

SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP: A STEP TOWARDS INDEPENDENCE (SESTI)

External Project Evaluation Report



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Acronyms and abbreviations

BDS	Business development services
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
CSO	Civil Society Organisations
CRI	Centre for Roma Initiatives
DMC	Decision Making Committee
ECOP	The European Confederation of Workers' Co-operatives, Social Co-operatives and Social and Participative Enterprises
ENSIE	European Network of Social Integration Enterprises
EMES	European Research Network about Social Economy
ICERD	International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
HRBA &GM	Human Rights Based Approach and Gender Mainstreaming
MSME	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises
LTO	Local Tourism Organisation
PCM	Project Cycle Management
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SLA	Sustainable Livelihood Approach

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1 INTRODUCTION

In January 2016, CARE International in cooperation with partners organizations Centre for Roma Initiatives (CRI) from Niksic and Bona Fide from Pljevlja started implementation of the project: Social Entrepreneurship: a Step towards Independence. SESTI Project has been financially supported by EU instrument: IPA 2014 Civil Society Facility Montenegro Programme.

The focus of this project is support to the Montenegro civil society organizations in the struggle to achieve sustainability of their core operations and achieve independence of their fundamental programs from the donors' funding. To raise stability and independence of the civil society sector, the project recognised economic empowerment of NGOs and, more particularly, NGO engagement in social entrepreneurship, as one of the best "tools", which will help them maintain their full mandate to represent the citizens in achievement of their rights.

The project is thus supporting two project partners - women's organisations Bona Fide from Pljevlja and Centre for Roma Initiatives from Niksic to get involved in the social entrepreneurial activities and obtain funds for their main mission: representation of vulnerable and marginalised women and struggle for achievement of their rights including the right to economic inclusion. The project-selected area is the less developed Montenegrin north, which has much lower economic status in comparison to the developed Podgorica and Adriatic south.

The project facilitated sustainable change in the sense of the said tendencies, through working on achieving the following objectives:

Overall objective: Contribute to strengthening of independence of women's CSOs in Montenegro to act as strong representatives of vulnerable women.

Specific objective: To foster CSOs' intense involvement in socio-economic inclusion of vulnerable women in less developed areas of Montenegro, through exercising and promoting social entrepreneurship and provision of business advisory.

1.1 Purpose of the consultancy

The purpose of this external evaluation is to assess the project quality by analyzing processes of its conceptualization, implementation, monitoring and internal evaluation. The paper looks at appropriateness (relevance), effectiveness and efficiency of project results. It also seeks to identify and anticipate project impact, in the light of objectives and indicators of the intervention. At the end, evaluator's task was to explore and identify good practices, lessons learned and recommendations on process, management, partnerships, transparency, stakeholders' participation and other aspects of project implementation.

The results of final evaluation will be used to inform the implementers, the donor and the involved stakeholders about the final findings and recommendations of the project and to enable learning, improved planning and implementation of future CARE Balkans projects/programs in the region.

The evaluation will also assess the following aspects:

- Improved individual organizational capacity of the project CSO partners in regard to the economic empowerment of women and social entrepreneurship;
- Improved cooperation and networking among partner CSOs, relevant local institutions and women beneficiaries in the target municipalities with a specific focus on the added value;
- Raised visibility of CSO partners' work in their local communities on issues concerning the economic empowerment of women.

1.2 Evaluation criteria

The evaluation criteria rely on the Standard Evaluation Criteria and **OECD/DAC criteria**, as proposed in DAC principles for evaluating development assistance. The report also takes into account specific CARE requirements for external reporting, such as Results-Assessment Form and Format for an Evaluation Report. Based on these platforms, evaluator prepared an evaluation matrix with specific questions suited for the project.

The report integrates **human rights based approach** (HRBA) and gender mainstreaming principles, such as transparency among partners, promotion of non-discrimination, participation and empowerment of women.

The Evaluation report also address synergies and contribution of the project to global development agendas, such as the **Sustainable Development Goals** (SDGs), especially with regards to the eradication of poverty, gender equality and promotion of *Leave no one behind* principle in general.

1.3 Preparation of the report: The process

Preparatory phase.

Collecting all necessary documents and contacts for the assignment. Most of the documents were received from the Project Manager and at a later stage from local partners.

Desk phase

Reviewing all available documents related to the project, such as project proposal set, project documentation, and project-related reports, monitoring reports, partner's reports and press clipping.

Finally, the desk phase review included proposition of the evaluation methodology, questions and together with CARE representative, identifying persons to be interviewed in the field.

Field research phase in the project target areas

The consultant conducted field visits to Pljevlja and Nikšić, to collect data using a mix of qualitative and quantitative approaches. In cooperation with the project team leader/the CARE Project Manager, the consultant has formulated a questionnaire and identified the key stakeholders to be interviewed during the evaluation. The process of consultations included interviews based on semi-structured questionnaires with representatives of project implementers: CARE International Balkans; the Centre for Roma Initiatives from Niksic and Bona Fide from Pljevlja, as well as with project partners and beneficiaries: representatives of agro- cooperatives, women sub-grants beneficiaries, relevant local institutions, and other actors related to the project activities in the two project municipalities (Pljevlja and Nikšić).

The following persons have been interviewed:

1. Branislav Tanasijević – Project Manager, CARE International Balkans
2. Azra Ajanović – Project Coordinator, Open centre Bona Fide, Pljevlja
3. Sabina Talović – Director, Open centre Bona Fide, Pljevlja
4. Sabit Ćirlija – Director of Bureau for Employment in Pljevlja
5. Dragiša Sokić – Director of Local Tourist Organisation in Pljevlja
6. Sanja Đondović – Municipality of Pljevlja
7. Kenan Delić - Director of the agricultural cooperative “Crveno zlato”
8. Dejan Miličić – Director of RTV Pljevlja
9. Duško Kovačević – Director of the Alliance of cooperatives of Montenegro
10. Elvira Delić – Grant beneficiary, Pljevlja
11. Lidija Potpara – Grant beneficiary, Pljevlja
12. Maja Matovic – Project Coordinator, Centre for Roma Initiatives, Niksic
13. Fana Delija – Centre for Roma Initiatives from Niksic
14. Miljaim Delija– Director of Agricultural cooperative “Od nasih ruku” in Niksic
15. Kamrija Tarlamisaj, Grant beneficiary, Niksic
16. Serveta Hasaj, Grant beneficiary, Niksic
17. Goran Đurović – CRNVO, Podgorica
18. Zorana Marković – CRNVO, Podgorica

Synthesis phase

Preparation of the final evaluation report.

Dissemination.

2 SUMMARY OF THE MAIN FINDINGS

RELEVANCE

The objective to contribute to strengthening of independence of women CSOs in Montenegro to act as strong representatives of vulnerable women remained consistent with current socio-economic situation and country development directions, including EU agenda, global Sustainable Development Goals and international human rights treaties (CEDAW; ICESCR and ICERD). The overall and specific project objectives are still appropriate to address requirements of project target groups and beneficiaries.

The project is consistent with national policies in the field of development of CSOs, education, employment and social inclusion. Specifically the project addressed local action plans for social inclusion and gender equality for municipalities of Niksic and Pljevlja in part of development of social services and economic empowerment of vulnerable women population.

The project is relevant and could benefit more from the EU Programs for development of social entrepreneurship. In addition, indirect contribution was provided to the negotiation position of Montenegro, in part of progress within the Chapter 19 on Social Policy and Employment.

All project target groups and beneficiaries reaffirmed the power of social entrepreneurship to transform economic, social and political relations in the country, as stated in the reports from exchange forums, the policy paper submitted by CSOs to the authorities and minutes from meeting with representatives of Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and Ministry of Economy.

