EURASIA PARTNERSHIP FOUNDATION

NGO Sustainability and Community Development Mechanisms in Armenia

SUMMARY RESEARCH REPORT

BASED ON EVALUATION OF EPF DOC AND RCCD PROGRAMS

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INTRODUCTION

The current document highlights main findings derived from the Evaluation of Eurasia Partnership Foundation (EPF) Armenia programs: Developing Organizational Capacities (DOC) and Resource Centers for Community Development (RCCD). The evaluation research and analysis has been conducted by Civic Development and Partnership Foundation (CDPF).

The research findings refer both to the DOC and RCCD project impact in particular and NGO sustainability and community development approaches in general. However, this summary document will present overall trends and mechanisms observed in NGO field and community development activities, non-withstanding whether they come from DOC and RCCD project framework or general discussions on the subject.

The Summary Report includes an introductory section on purpose of the evaluation and evaluation methodology, followed by major findings and conclusions on aspects of NGO sustainability and community development. Major recommendations targeted to involved stakeholders are specified, and finally, lessons learned on RCCD and DOC programs are presented for EPF to consider in further implication of its programs.

The evaluation team hopes that the findings and recommendations derived will be considered by EPF and other interested parties and will serve to the benefit of future development of Armenian nonprofits and thus the Civil Society in general.

PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION AND EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The Evaluation Research was initiated by EPF Armenia to evaluate DOC and RCCD programs and to investigate NGO sustainability and community development models, proved to be efficient in Armenia. EPF launched the DOC and RCCD programs in 2005 with the following goals: to strengthen the organizational capacities of non-governmental organizations to improve their performance and service delivery (DOC); and to improve the capacity of community-based organizations (CBO) so that they can play an active role in community development through strengthening the capacities of resource centers serving to CBOs and establishing a country-wide network of community development resource centers in Armenia.

CDPF was contracted by EPF Armenia to implement the evaluation research. The research was implemented through qualitative methods of data collection and analysis. It pursued recommendation purposes rather than and beyond DOC and RCCD programs' evaluation.

In particular, the goal of the summative evaluation was set to (1) provide an independent assessment of the DOC program's impact on its client NGOs and the RCCD resource centers' impact on the CBOs they were intended to serve, if any, and (2) to provide evaluation of DOC and RCCD project's impact on the NGOs involved and on community development initiatives in general, as well as provide findings on the most efficient mechanisms of NGO sustainability and community development approaches in place. Accordingly, the following evaluation objectives were specified for the research:

Objective 1:   Provide evaluation of DOC program

Objective 2:   Provide evaluation of RCCD program

Objective 3:   Identify models/ mechanisms for NGO sustainability

Objective 4:   Identify positive community change models produced by EPF grantees and other organizations' interventions

Objective 5:   Provide expert recommendations to EPF and its networks on further implications into EPF's ongoing programs

The following methods were utilized for data collection: (a) qualitative interviews, (b) focus-group discussions, (c) document/record revision, (d) expert interviews. The protocols for DOC, RCCD implementing organizations' staff interviews and protocols for RCCD client CBO interviews were developed accordingly. Selection of

respondents was based on EPF recommendations to ensure researching on successful practices of implementing partners'. All the data generated laid beyond the developed recommendations.

For evaluation research, four DOC grantee organizations and six RCCD grantee organizations had been selected based on EPF recommendations. In each of selected organizations, interviews with key staff had been conducted. Reports on DOC and RCCD project implementation as well as organizational capacity assessment reports and development plan of DOC grantees have been examined before interview conduction. Apart from interviews with DOC and RCCD implementing organizations, face-to-face interviews and focus-group discussions were conducted with regional CBO representatives to assess the impact that RCCD program had on CBOs and to explore NGO sustainability and community development issues and approaches. Besides, ten experts proficient in NGO field and/or presenting various international organizations working in the field of community development have been interviewed for collecting more expertise on these objectives.

