all the countries involved. In that respect, CoE Convention that sets same/unique standards is perfect framework for tackling various relevant issues for different countries. The Action included all relevant actors/stakeholders as target groups.

All activities were implemented as planned, in timely manner and in a qualitative way. The important factor in successful implementation was flexibility that AWC demonstrated in planning of activities which allowed women CSOs (especially on local level) to adapt them to their particular context and needs. The Action was also characterized by large number of unplanned activities both on national as well as local level, which majority of CSOs connected to other projects and regular work, which brought added value to the Action as a whole.

All expected results were achieved.

- **Women CSOs developed knowledge and skills for active participation in the public dialogue and influence on decision-makers, with lower level only in the area of EU experiences and practices.** The areas in which knowledge/skills were developed include: analysis of data, monitoring and advocacy; knowledge on CoE Convention; knowledge and skills in communication strategies and specifically the communication/PR tools that can be used in advocacy process; established/developed contacts with journalists; knowledge on IRBs procedures. The area in which majority of the groups expressed lower level of developed knowledge is on EU experiences and practices, which is due to relatively limited roles of both WAVE and EWL. While the Action plan allowed for their larger involvement, this space was not used in most efficient way.
- **The dialogue between women CSOs and decision makers on harmonisation of legal/policy framework with CoE Convention was successfully established.** Women CSOs campaigns and activities were exceptionally well covered in media which together with the high quality of analysis and research helped in establishing visibility and credibility of women CSOs among both local and national stakeholders. As a result, the need for harmonisation legal/policy framework was discussed in all countries, regardless if the Convention was ratified or not in particular country.
- **Capacities of local women CSOs for representing rights of beneficiaries and monitoring measures of protection from GBV were strengthened,** particularly in areas such as: developing methodologies for research/analysis; strengthened and/or developed contacts with local authorities and local assemblies, ability to negotiate and enter direct dialogue with local institutions and using gained knowledge in representing and advocating the rights of their beneficiaries. Their capacities to use IRBs as a vehicle for representing the rights of beneficiaries remains the area for improvement. Different level of pre-existing capacities of local CSOs and level of support provided by national partners were the important factors that influenced the measure in which this result was achieved for various local CSOs.
- **The base for system for comprehensive monitoring of the implementation of legal and policy solutions related to CoE Convention was successfully established** with developing Guide with indicators for monitoring the implementation of CoE Convention as well as proposals for unique database on GBV being complementary steps in this process. It should be kept in mind though, that while women CSOs can monitor implementation of the solutions on their own, significant level of cooperation and coordination between women CSOs, Government and institutions will be needed for adopting proposals for unique databases.

Significant progress has been made in achieving both specific as well as overall objective. Increased capacities are demonstrated with 62 proposals for changes/amendments in the current legal/policy framework from which 42 are adopted fully, partially or are in procedure. Furthermore, CoE Convention was ratified in four countries; process of harmonisation however was started in all countries. Finally, the Guide provides powerful tool for women CSOs in monitoring the implementation of the Convention and thus excellent base for further advocacy and establishing solutions for protecting against gender based violence.



Impact on the target groups has been significant. For **national and local decision-makers and institutions**, impact reflects in awareness of the Convention and consequently realization that harmonisation of national and local legal and policy framework needs to happen. For **media** the impact has reflected in the better understanding of the general importance of the issue of GBV, as well as realization that this topic is interesting for the public and their audience. For **IRBs**, increased awareness of both the Convention, as well as the knowledge on necessary changes in legal/policy framework was most important. For **women CSOs**, significantly strengthened capacities in areas such as research and analysis, advocacy, communication strategies etc. were important. At the same time their increased visibility and credibility also influenced positively their position as well as confidence in representing rights of their beneficiaries. In terms of **final beneficiaries**, they are still to be impacted by the legal policy changes. However, the level of information available is increased, as well as their awareness of the potential solutions and women CSOs as organisations that could possibly support them.

The most important impact that actually concerns all target groups, is the realization that women CSOs are effective, knowledgeable and credible partners and resource in increasing the awareness about GBV and fighting it. It can be said that the Action significantly contributed to women CSOs finally getting "a seat at the table" with all relevant actors.

The Actions' efficiency was on the high level. The activities were implemented in timely manner, coordination mechanisms were well structured and respected, tasks were well-defined and divided between project partners and AWC as lead partner ensured smooth implementation as well as support to project partners. Internal monitoring system was exceptionally developed and implemented. Financially, project was both planned and managed efficiently, with slight changes in between the budget lines due to higher travel costs, but within allowed limits for re-allocation.

By effective implementation the Action sustainability is achieved on all levels: financial, institutional, policy. The most important sustainability aspects include: high number of Adopted proposals for legal/policy changes; increased capacity of women CSOs; government institutions that will have to introduce institutional changes due to adopted proposals; produced researches and consequent analysis that created sustainable base for long-term advocacy and lobbying for legislative harmonisation. Financially, funds for continuing the Action are secured through the EU funding for the next two years; in addition, process of harmonisation has already demonstrated financial sustainability of some of the changes/amendments adopted.

Finally, the Action is highly replicable, in wider region, but also in EU member countries that have not yet ratified the Convention. Moreover, the Action methodology and solutions can be used in advocacy efforts of other CSOs for areas other than GBV (human rights, good governance etc).

Recommendations

Ensuring space for potential unexpected delays/events during planning. Given that the Action involved large number of complex activities which were happening simultaneously, any unexpected event or delay due to external circumstances could endanger successful implementation. While this did not happen during this Action, a more careful planning in terms of number of activities and timeline could be significant in future projects/actions.

Increasing level of support to local CSOs. Different levels of local CSOs pre-existing capacities influenced progress in their capacity building. In that respect local CSOs, especially those from smaller communities and with lower level of capacity would benefit from additional support from national partners that doesn't demand significant financial resources and is tailored to their needs.

Strengthening exchange between EU and regional countries, in terms of higher level of knowledge and sharing EU experience to be brought in by WAVE and EWL; additionally, while there was certain level of sharing information about the Action through the networks of both organisations, this component could also be strengthened, especially having in mind high replicability of the Action.

Increasing promotion of the results of the Action. While promotion of the Convention and GBV issues was on exceptional level, women CSOs in all countries might benefit from promotion of the results achieved. This would additionally strengthen their position among relevant stakeholders, but also among wider public and citizens.