EFFECTIVENESS

Project purpose was attained both in quantitative and qualitative terms. SESTI project succeeded to foster engagement of CSOs in socio-economic inclusion of vulnerable women in less developed areas of Montenegro, through exercising and promoting social entrepreneurship and provision of business advisory.

The outputs are delivered as planned. The main outputs of the project are as follows:

- *Baseline Study* on measures and practice in strengthening of the position of women and innovative methodologies for sustainable civil society involvement;
- The two *business resource centre* established in Niksic and Pljevlja to provide advisory services to women CSOs and individuals interested in running a social enterprise;
- *Agro-cooperative "Od naših ruku" (Out of Our Hands)* registered by CRI in Niksic;
- *Agro-cooperative "Crveno zlato" (Red Gold)* registered by BF in Pljevlja;
- The *two persons employed* as directors of agro-cooperatives;
- The *two business plans* for cooperatives prepared, revised and implemented;
- Developed *Model for economic engagement* of CSOs in Montenegro;
- *Brochure* with storytelling on project and examples of women empowerment;
- Formed *representative Board of CSOs* included in social entrepreneurship;
- *The document on the Initiative* for adoption of the Strategy for development of social entrepreneurship, submitted to the relevant authorities;

Besides tangible products and services, the project produced numerous effects, such as increased level of information, skills and knowledge among all target groups and

beneficiaries. During the process of consultations, project beneficiaries expressed their satisfaction with the quality and availability of the outputs.

EFFICIENCY

Most of the selected implementation mechanisms proved to be efficient. Apart from contractual agreement, CARE invested additional efforts in direct communication and mentoring of local partners, due to their unpreparedness for demanding procedures in taking the role of resource centre. The main “internal” challenge was lack of expertise in EU project management and specific knowledge about financial management. In the field, partners failed to timely provide adequate parcels for agro-cooperatives, which led to late planting and harvesting of raspberries. As a result, the project was extended for 3 months beyond the originally planned date, which was necessary to deliver the planned outputs.

Some of the methods provided significant effects: door-to-door campaign for raising awareness among men; study visits to the Bosnia and Herzegovina and using local mentors helped BF and CRI staff to increase information, knowledge and skills necessary for development of the two cooperatives. When it comes to policy work, apart from advocating for preparation of Strategy, the Project demonstrated concrete models of implementation, which helped to increase awareness and commitment among relevant authorities. During exchange forums and meetings with relevant ministries, the officials stated that they are eager to cooperate and support directly development of social enterprises, while they asked CSOs to provide critical contribution in development of the Strategy, preferably based on the French model.

The important output of the project is CSO platform, consisted of ten local organisations from six municipalities in all the three country regions (north, central and south) which is expected to continue with advocacy work upon project realisation. The platform is consisted of CSOs interested or already running certain type of social enterprise. It would be beneficial if more women organisation were involved, having in mind that project objectives are focused on women CSOs.

IMPACT

SESTI Project has contributed to strengthening of *independence of women’s CSOs* in Montenegro to act as strong representatives of vulnerable women. Direct contribution in this regard has already been evident in cases of the two local partner organisations, while indirect impact could be measured in future period, when the project efforts made at policy level start to materialise. Namely, the project promoted *social entrepreneurship as a platform* to enhance sustainability of CSOs, while improving the rule of law and quality of life of socially and economically deprived women.

The project was successful in integration of human rights based approach and gender mainstreaming.

SUSTAINABILITY

The project succeeded to produce long-term effects at the level of policy – in form of declared political will to develop Strategy for development of social entrepreneurship; institutional level, mostly by creation of CSO platform and the two agro-cooperatives, as well as best practices of using social entrepreneurship to achieve country developmental

goals. Further efforts are needed to increase financial sustainability of the two cooperatives.

3 MAIN FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

3.1 Project design

The idea to implement the SESTI Project in Montenegro was conceptualized by the CARE International Balkan Management Team. The identification process of the project itself was strengthened by the involvement of the two key partners, *Center for Roma Initiatives* from Nikšić and *Open Centre Bona Fide* from Pljevlja. Both local organizations have been selected based on the working experience, their recognition in the communities and their contacts with vulnerable women who represent their main beneficiaries. Most of the beneficiaries in both organisations are facing multiple deprivations in education, employment, and housing and are subjected to family violence, early marriages and even racism.

Establishing this local and functional partnership helped the lead applicant to better understand the local context, be acquainted with the situation of the project beneficiaries, recognize and address the underlying causes of social isolation faced by women.

The project was designed to establish multidimensional partnerships at all relevant levels: policy and legal framework; institutions in charge for social and economic affairs; social entrepreneurs and CSOs interested in social entrepreneurship; agencies and organisations implementing projects with potential synergy. CARE has approached holistically the project by targeting not only vulnerable women – but also their family members and local communities.

3.1.1 Analysis of Logical Framework of the Project

In general, the logical framework is well designed and coherent, with components presented in a reasonable manner.

Logic of intervention is clear (Figure 1): the linkage between activities, results and specific objectives is logical and consistent and could guarantee contribution to the achievement of the overall objective: *To contribute to strengthening independence of women CSOs in Montenegro to act as strong representatives of vulnerable groups.*

Indicators of success are attainable and realistic, while they could be more specific and measurable. For example, most of the indicators are about awareness, interest and attitudes, which are not easy to be objectively measured (“*number of men who **recognise benefits...***”; “*nr of women who **express interest in...***”; “*nr of women who **name CRI/BF as their business centre***”, or “*nr of Government officials **familiar with project campaign goals***”). In addition, the indicators in the LFM are missing the baseline and targeted values,

which could help to measure the achievement more accurately. Indicators are **gender – specific**, providing in depth insights into project achievements.

At the level of specific objectives, there is only one indicator set, which will later decrease visibility of all the effects accomplished.

Sources of verification are mostly relying on internal documents (“*project data*”, “*project report*”, “*project documentation*”). It would be advisable to introduce more of the external reliable sources, especially at the level of specific objective.

Assumptions are well designed, while they should be linked to the correct project level: Assumptions table at the Objective purpose level should remain empty.

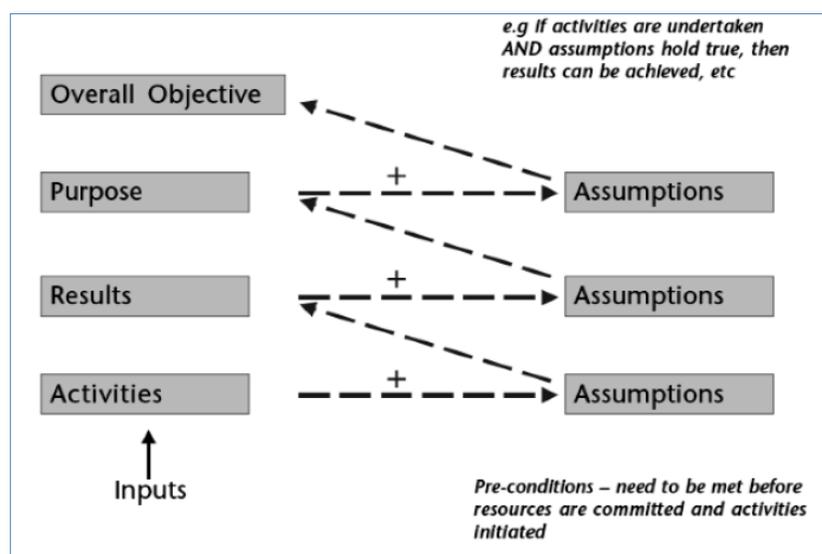


Figure 1 Assumptions and Objectives Hierarchy

Risks could be more specific. Access to the market and other risks connected to the financial operations and sustainability of CSOs and their social enterprises were not stated in the LFM.