In total, the number of respondents involved in the research is as follows:

- 10 representatives of DOC implementing organizations
- 8 representatives of RCCD implementing organizations
- 22 representatives of CBOs involved in individual interviews and 49 representatives of CBOs participated in 6 focus-group discussions

Based on the findings and conclusions generated through the analysis of Objectives 1-4, the Evaluation Team has elaborated expert recommendations to EPF and its networks on how these models should be integrated in to EPF's ongoing programs.

MAJOR FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

1. NGO Sustainability aspects

1.1. Governance and Strategic Management

Throughout the research interviews and focus-group discussions, little importance was given by NGOs to the stable functioning of organization's governing bodies and systematic strategic management as factors for NGO sustainability. It can be assumed that this aspect of NGO management is not considered as a priority for development, and the functions of board and the supervisory committee of the organization are sometimes perceived as more formal rather than necessary. At the same time, organizations that received development assistance in this area report that giving attention to involvement of beneficiaries in governing bodies of organization plays a significant role in more sustainable involvement of beneficiaries in decision-making level.

As to strategic planning, this area is also overlooked by most of Armenian NGOs. Those who have undergone through this process note that participatory strategic planning is very important for effective organization and targeting activities of the organization. However, assistance of external consultant is critical for NGOs to produce a comprehensive strategic plan.

Another important aspect of NGO governance is membership, which is considered to be the main decision-making body and key resource for each membership based non-profit. Among the researched organizations, members are recruited within the scope of beneficiaries and/or volunteers. Usually, when membership is based on beneficiary status, the level of members' commitment and motivation depends on the extent of benefits got as beneficiaries. In some organizations, enlargement of member base is closely connected with enlargement of volunteer pool and vice versa. Some respondents also note that the increase of membership base is also connected with general trust atmosphere toward NGOs. In any case, the primary issue in membership management is establishment of motivational mechanisms for more effective involvement of members. At the same time, not all NGOs practice membership fee generation. One of the explanations for not collecting fee is that even when membership fee is practiced, it comprises very little amount in the overall budget of NGO and creates additional paperwork. However, fee collection has been noted to be important in terms of getting more commitment on the side of members and developing sense of ownership.

1.2. Financial Sustainability

For Armenian NGOs grant funding is still considered as the major source for NGO revenue. At the same time, getting grant funds is a challenge for most of the NGOs especially if they have start-up status. Also, organizations operating in the regions mention that they are not in equal conditions with Yerevan-based NGOs in terms of grant-seeking skills; foreign language knowledge, lack of information and insufficient proposal-writing skills are major limitations.

The majority of respondents stated that the preferred approach towards financial sustainability is social enterprise, in particular for-fee service provision to beneficiaries. The concept of social enterprise is mostly viewed by NGOs as an embedded one, that is, implementing mission-related activities, as presently this is the most frequent and feasible way of social enterprise functioning in Armenia.

Nevertheless, there is a resistance among NGOs in initiating social enterprise due to lack of skills in business field and lack of confidence in enterprise management. NGO legislation is considered to be not supportive, since it provides the same conditions for social enterprise as for business entities.

Organizations consider diversification of financial sources and planning fundraising activities as important precondition for sustainability. However, this is the case in organizations that have been involved in development initiatives and are relatively advanced. NGOs do not practice various fundraising approaches for raising funds locally. Only few NGOs have experience running special events, major gift campaigns, etc. Several factors cause this such as lack of fund-raising skills, absence of culture of giving and participation, etc.

1.3. Leadership and Human Resource Management

The research confirms that human resources are of a key importance for NGO sustainability. Thus, ongoing development of these resources is essential for a successful NGO. Professional development activities in NGOs are important in several aspects: for ensuring sustainability of available human resources, as a motivational factor, and for development of NGO services in general.