3.1.2 Local ownership

SESTI Project was implemented primarily in Niksic and Pljevlja, while other Montenegrin municipalities were also included in specific project activities (Andrijevisa, Podgorica, Budva). The project resulted in considerable impact at both national and local levels. As a result of participatory approach, there is a strong sense of ownership among target group and project beneficiaries. Having in mind that international organization is a leading applicant, sense of ownership over project result could be a challenge for follow-up activities. However, CARE succeeded to ensure adequate structures at local levels to maintain the results upon project realisation, such as CSO Board for social entrepreneurship and the two functional agro-cooperatives.

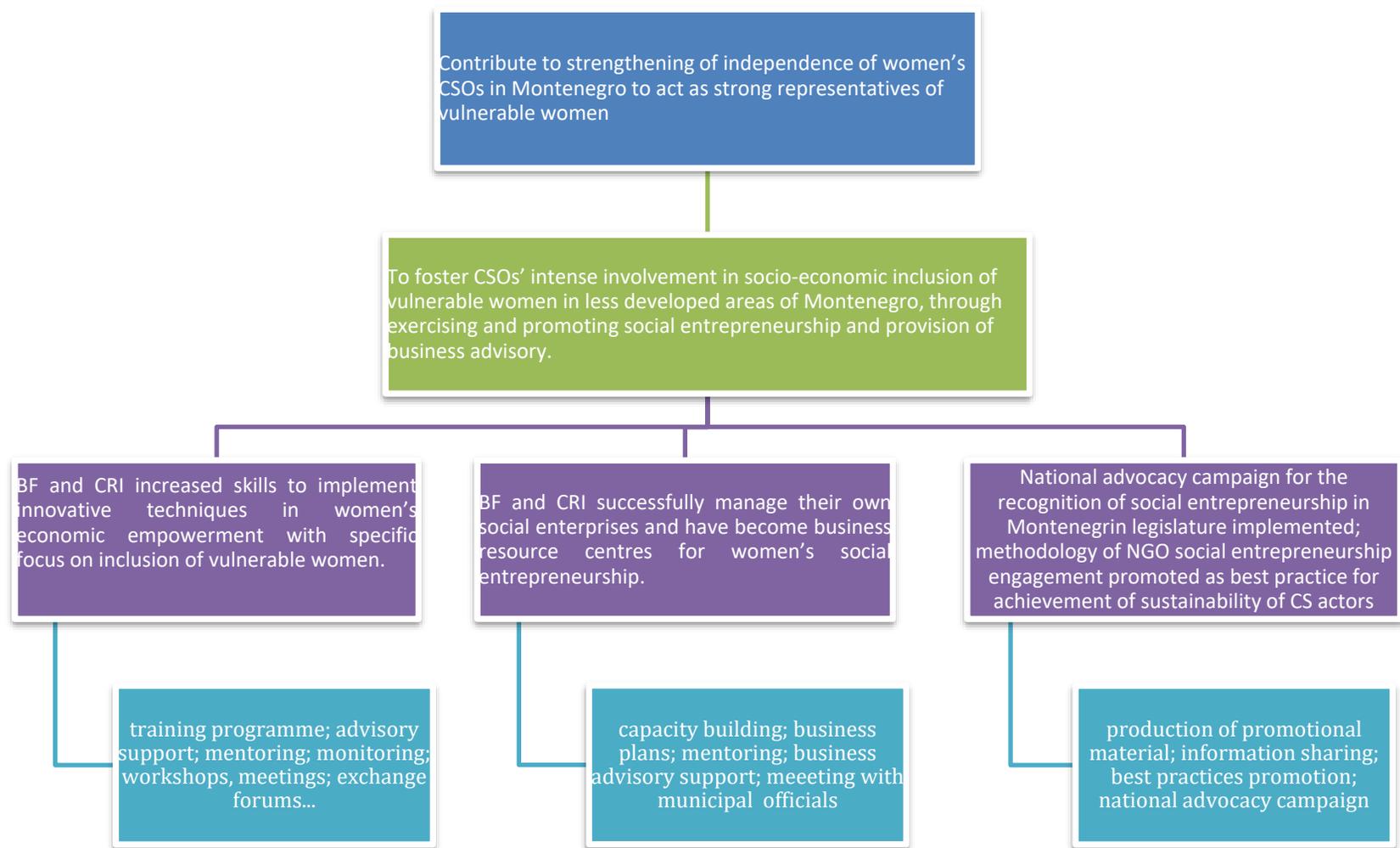


Figure 2 Project Logic of Intervention (LoI)

3.2 Project implementation

3.2.1 Relevance

Project objectives remained relevant to the situation and development perspectives of the country, European and global policies and the needs of target groups and final beneficiaries of the project.

Relevance to the Project in relation to the country situation and development agenda

In general, **sustainability of local civil society organisations** in Montenegro is essential for holding the local authorities accountable and services available to the most vulnerable population, especially having in mind that about 80% of social services in the country are provided by non-governmental organisations¹

The most recent *CSO Sustainability Index* for Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia developed by United States Agency for International Development—reveals that Montenegro, together with Serbia continues to have the lowest levels of sustainability in the South-eastern Europe.² Among the categories, financial viability has been ranked as the most challenging (5.0). USAID report reminds that CSOs remain highly dependent on international donor funding, while EU and various embassies continue to be critical sources of financial support. However, EU programs in general are only accessible to a few well-developed CSOs that are capable of meeting the co-financing and other requirements for EU grants.³

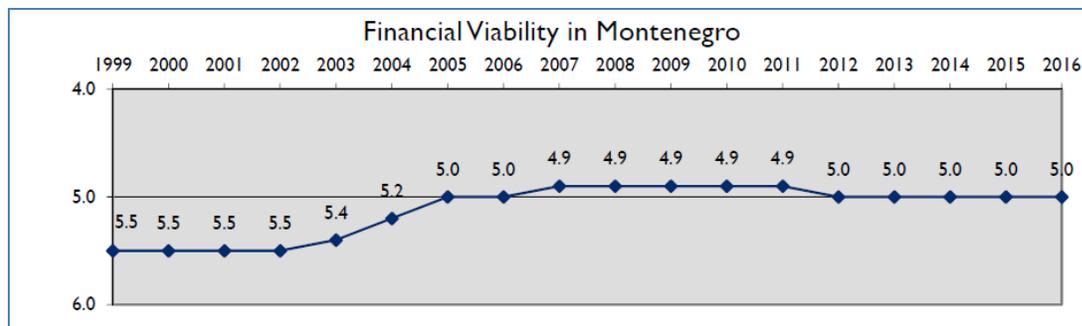


Figure 3 CSO Financial Viability Index

Although social entrepreneurship has not been strongly embedded into national policies, its importance was acknowledged in several strategic documents:

¹ Institute Alternativa, *Mapping of Social Services in Montenegro*, Podgorica, 2013

² USAID, *CSO Sustainability Index for Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia*, July 2017, available at: <https://bit.ly/2nbQRpF>

³ The Index's methodology relies on CSO practitioners and researchers, who in each country form an expert panel to assess and rate these dimensions of CSO sustainability during the year. The panel agrees on a score for each dimension, which can range from 1 (most developed) to 7 (most challenged)

- *National Strategy for Employment and Human Resources Development (2016-2020)*⁴, especially in regards to Priority 1: Increasing employment and reducing unemployment; Priority 3: improving qualifications and competences in accordance with labour market need. Strategic goal IV under Priority 4: Promotion of social inclusion and poverty reduction and "Creating Conditions for the Development of Social Entrepreneurship", "with a view to ensure better coverage and activation of vulnerable groups, integration in education and employment of persons with disabilities, as well as to encourage the inclusion of vulnerable groups in the labour market".
- Recently adopted *Strategy for Improving the Enabling Environment for the Activities of Non-Governmental Organisations 2018-2020*⁵, reflects on major obstacles for functioning of social enterprises, such as lack of capacity and skills necessary to mitigate the risks at the market, lack of business strategies and plans, lack of previous market research and dominant dependence on donor resources. The document suggests that adequate policies (Strategy or Law on Social Entrepreneurship) should be developed by using bottom-up approach.
- *Strategy for Women Entrepreneurship (2015-2020)*, in the part of three out of four strategic priorities: I Creating a favourable business environment for development of female entrepreneurship (M4; M6 and M7); II Provision of necessary knowledge and skills (M16; M17; M18; M19) and III Promotion, networking and advocacy for the interests of women entrepreneurs (M25).
- The action has also contributed to the implementation of the *Strategy for Lifelong Entrepreneurial Learning*, especially in achieving operational objective 3.2: Developing entrepreneurship skills through training programs and mentoring for SMEs; Objective 4.1: To raise awareness of social community on importance of entrepreneurial learning and Objective 5.3: To ensure that new and potential entrepreneurs have access to lifelong education and training.
- Strategic documents at local level, especially with the *local action plans for social inclusion*⁶ and the *local action plans for gender equality*⁷ in the both municipalities of Niksic and Pljevlja, where economic empowerment of women is essential for reducing social exclusion. All the four documents recognise the role of CSOs as important service providers to the vulnerable population.

The project is in line with European Commission aim to create a favourable financial, administrative and legal environment for social enterprises, because of their contribution to wider social, environmental or community objectives (more reference is provided in Chapter 3.2.6 on Project Sustainability). The project fits into the New EU programme for

⁴ Government of Montenegro, *National Strategy for Employment and Human Resources Development 2016-2020*

⁵ Government of Montenegro, *Strategy for Improving the Enabling Environment for the Activities of Non-Governmental Organisations 2018-2020*

⁶ Municipality of Pljevlja, *Local action plan for improvement of social inclusion and development of social protection services*, available at: <https://bit.ly/2KpwwDu>

⁷ Local action plan for gender equality in municipality of Pljevlja 2016-2018, available at: <https://bit.ly/2KkGQEp>

Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI) and EU Social Business Initiative launched in 2011, and is relevant in the context of EU agenda for Montenegro, Chapter 19 on Social Policy and Employment. However, reference on the European prospective or instruments for employment and social inclusion haven't been substantially presented in the project.

Relevance of the Project in relation to the needs target groups and final beneficiaries

There is a strong link between expected outcomes of the project and the needs of the relevant stakeholders. The project directly involved 350 "hard-to-employ" **women**: jobless, victims of family violence, rural women and poor Roma women below the poverty line. Most of the specific services available to this group have been provided by **civil society organisations**: *Local Action plan for Social Inclusion Niksic* contains description of CRI mission and activities, acknowledging their critical contribution in providing support to the most vulnerable communities. Similarly, *Local action plan for promotion of Social Inclusion in Pljevlja Municipality*, has mapped Bona Fide as relevant provider of social services in the community. The project directly addressed the need of the two local organisations to build capacities to become business resource centre for women-led start-ups, and to diversify their income streams. The project have also been relevant for **local and national authorities**, since they have received more information and practical examples of models for putting social entrepreneurship into practice.

3.2.2 Effectiveness

In general, project purpose was attained both in quantitative and qualitative terms. SESTI project succeeded to foster engagement of CSOs in socio-economic inclusion of vulnerable women in less developed areas of Montenegro, through exercising and promoting social entrepreneurship and provision of business advisory to the two local organisations – CRI and BF and their beneficiaries. Moreover, the project produced benefits for wider audience, men and women, their families and community at large. At policy level, the project succeeded to reach duty bearers both at local and national level and get positive feedback on the proposal to prepare a strategy for development of social entrepreneurship.

Indicator at the level of specific objective has not been achieved until the end of project: Partner CSOs haven't managed to invest portion of profit from cooperatives into their programmes for vulnerable women, because cooperatives haven't had started to pay off due to prolonged capacity building and business planning processes for partners' social enterprises. However, numerous outputs produced at the level of results demonstrate that all the milestones have been met and that the objectives will most likely be achieved in the near future. On the other side, women who have received social loans (from the

complementing CARE's JAKA Project – ADA financed⁸) have already started to invest with goods and services to the women left behind in the community.

The main outputs of the project are as follows:

- Baseline Study on measures and practice in strengthening of the position of women and innovative methodologies for sustainable civil society involvement;
- Agro-cooperative "Od naših ruku" (*Out of Our Hands*) registered by CRI in Nikšić;
- Agro-cooperative "Crveno zlato" (*Red Gold*) registered by BF in Pljevlja;
- The two persons (Mr Miljaim Delija and Mr Kenan Delić) employed as directors of agro-cooperatives;
- The two business plans for cooperatives prepared, revised and implemented;
- The two business resource centre established to provide advisory services to women CSOs and individuals interested in running a social enterprise;
- Developed Model for economic engagement of nongovernmental organisation in Montenegro;
- Brochure on project and examples of women empowerment;
- Formed representative board of Montenegrin CSOs included in social entrepreneurship;
- The document on the Initiative for adoption of the Strategy for development of social entrepreneurship, submitted to the Ministry of Social Welfare and Ministry of Economy;
- Over 20 state media reported about advocacy campaign and
- Inception, Interim and Final reports from project managers and third parties.

Besides tangible products and services, the project produced numerous effects on project stakeholders (See Table 1).

The project outputs are delivered as planned. The insight into project documentation and findings from the interviews reveal that there is a high level of satisfaction with the quality of the outputs among project target groups and beneficiaries. All the outputs produced were made available to the primary intended users; apart from availability to most of the Roma illiterate women involved in the project, for whom CRI have interpreted useful information. The added value of all the documents produced is their utilisation for the purpose. For example, Baseline study was used to design the most appropriate project interventions, business plans were drafted but also largely implemented during the project, designed and printed brochures were used to inform CSOs, relevant institutions and other stakeholders who participated in meetings, exchange forums and other events. The paper on the *Initiative for Adoption of Strategy for Development of Social Entrepreneurship* was submitted to the relevant authorities (Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare and Ministry of Economy), and later presented during official meeting. This paper was appreciated by the officials, so it would be beneficial for the advocacy process to make it available for wider public, by publishing it on web pages of local partners and other web platforms and mailing

⁸ Project *Social inclusion through Woman Economic Empowerment in Montenegro (JAKA)*, funded by the Austrian Development Cooperation (ADC) and CARE Austria.

lists of CSOs and business associations (Chamber of Commerce, Employers Association, Association of Craftsmen, women CSOs etc).

The intangible outputs, such as increased level of information, knowledge and skills of CRI and BF staff was put into practical use: the two organisations have started to professionally provide services of economic empowerment to women and to run evidence-based advocacy actions to stimulate enabling environment for social entrepreneurship. Women who were trained during the project were skilled and empowered to apply for social loans and implement their business ideas. Twenty women were coached for the employment in social entrepreneurship, while more than 80 have received business advisory services.