Both NGO representatives and experts claim that NGO leader's personality is very important and can impact the sustainability of organization in double ways: as a risk when leader leaves and as a factor for organization to thrive if the leader is strong and committed. In any case, most of respondents agree that skills developed within the organization should be institutionalized so that not to be dependent on a personality. E.g. during the RCCD program, significant pool of RC human resources was trained for service provision, but when funding was over, only few of the Resource Centers were able to keep the developed human resources involved whether as staff in other projects or as volunteers.

As to human resource management, lack of relevant skills and efficient approaches among Armenian NGOs is noticed. Understanding of the meaning of human resource management policies and procedures needs to be developed as part of NGO management culture. Professional development systems and motivational mechanisms have been stressed as factors helping to keep the staff already involved in organizational activities and to provide efficient use of human resources. In this regard, efficient human resource management is linked with financial sustainability.

Another important aspect of human resource management is volunteer management. There is an opinion that volunteerism culture is not developed yet and requires major effort for cultivation. On the other hand, NGOs usually lack skills and expertise in volunteer management, which is needed for effective use of volunteers and their contribution to organization sustainability. In situation where financial sustainability is fragile, volunteer base enlargement and volunteer management becomes a critical part of NGO's activities. Devotion to the mission provides basis for volunteering for an NGO and for sustainability of projects. Some NGOs claim that they continue working non-withstanding availability of funds, and this is due to the devotion and understanding of the cause.

1.4. Service Provision and Administrative System

Elements of sound service delivery system including need assessment, monitoring, provision mechanisms, and evaluation, are used in part of NGOs involved in service provision; however, all these elements are usually not seen in their complexity, while implementation is usually more emphasized by NGOs. On the other hand, need

assessment and development of new services is more stressed as compared to service evaluation. The latter is often conducted just for the sake of the project and underestimated for further development of services.

Sustainable service provision is interlinked with development of organizations' financial sustainability together with human resources and operational systems: professional staff and smooth administration mechanisms help to establish basis for quality service provision. Another aspect of service provision is effective marketing of NGO services which is at place mostly only when an external assistance is provided.

The culture of maintaining administrative procedures and processes is not at place and often taken as formality. Lack of sound administrative procedures observed in NGOs is also linked with lack of appropriate human resources for administration system management. Available administrative systems are not used efficiently for further development, e.g. service registration is rarely used as a need assessment tool.

1.5. External Relations and Partnership

Effective communication and PR is one of the keys for organization's successful activities; however, organizations do not put proper emphasis on their PR activities and make limited use of their PR materials especially in terms of fundraising. On the other hand, fundraising mechanisms are needed for NGOs to develop successful PR of organization.

Collaboration with other organizations is valued as a factor for sustainability. However, in practice this approach is not always utilized: though there are successful cases of collaboration among NGOs, respondents found that more efforts are necessary.

Seminars and other joint events serve as a good ground for NGOs in terms of exchange of information and for settling personal contacts. In this regard, joint events organized by development agencies and Resource Centers have been of a great support to organizations in enlarging the scopes of partnership with each other. Even after the funding is over, Resource Centers involve their beneficiaries in various activities and partnership. At the same time, though Resource Centers themselves stated commitment for building long-lasting relationships, no clear communication mechanisms have been established among RCs. Resource share and joint project implementation have been mentioned by RCs as possibilities for future joint effort.

A few NGOs have generated some valuable experience in collaboration with local self-government bodies. NGOs are starting to be considered by LSGB as having more professional and skilled human resources, thus grounds for further cooperation are established. Simultaneously, some progress in development of mutual trust between local NGOs and LSGB is observed. However, still very few organizations had successful systematic experience with local self-government bodies in regard to financial support, though NGOs are aware of social partnership mechanisms and see possibility of collaboration with LSGB as contract relationships. Limited practices of social contracting and partnership exist and could be enlarged.

On the other hand, NGOs do not want to be dependent from LSBG or any other governmental agency, thus prefer not having any financial affiliation with those sources. Many respondents stated that the bases of collaboration between state and NGOs are not always fair, and there is an issue of biased approach and unfair distribution of funds on the part of state. It is noted that partnership between NGOs and LSGBs in often based upon personal factors and does not have systematic character.