Intervention logic	Objectively verifiable indicators	Project Achievements	Major outputs
<p>ER1: Bona Fide and CRI increased skills to implement innovative techniques in women's economic empowerment with specific focus on inclusion of vulnerable women.</p>	<p>Indicator 1.1: 2 women's CSOs capacities strengthened for women's economic empowerment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Prepared <u>Study</u> on measures and practice in strengthening of the position of women and innovative methodologies for sustainable civil society involvement ✓ CRI and BF received an <u>Initial training on economic empowerment</u> of women; ✓ CRI and BF staff received a training on their <u>transition from common service women's NGOs into organization that provide economic empowerment programs</u> ✓ CRI and BF received a training on <u>planning and organisation of the campaign to promote social entrepreneurship</u>. ✓ Organised <u>six exchange forums</u> for target beneficiaries in the two target areas on strengthening of the economic position of vulnerable women. 	<p>Baseline Study Increased level of information, knowledge and skills of CRI and BF employees about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Economic empowerment of women; b) Organisational transition towards provider of services for economic empowerment and c) Advocacy activities for social entrepreneurship <p>Partner organisations eager to participate proactively in all project activities</p> <p>Raised awareness about the project and newly supported social businesses among municipal and national institutions, local NGOs and other women interested in economic development</p>
	<p>Indicator 1.2: Increase in the number of men from local communities who recognise benefits of women's economic engagement.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Organised <u>visits to 150 families</u> of vulnerable women in Niksic and Pljevlja, to raise awareness and advocate for women economic engagement 	<p>Identified and motivated individual women to participate in educational workshop</p> <p>More than 100 men (fathers, husbands, brothers) informed and aware about women economic rights and</p>

	<p>Indicator 1.3 %increase of women – workshops participants, who express interest in economic engagement (pre-post-tests)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Organised <u>four workshops with men, family members of vulnerable women</u> ✓ 101 women participated in the first <u>initial workshop about economic empowerment.</u> ✓ CRI organized <u>7 workshops</u> with the total of 109 women participants from Niksic ✓ Bona Fide organized <u>6 workshops</u> with the total of 87 women participants from Pljevlja 	<p>the importance of women's economic activity 45 men from the local communities (Niksic and Pljevlja informed and aware of the importance of women's economic engagement Raised awareness among 56 women in Pljevlja and 45 women in Niksic about economic empowerment. Increased knowledge among 80% of them. 40 out of 101 women who participated in workshop received small grant/social loan to implement their business ideas⁹ 196 women increased their knowledge about entrepreneurship</p>
	<p>Indicator 1.4: Increase of knowledge on possibilities of economic empowerment among workshop participants (pre-post-tests).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ <u>80% of women</u> who participated in workshops increased their knowledge and expressed interest in starting small business (self-employment) or employment 	<p>60 applications submitted by women who participated in SESTI project workshops to the Grant Program from JAKA Project</p>

⁹ The grants are allocated through the CARE's JAKA Project.

<p>ER2: Bona Fide and CRI successfully manage their own social enterprises and have become business resource centres for women's social entrepreneurship.</p>	<p>Indicator 2.1: 2 project partners' enterprises are functional and employing at least 2 persons each until the end of the project.</p> <p>Indicator 2.2 # of women from local communities who name CRI/Bona Fide as their business resource centres.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Two project partners <u>registered cooperatives</u> ✓ <u>Basic assets</u> (land, machinery for production etc.) <u>and liabilities</u> (salary, land lease etc.) <u>put into function</u> ✓ <u>First employees</u> engaged to run cooperatives (one per each). ✓ Training organised on <u>preparation of business plans</u> for 14 representatives of CRI and BF ✓ <u>Study visit</u> organised to women's cooperatives in BiH: Maja Kravica, Bolja Buducnost Tuzla and Lara Bijeljina and participation on conference for economic empowerment of women ✓ <u>Study tour</u>, organised to agricultural Fair in Rudo, BiH, where project partners visited cooperative "Uvac" and NGO Luna ✓ <u>Study tour</u> organised to the three-joint venture in Bratunac, Bijeljina and Tuzla II ✓ Over 100 women from the local communities who participated the project organised workshops and meetings have named CRI/Bona Fide as their business resource centres 	<p>The two agro-cooperatives registered and started to function</p> <p>The two persons (both men) employed as directors of agro-cooperatives</p> <p>The two business plans for cooperatives prepared, revised and implemented</p> <p>Developed Model for economic engagement of nongovernmental organisation in MNE</p> <p>Exchanged positive practice about possible models for starting social enterprise;</p> <p>Raised motivation among BF and CRI for starting a cooperative</p> <p>Networking with potential colleagues from BiH</p> <p>Directors of newly established cooperatives learned about business management from BiH colleagues.</p> <p>CRI and BF widely recognised as local resource centre (by project beneficiaries)</p>
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<p>ER3: National advocacy campaign for the recognition of social entrepreneurship in Montenegrin legislature implemented; methodology of NGO social entrepreneurship engagement promoted as best practice for achievement of sustainability of civil society actors.</p>	<p>Indicator 3.1: # of CSOs included in information and best practice exchange meetings</p> <p>Indicator 3.2: # of CSOs who expressed interest in replicating the project best practice</p> <p>Indicator 3.3: # of relevant Government officials familiar with the project campaign goals</p> <p>Indicator 3.4: Increase in the number of CSOs interested in social/cooperative entrepreneurship involvement.</p> <p>Indicator 3.5: # of media reporting on the advocacy campaign, its goals and results.</p> <p>Indicator 3.6: Official requests for alteration of legal framework submitted by the Representative Board</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Documented lessons learnt from CRI's and BF's involvement in social entrepreneurship/ cooperatives and ✓ Produced <u>the materials</u> to promote the project best practice for replication. ✓ Organized 5 <u>round tables</u> for Montenegrin CSOs interested in social entrepreneurship to exchange best practice, address the challenges for development of social entrepreneurship and advocate for new solutions (in Andrijevisa, Niksic, Podgorica, Pljevlja and Budva) ✓ <u>Mapping of the challenges</u> for development of social entrepreneurship ✓ Created <u>Network of CSOs</u> active in social entrepreneurship ✓ Defined <u>policy asks</u> to improve the status of social entrepreneurship in Montenegro ✓ Organised a <u>meeting with relevant ministries</u> to advocate for improvement of legal and regulatory framework for social entrepreneurship ✓ Representatives of relevant ministries expressed their interest in further activities to improve enabling environment for social entrepreneurs and suggested to make reference to the "French model" 	<p>Brochure on project and examples of women empowerment, printed and distributed</p> <p>Over 10 CSOs are interested in replicating project best practice</p> <p>57 CSOs included in campaign on social entrepreneurship, all declaring interest to involve actively in social entrepreneurship</p> <p>117 representatives of all sectors took part in dialogue about models for development social entrepreneurship</p> <p>Formed representative board of 10 CSOs included in social entrepreneurship and Minimum 27 state institutions representatives got familiar with purpose of the advocacy campaign</p> <p>Policy ask/Initiative for adoption of the Strategy for development of social entrepreneurship</p> <p>Over 20 state media reported about advocacy campaign</p>
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Table 1 Logic of Intervention vs. Project Achievements

The project successfully showcased gender mainstreaming into local economic development policies. Measures of interventions included:

- *Education of local organisation* on how to ensure sustainability of their programs and services for vulnerable women by using social entrepreneurship;
- *Advocacy and lobbying for policies* to regulate and boost social entrepreneurship;
- *Demonstrating possibilities for social entrepreneurship, by establishing and managing the two agro-cooperatives;*
- *Raising awareness* on the importance of economic activity of women and the role of women in the household economy, which targeted both women and man with different types of activities and advocacy;
- *Providing access to financial and material resources* for women start-ups;
- *Mentoring and other forms of direct assistance* (preparation of business plans, study visits etc.) for women.

Major factors positively influencing the achievement of the project activities

Project effectiveness was enhanced by making appropriate **synergies with the complementary Project**: “Social inclusion through Woman Economic Empowerment in Montenegro (JAKA)”, funded by the Austrian Development Cooperation (ADC), and CARE Austria. Similar to SESTI, JAKA Project aims to contribute to the improvement of the living conditions and social inclusion of the most vulnerable women in Montenegro, through promoting economic empowerment among socially deprived and marginalized women in the target communities of Niksic and Pljevlja, as means for improvement of their socio-economic position and full access to rights. The most important contribution was allocation of grants/social loans to the vulnerable women who were previously informed, educated and encouraged to engage in small business through SESTI Project. In total, 44 women received social loans (26 from Pljevlja and 16 from Niksic and 2 from Podgorica), out of which 13 women registered their own business. JAKA Project has also co-financed the newly registered agro – cooperatives, who received a land (10 years tenure), necessary equipment, installed the fences, greenhouses and irrigation systems, seeds and designed packages for final products.

Target groups and beneficiaries, as well as proper mechanisms for their participation were carefully selected. All stakeholders gave significant contribution to the project realisation and sustainability. Relevant institutions took part in dialogue about model of social entrepreneurship for Montenegro, while local departments assisted in building the capacities of the project beneficiaries. For example, the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare made it possible for a few Roma beneficiaries who received a grant for cattle not to lose the right to social allowance. The municipality of Niksic provided the water connector necessary for the greenhouse. In Pljevlja, the Employment Agency was actively involved in counselling and provision of assistance to grant beneficiaries. Moreover, the Agency and Bona Fide have signed a contract on temporary employment of 15 women who took part in project educational activities.

The support of the Union of Cooperatives of Montenegro was of great importance for both organizations, especially in the area of experienced counselling to grant beneficiaries, and later through the assistance in organizing cooperatives, getting familiar with legal frameworks, procedures and sharing their practical experience.

CARE strategically selected consulting agencies and CSOs (CRNVO, Build Studio, Tehnopolis etc.), who are well-known as socially responsible and reliable future partners in promotion of social entrepreneurship and sustainability of civil society sector.

Local media were important factor for promotion of visibility of the project. The director of RTV Pljevlja, who prepared a documentary about the project in the TV show "Selu u pohode" (engl. "Visiting the village") stated: *"This was very much interesting for the media, you have a **story about "invisible" people, it was a little bit provocative, it also influences the change of public awareness about the role of non-governmental organisations, and it changes our perception about entrepreneurship**".*

Major challenges influencing the achievement of project objectives

The project realisation was accompanied by a series of challenges that were addressed in the course of the process.

The in-house Baseline research¹⁰ about the possibilities for women economic empowerment revealed that at the beginning of the project the local partners, especially CRI who work with the most deprived population of women, were doubtful about the idea of establishing and managing social entrepreneurship. Similar to the perception of the general public, most of the activists misunderstood the concept of social entrepreneurship, while the idea of "making profits" in their opinion was in opposition to running an organisation (that "should not make profit"). The next challenge was realising that *administrative capacities of the two organisations were at lower level than previously assessed*, which required additional trainings and mentoring of the partners, so that, at a later stage of the project, they can act as a resource centre and manage their social enterprises. At the end, both CRI and Bona Fide have gained relevant information, practical knowledge and skills to understand the concept of social entrepreneurship and running business in general - to be more flexible to the needs of market and at the same time to advocate for better relevant policies.

The VAT exemption procedures have affected the delays of the business-related activities of the beneficiaries in both cities. For small producers from whom goods were to be purchased, the VAT exemption procedures are a novelty that they do not understand and which creates distrust. To address this challenge, the management team of both organizations had to make an additional effort to convince suppliers of the correctness of the procedures, i.e. that VAT exemption is legal.

¹⁰ Research about possibilities for women economic empowerment , CARE Balkans, in house research and guidelines, 2017

Political situation influenced delays in activities that required engagement of local institutions during the time of elections¹¹. The reason behind is that most of the employees in public institutions are politically active, especially during election periods.

Due to delay in establishing cooperatives, unfavourable weather conditions and other factors, final *production and sales did not happen* until the end of project. This resulted in *impossibility for desirable employment of women*, and questioned further payment of *salaries for directors* of cooperatives, and more importantly – operating costs (water, electricity). Financial viability of the cooperatives will remain a challenge, until first sales, increase of production and engagement of more women. This situation influenced the fulfilment of indicator for specific objective – until the end of the project, partner CSOs were not yet able to invest portion of profit from their cooperatives into their regular programs of social support to vulnerable women. On the other side, users of grant programme realised through JAKA project succeeded to contribute with 10% value of their profit to the community, by providing goods (eggs, milk, cheese etc.) and services (haircut) to women in need (beneficiaries of CRI and BF programmes). This is very important project achievement since it confirmed that the proposed mechanism for development of social enterprises and support to vulnerable women is functional.

The project had very good outreach among vulnerable women in Pljevlja and Niksic, and fulfilled the indicators to increase their interest in economic engagement and to increase knowledge about possibilities for employment and self-employment. At the same time, the most common barrier development agencies face during implementation of interventions for economic empowerment occurred – the fact that most of the interested women were beneficiaries of the *family allowance* provided by the social healthcare services. After realising that by receiving a grant and registering a business they would lose the right to their monthly allowance, a significant number of women withdraw their application for a grant. Consequently, in Niksic, 60 Roma and Egyptian women applied for the program, out of which two thirds dropped out.

A particular challenge for CRI was that most beneficiaries of the program were *illiterate* and only spoke Albanian (since they are Roma women, refugees from Kosovo), which meant that the members of the organization had to follow and provide support to each client, both during the development of the business plan and during the realization (obtaining documentation, buying goods, contracting, etc.). Another problem arose when the grant beneficiaries attempted to register their business because it turned out that this is not possible, because they *live on "illegal land"*, which is the case with almost every Roma settlement. For this group of women, the CARE management team left the possibility to postpone the period for registering one year upon project finalisation. This situation will remain an issue since there is no clear strategy what kind of intervention would change the position of women in one year period. On the other side, Centre for

¹¹ Parliamentary elections were held on 16 October 2016; Local elections in Niksic were held on 12 March 2017; Presidential elections were held on 15 April 2018 and Local elections in Pljevlja were held in May 2018.

Roma Initiative, in role of resource centre, should have already started advocacy campaign, targeting local relevant authorities.

On the other side, this was not an issue in Pljevlja, where most of the women involved were literate and had completed a secondary education, as well as registered private land owned by a family member.

3.2.3 Efficiency

Co-ordination and cooperation among partners went well. The process of consultations, planning and problem solving was organised in a transparent and accountable manner. Project partners communicated on regular bases by skype, email and telephone, as well as directly during internal 20 meetings and other project events.

In order to support local partners in fulfilling their contractual obligations in terms of project implementation and reporting, CARE *intensified capacity building activities* and allocated additional resources for team meetings. This also caused delays in implementation of the activities starting from the inception phase.

Meetings of the management team in the inception period served to divide the roles and responsibilities, mobilize the necessary human and technical resources, establish relationship with key stakeholders, revise and implement project activities and establish an adequate monitoring system. In the main implementation period, the management team coordinated the provision and utilisation of resources, the realisation of the activities and achieving the results, conducted the monitoring of the progress and the outputs, reviewed the operational plans based on delays in the realisation of the planned activities.

The project was extended for 3 months beyond the originally planned date. The partners stated the two major reasons for requesting the no-cost project extension: a) estimated need for further capacity building of the partners in order to strengthen their administrative capacity before they take the role of resource centres; b) despite significant benefits from the implementation of the two complementary projects - SESTI and JAKA, both projects used the same staff, which proved to be inefficient; c) due to late finding of adequate parcels for agro-cooperative and unfavourable weather conditions in autumn 2017, works on preparation of the land for agro-cooperatives were postponed for the last two months of implementation.

Postponing project activities resulted in late production of raspberries, hence the financial effects of the two cooperatives remained unknown until the end of the project.

Project management team combined the resources from SESTI Project with the complementary JAKA Project, funded by the Austrian Development Cooperation (ADC), and CARE Austria. Among the most important outputs of JAKA Project was successful implementation of programme of sub-grants to women, through allocation of 43 social loans for implementation of business plans, which considerably contributed to the achievement of the objectives of SESTI Project.