As to NGO collaboration with business, it seems to be fragmentary and not institutionalized; however, there are seeds of successful collaboration which could start traditions and extended to other NGOs and businesses. Most of the initiatives and positive experience in terms of NGO-business partnership are connected with service delivery and fundraising actions.

A large topic for discussion is collaboration between local NGOs and donor organizations. As mentioned above, there is still high dependency of NGOs on grant funding. As a result, NGOs often try to fit with donors' funding requirements because they have to cope with the issue of financial sustainability. When implementing grant projects, NGOs have little possibility to influence donor organization's approaches. Some respondents mentioned that there are no sound mechanisms and systems for communicating with international organizations interested in the regional development activities and this tendency weakens collaborative efforts.

1.6. Capacity-Building Assistance

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Many findings briefed above show that NGOs still need technical and capacity-building assistance. External assistance is crucial for NGO capacity development for a range of reasons: (1) organization does not possess adequate financial resources for operational expenses and for capacity development; (2) organizations need coaching and consultation in planning and implementation of capacity development activities; (3) organizations needing development do not and could not have enough awareness on their development gaps and opportunities. At the same time, assistance in development of organizational capacities is needed in several directions, including development of policy and procedure systems, professional development of human resources, service development and material base development.

2. Community Development aspects:

2.1. Planning and Need Assessment

Research showed that community development initiatives are not always based on thorough and comprehensive need assessment. Community development project (CDP) initiators state that all the planned efforts are based on needs assessment, but in most of the cases when needs assessment is being conducted, few participatory approaches would be used involving multi-level stakeholders.

At the same time, research proves that participatory approaches are more efficient both in terms of sound need assessment as well as all stake-holder involvement in the process and creating ownership of development effort. Community leaders and LSGB officials normally get involved in need assessment processes when initiated by other parties, though each initiator runs the process in accordance to its goals and purposes. However, key stakeholders are often not involved in analysis stage of need assessment and accordingly in followed planning and decision-making. At the same time, planning tools are not always practiced by community development agents, which bring the effectiveness of development efforts to risk.

2.2. Mobilization Mechanisms

Community mobilization aspect is of a key importance for efficient community development effort. Therefore, for funding community development projects, donors prefer working with communities where the level of mobilization of the population is higher. It is visible that when beneficiary mobilization and participation is larger, the project implementation is more effective and the results are more sustainable.

The mobilization process is more efficient when started at the need assessment stage, and motivations for people to be involved are necessary to be considered to expand mobilization. There is a large practice to involve local active groups in community development processes as a basis for mobilization. Several other factor influence mobilization level such as the standard of living of a community: in communities with lower standard of the well-being of it is more difficult to mobilize people for public work. Also, it is claimed that mobilizing people in rural communities is easier then in bigger urban ones, since the outcomes of efforts are more vivid in the small communities and social connections are more obvious.

Combined approach to community contribution, when not only financial means but also other types of contribution such as labor and technical resources are required, is more efficient in terms of mobilization. Involving community formal leaders is also essential for successful mobilization in most of the cases, as it contributes to the will to continue project after the funding is over and to maintain results achieved.

2.3. LSGB and Private Sector Participation

It was already mentioned that involvement of formal community leaders is central for mobilization and further sustainability of community development projects. On the other hand, participatory and accountable approach in implementation of CDPs helps to change the capacities and working style of LSGB work to more transparent and participatory one. Thus, involvement of local leaders contributes to the sustainability of development projects.

However, there are no clearly defined and set mechanisms for LSGB participation in community development projects initiated by other stakeholders. The collaboration is often on-need base: while implementing community development initiatives, various agencies and local organizations relate with direct functions of state and/or LSGB, but as a rule there is no formal partnership in place. On the other hand, there is a high dependency on

leader's personality and relationships of CDP implementer and the community head, which brings again to the understanding of need for institutionalization of partnership.

At the same time, private sector institutions present in the community rarely get involved and participate in development projects. The collaboration between public and private sector is not institutionalized.

2.4. Impact Assessment and Project Sustainability

More often monitoring and evaluation conducted for a particular project is initiated by donors, but does not always present a real picture as the methods laid behind are probably not always adequate. Besides, there are no well defined approaches for implanting development project evaluations in impact assessments, though the findings confirmed that adequate impact assessments help to develop basis to sustain project results and to continue with more effective interventions. Respondents note that there is a tendency on the side of CDP implementers of emphasizing outcome and result level rather then impact.

At the same time, sustainability of community development initiatives is a major concern of all stakeholders of CDP. When planning the effort, it is essential to assess human and other resources available and plan on developing and leveraging the existing capacity. Resource centers or other kind of support organization contribute to the sustainability development as they provide basis for ongoing support to the initiatives. Formalization of active groups as independent structure has also proved to be effective. Another practice cultivated for ensuring further implication of project results is relatively new approach of donor organizations supporting implementation of advocacy-based development projects.

In general, both in CDP and other projects several factors influencing sustainability shall be stressed:

- participatory project needs assessment,
- stakeholder mobilization and participation,
- project linkage with implementing organization's mission and strategy,
- sufficient fundraising,
- human capacity building

Even when there are no financial resources in place, commitment and motivation can provide for continuity of a project and create basis for further funding.

Paternalistic approaches and absence of culture of participating and giving for the sake of community in general creates major risk for participatory community development processes and further sustainability of results. Civic sector representatives state that it will take a long time to develop that culture and to change the attitude. Long-term community development projects in same community contribute to making that long-term change in attitude and cultural level in communities through education of children and youth. In some cases community foundations were created with business entities' involvement to insure CDP sustainability.

MAJOR RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Recommendations to NGOs

NGOs should consider developing capacities in major areas critical for sustainable organizational and mission-related developments. Among those, developing governance practices, mechanisms for working with members, volunteers, community/beneficiary mobilization, and internal administrative systems particularly regarding service provision are to be significantly developed. Another aspect of development is external relations including partnership with NGOs and other parties and using efficient PR and communication tools. Specific recommendations on each area of organizational development are as follows:

1.1.   Only given recognition and successful utilization of the role of governing body, larger involvement of members and beneficiaries in governing bodies of organization will contribute toward more sustainable involvement of beneficiaries in decision-making level. Advisory Board may also serve for better beneficiary involvement in organizations' decision-making. It is also necessary to develop skills of NGOs in producing strategic plan as it proved to be critical for consistent functioning of the organization and as a basis for all other development.

1.2.   NGOs should concentrate efforts in developing and implementing membership policies and procedures in accordance to their internal and external environment, which is unique for each organization. Motivational aspects of membership recruitment and development are to be considered. This will open new possibilities for enlarging membership and for more efficient collection of membership fee. Practicing membership fee collection may bring more commitment on the side of members and develop higher sense of ownership.

1.3.   Ongoing development of human resources is essential for a successful NGO. At the same time, it is important to ensure institutionalization of skills and capacities within the organization, which is necessary for sustainability of capacity development. Development of culture of human resource management is needed for development of human resource management system; moreover, not only management but all the stakeholders are to be involved in the process. In this process, motivational mechanisms should be in focus to keep the staff already involved in organizational activities, as well as more efficient use of job descriptions in terms of recruitment, selection, performance management, etc.

1.4.   As volunteer base enlargement is critical to sustainability of NGO's activities, volunteer management should be an important part of human resource management. Though considerable experience was generated by local NGOs in recruiting volunteers, nevertheless, all stakeholders agree that the volunteerism culture is not developed yet and require major effort for cultivation. From another perspective, NGOs lack skills and expertise in volunteer management, which is needed for effective use of volunteers and their contribution to organization sustainability.