Some of the methods used for project implementation were poorly efficient, but at the same time extremely effective, such as *door-to-door campaign* to raise awareness among men from local communities about the importance of women's economic engagement. The activity resulted in field visits to 150 families, and organization of the

five workshops with 45 men, which represents significant outreach. Moreover, direct involvement of men in the activities to empower women is the most efficient way to achieve the expected outputs.

As regard to the methods used, the interviewed local partners and directors of agro – cooperatives mostly appreciated organization of the three *study visits* to Bosnia and Heregovina, especially visiting Women's Association Maja Kravica and agro-cooperative in Bratunac, as well as Fair of home-made products in Rudo, where they learned about raspberries planting, cold storage etc. These modalities of implementations were very much conducive for achieving expected project results, since they helped to bring education, experience and expertise into future business resource centre.

The advocacy campaign for Strategy was backed up with provision of concrete models on how the positive change would look like.

The project proved to be efficient in terms of using *local human resources/expertise*. All trainers and consultants have been engaged from Montenegro and Bosnia and Hercegovina. In view of trainings' participants, this was valuable, since trainers/mentors have been familiar with the situation in local context and also have stayed at their disposal for any advice and support. Carefully selected external consultants/agencies had positive effect on project sustainability, since they were selected based on their long term interest in the topic, for example:

- *Agricultural Biotechnical Institute Bijelo Polje* the oldest scientific research institution in Montenegro and one of the founders of the University. Consultant from this institution supported cooperatives in revision and realization of business plans including preparatory works for raspberries production. Workshops were organized in the premises of *Innovation and Entrepreneurship Center Tehnopolis*, which is a part of Science and Technology Park (STP) in Montenegro. Tehnopolis has continued to promote innovative agricultural measures and project beneficiaries perceive them as an important knowledge focal point.
- *Centre for Development of Non-governmental Organizations - CRNVO* has been contracted to lead implementation of national advocacy campaign for recognition of social entrepreneurship in national legislation. CRNVO has proven track record in promotion of policy and practices related to social entrepreneurship^{12,13} and corporate social responsibility. At the contracting time the organisation was implementing the project on building capacities of women for social entrepreneurship. In addition, CRNVO is national resource centre for all non-governmental organizations, which has been used for significant outreach among targeted CSOs and relevant authorities during organisation of meetings and round tables in the five municipalities (Andrijevisa, Niksic, Podgorica, Pljevlja and Budva).
- Build Studio is Design Company recognized for their social engagement. Besides preparation and implementation of marketing plan, Build studio promoted the SESTI project as part of their social responsibility efforts.

¹² Marina Vukovic, Jovana Bulatovic, *Needs analysis of social enterprises in Montenegro*, CRNVO, 2016

¹³ Jovana Bulatovic, *Guide for establishment of social enterprises*, CRNVO, 2015

3.2.4 Impact

SESTI Project has contributed to strengthening *of independence of women's CSOs* in Montenegro to act as strong representatives of vulnerable women. Direct contribution in this regard has already been evident in cases of the two local partner organisations, while indirect impact could be measured in future period, when the efforts made at policy level start to materialise. The project promoted *social entrepreneurship as a platform* to enhance sustainability of CSOs, while improving the rule of law and quality of life of socially and economically deprived women.

Having in mind exceptionally low level of financial viability of CSOs in the country, development of social entrepreneurship have been of their vital interest, since it represent alternative source of funding.

Direct medium-term effects produced are *commitment of the duty bearers* to work on the regulatory framework for social entrepreneurship, and *demonstration of a business model* that will help CSOs to pursue their mission while ensuring financial viability through diversification of funding sources.

The most apparent change resulted from the project is, reflected through project indicator for the overall objective: *Women in Montenegro fully exercise their citizen's rights*. Namely, the project encouraged more than 350 vulnerable women in the two municipalities to start exercising some of their universal human rights (right to education, right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment), which is interlinked with protection of their right to equality and non-discrimination. In total, 24 women were coached for employment in social enterprise; while project partners provided advisory services to more than 80 women.

The project helped to *raise the awareness of targeted men*, husbands, fathers and/or brothers of the vulnerable women about gender equality and the important role of women in the economy. For that purpose, over 100 men participated in workshops and trainings, and later supported their female family members to take active role in the project.

Significant outreach among women and wider community of Niksic and Pljevlja positioned CRI and Bona Fide as relevant *business resource centres for women*.

By implementing *national advocacy campaign*, CARE and partners succeeded to ensure commitment of the government officials to continue and support the efforts of civil society to improve legislation and enabling environment for doing social entrepreneurship. More than 20 representatives of national and local governments were addressed during the advocacy process, which resulted in confirmation of the importance of social entrepreneurship as an instrument for achieving social and economical objectives. Duty

bearers encouraged CSOs to start the process of preparation of relevant Strategy, and proposed to elaborate more on the French model.¹⁴

The project gave critical contribution to *build partnerships* necessary to address social entrepreneurship in Montenegro. All relevant stakeholders were included in the process: relevant institutions at national and local level, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, Ministry of Economy, centres for social work, local employment agencies, local department for agriculture, Agricultural biotechnical institute, local tourist organisation (LTO), business associations, CSOs and their social enterprises, development agencies and local community representatives.

There has been a considerable change on the level of *awareness and behaviour of the representatives of the local institutions towards vulnerable women and women CSOs*. During the interview held, director of the local Employment Bureau in Pljevlja stated: *"I knew some of those women who were involved in the program, who did not have the chance to get a loan from the bureau, and now, when I'm convinced about what and how they work, not only that they will be eligible to apply, but they will have priority for obtaining loans and other legally envisaged benefits."* He also offered a partnership, so that available financial instrument could be used for social entrepreneurs. Surprisingly, before the project was finalised, Bona Fide actually signed the contract for temporarily employment of 15 women.

Women are informed, educated and empowered to engage in economic activities and get out of the social and economic isolation. The project had transformative effects on gender relation within the families; the interviewed women reported that they feel more respected by their spouses. In their view, this happened as a result of "door-to-door" campaign, and workshops with men. The effects of provision of support to women's employment and self-employment are especially visible in cases of Roma and Egyptian women, since they have suffered from extreme poverty and discrimination.

Brochures produced by the project contain stories about the effects of project interventions on women's lives. Desk review and interviews organised for the purpose of this evaluation confirmed significant contribution that should be more intensively presented to the wider public.

The project contributed to the implementation of **Global Sustainable Development Goals**, in particular **SDG 5: "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls"**, especially targets related to *"ending all forms of discrimination; recognizing and value unpaid care and domestic work, promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family; and giving women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services,*

¹⁴ In July 2014 French Parliament adopted the Law on Social and Solidarity Economy. The law provides set of criteria to appreciate whether an organization can or cannot be considered as the one providing a social utility. More information available at: <https://bit.ly/Pdfwr7>

inheritance and natural resources.” In addition, the project adequately addressed **SDG 1**: End poverty in all forms, by establishing mechanisms for income generating activities for the most deprived population.

3.2.6 Sustainability

Possibilities for multiplication and sustainability of project results are obvious and multidimensional. Financial sustainability remains major challenge.

Sustainability at the policy level

By implementing national advocacy campaign, CARE and partners succeeded to ensure *commitment of the government officials* to continue and support the efforts of civil society to improve legislation and enabling environment for doing social entrepreneurship. The major concern in this regard is that the declared support of the institutions could remain subject to personal preference of the officials, instead of a system, legalised action.

Besides advocating for improving enabling environment for social entrepreneurship, an important impact achieved at the policy level is building the *capacity of local organisations for public advocacy* and lobbying, as well as *networking* with other relevant NGOs. BF and CRI will have the opportunity to implement advocacy action plans resulted from the training organised during the project. Significant product of the newly acquired skills is the agreement made with TIKa agency, to financially support purchasing cooling store facility with adequate infrastructure for standardised treatment of the raspberry in Pljevlja.

Sustainability at the institutional level

CARE has invested lot of effort to build capacities of the two local organisations, BF and CRI, to establish and continue to function on long term basis as *reliable resource centres* for women’s business initiatives. Both organisations have registered their social enterprises - *agro-cooperatives*, which will serve as a laboratories for demonstration of socially responsible businesses. The example of economic empowerment of women through agro-cooperatives will continue to serve as a *model* for other CSOs: during the exchange forums, about 10 CSO have already expressed interest to replicate this practice.

Besides these four newly established structures, the project created a *CSO Platform - Representative Board* that will continue to work on advocating for preparation, adoption and implementation of the policies which regulate social entrepreneurship. This Board has potential to grow into relevant partner in shaping the policies for employment and social inclusion.

Financial sustainability

Having in mind extremely low level of financial viability of CSOs in the country, development of social entrepreneurship is of their vital interest, since it represent alternative source of funding social services for the most vulnerable persons in the country.

The project has started to develop several mechanisms to ensure financial sustainability in a systematic and structured manner. Financial sustainability of the two local organisations has been increased by

- Training of staff about the importance of economic empowerment of women;
- Training and mentoring about how to transform into provider of programs for economic empowerment;
- Training and mentoring for establishing social businesses/agro-cooperative, preparation of business and marketing plans;
- Education about finance and administration necessary for running programs of economic empowerment, and specific social businesses.
- Procurement of fixed assets and current assets for the initial work of the cooperatives (land, mechanisations, seeds, packages etc.)

Financial viability of the beneficiaries of business resource centres was planned to contribute to financial sustainability of the organisation: it was foreseen that part of the profit from cooperatives should be invested into CSOs. Cooperatives didn't have finalised products and sales until the end of the project, which prevented them to invest in CSOs, as planned. Moreover, the situation endangered financial viability of cooperatives.

The financial gap is partly caused by the fact that production of fruits was the only planned source of funding for cooperatives. For that reason it is important to explore additional opportunities for building capacities of the enterprises. For example, in 2017, The European Investment Fund (EIF) and Crnogorska Komercijalna Banka AD (CKB) have signed the first transaction in Montenegro under the *EU Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI)*. EaSU provides support to increase the availability and accessibility of microfinance for vulnerable groups and micro-enterprises, and increase access to finance for social enterprises.

In synergy with CARE's JAKA Project, considerable effects were accomplished towards financial security of economically deprived women and their families, by increasing their employability, and direct support to self-employment (education, social loans, mentoring) and wage-employment (education).

The social loans/grants awarded to women will serve as seed money for the implementation of their business plans. Since the project significantly increased the employability of women, those who haven't received grants for self-employment have been enabled to work at a newly established business or at third party employers. Employees in the cooperatives will ensure an income from profit made out of selling raspberries. Women who participated in project trainings will be temporarily employed by the agro cooperative during the harvesting season (twice a year). The cooperatives will continue with their efforts to expand the range of products to generate more income.

The legalisation of the 13 individual granted women business, their improvement and promotion has opened new funding opportunities. The project beneficiaries who registered their business are entitled to apply for financial support through the state "Agrarian

budget". The local employment bureaus committed to provide available resources to support the women: subsidies, loans, public works, counselling etc.

Environmental sustainability

All the seeds purchased during the project were ecologically tested, while the production of healthy food and products of wool and other natural materials is the main comparative advantage of most of the grant beneficiaries. The education of the women producers included sessions about environmental standards.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- i. As a follow-up activity at the policy level, it is important to use momentum when representatives of relevant authorities have declared commitment to regulate social entrepreneurship. During the process, it is important to ensure more official commitment of relevant authority, in form of MoU, or creation of official working group for preparation of the *Strategy for development of social entrepreneurship*. This would ensure sense of ownership and keeping relevant authorities accountable for preparation of the document in near future.
- ii. CSOs Representative Board of organisations active in social entrepreneurship supported by CARE should take the lead in process of *public consultations* for preparation of the Strategy. Their critical contribution could be developing *prior gender impact assessment of the policies*, as recommended by 2018 EU Montenegro Progress Report¹⁵, and advocating for specific measures to increase potential benefits for women from engaging in social enterprise;
- iii. In order to contribute to the overall project objective, it would be essential to *involve more women organisations* in the work of CSO Platform for social entrepreneurship;
- iv. The project does not provide enough reference to the **EU agenda on social entrepreneurship**. In order to strengthen institutional and financial sustainability, CRI and BF should join similar regional and EU platforms, such as The European Network of Social Integration Enterprises (ENSIE); The European Confederation of Workers' Co-operatives, Social Co-operatives and Social and Participative Enterprises (ECOP); or European Confederation of Workers' Cooperatives, Social Cooperatives and Social and Participative Enterprises (CECOP). Joining these initiatives could help access the new knowledge platforms and financial resources for strengthening agro-cooperatives.

¹⁵ European Commission, 2018 Montenegro Progress Report, available at: <https://bit.ly/2qExIEK>

- v. The established social enterprises need to urgently diversify sources of income. It would be worthy to explore possibilities for **cooperation with micro financial institutions, based on the mechanisms introduced by European Commission Delegation to Montenegro and CKB** (Montenegrin Commercial Bank), **IRF** (Investment and Development Fund of Montenegro); EU Programme for development of clusters COSME - which is also accessible to agro-cooperatives **etc.**
- vi. Most of the CSOs who implement programmes of economic empowerment as a tool for social inclusion in Montenegro do not necessarily have **adequate knowledge and skills in economic sciences**, which are necessary to provide business development services (BDS). Therefore, it is necessary to continue with programs for increase the **financial literacy and entrepreneurial skills for staff of the two business resource centres and other relevant organisations;**
- vii. Although agro cooperatives prepared **marketing plans**, they will need additional skills and knowledge to implement the plan, especially in part of distribution, product placement and sales;
- viii. Majority of the labour force of the established agro-cooperatives were women, while both directors are men. In future similar initiatives, it would be helpful to reserve managerial positions for women, in order to address stereotyped gender roles and **promote women leadership;**
- ix. CARE should provide more visibility to their very specific **approach of dealing with gender inequalities by direct inclusion of men**. This approach would be an essential principle of professionals who work on political, economic and social inclusion of women.

**“This family lives in the worst possible conditions:
Šemsija Ademai and her six children”**

Daily press Vijesti **April 2012**

VODA NA SVE STRANE

25.4.2012 21:42

Ova porodica živi u najgorim uslovima: Šemsija Ademaj i šestoro djece

“Ponekad mi pomognu drugari, ponekad učiteljica, pa mi daju svesku, olovku, gumicu”, kaže Bajram Ademaj

4951 PREGLEDA 25 KOMENTARA



FOTO: IVAN PETRUŠIĆ

AUTOR: Svetlana Mandić

“...Now we sell eggs, and children go to school with small pocket money for a school lunch. I hope I will never again feel as helpless as than...”

Care International Balkans Brochure, **December 2017**

The best example is Šemsija Ademai, a Roma woman who lives with her husband and seven children in a small cabin next to the Nikšić Railway Station while they put chickens in a small concrete made building.

“I have seven children, the oldest one is 14 and the youngest one is 7-year old. The hardest thing for me was that I could not give them even 50 eurocents in the morning when they go to school. Now we sell eggs, and children go to school with small pocket money for a school lunch. I hope I will never again feel as helpless as that. “



Šemsija Ademai, Nikšić