1.5.   The culture of maintaining administrative procedures and processes is not at place and often taken as formality; available administrative systems are not used efficiently for further development. Corresponding training in the area of administrative management is needed together with measures in the direction of ensuring human resource and financial sustainability to ensure that necessary resources are in place.

1.6.   Building capacities in sound service delivery system including all the chains is necessary. Service implementation is mostly stressed by NGOs and some need assessment efforts are put; however, there is often lack of complex and systematic evaluation system. Development of databases of client beneficiaries as one of the component of service delivery system is the most developed aspect and proves to be effective in targeting beneficiaries; however, only periodic need assessment and subsequent update of the database will ensure its effective use. NGOs should conduct targeted needs assessment and develop service evaluation mechanisms to incorporate in organization policies.

1.7.   When both for-fee and free-of-charge services are provided, NGOs face difficulties in developing diversification principles and approaches, as well as in following those in administrative procedures. Clear principles and approaches of providing for-fee and free-of-charge services should be elaborated based both on the gained experience of service provision and on the need assessment conducted before planning. The elaborated principles should be integrated into administrative procedures.

1.8.   Diversified marketing and sales approach should be developed to provide sustainability of service provision. Non-profit marketing approaches also need to be learnt by NGOs to develop marketing

activities not only for fee-for services but all the services provided by organizations. Developing and implementing sound fundraising strategies would be another asset to ensure sustainability of service provision.

1.9. Sound accountability mechanisms for generated and spent funds to build greater trust toward NGOs, together with developing NGO capacity on fundraising mechanisms, tools and approaches is needed for developing fundraising culture. At the same time, trainings alone are not enough for developing fundraising capacities: experience, networking, and appropriate human resources will generate the institutional capacity for fundraising.

1.10. The following efforts can be consolidated regarding development of social enterprise institution which is considered to be a powerful resource for insuring financial sustainability:

- developing skills and resource base in social enterprise management;

- increasing self-confidence through provision of successful cases and mechanisms of enterprise functioning;

- setting up clear mechanisms of differentiating for-fee and free services and/or corresponding categories of population;

- promoting legislation improvements in non-profit taxation

1.11. More capacity development and funding for producing PR materials and implementing more effective PR activities would be effective. Development of human resource and financial base for PR and marketing activities is necessary. Good image and public accountability are key for promoting efficient collaboration with mass media.

1.12. To build on existing experience and develop NGO collaboration, the following is recommended for planning further efforts:

- NGOs should be open and innovative when investigating new opportunities and mechanisms for cooperation for the sake of efficient resource usage and maximizing the impact;

- NGOs might work more closely when putting together fundraising efforts, and grant-seeking in particular;

- efficient experience exchange and learning should be promoted and developed.

- NGOs should develop their accountability, transparency, and marketing approaches, etc

1.13. To develop NGO-state partnership, the following measures can be practiced and/or promoted both on state and NGO part:

- disseminating social partnership practices and awareness raising on that, promoting sound mechanisms on social contracting, popularization of these mechanisms;

- participatory monitoring of state funds to ensure fair distribution and well-judged decision on funding;

- building mutual understanding and trust between non-profit entities, LSGB and state authorities.

1.14. Initiatives and positive experience in NGO-business partnership should be focused both by NGOs and development agencies to insure sustainability of approaches.

2. Recommendations to Development Agencies and Donor Community

It is recommended that Development Agencies and Donor Community provide more capacity-building programs, free trainings, and information dissemination activities to insure that there are enough knowledge, capacities, and skills in place for NGO sustainable activities. Special emphases might be made for capacity building programs for regional and start-up NGOs. At the same time, development assistance to NGOs has to be a complex one, involving all OD areas in order to achieve sustainable results in development and taking into account all the highlights indicated above. In this regards, long-term development projects are more effective to cause changes in organizational culture and on attitude level. Apart from knowledge and skill development, capacity-building programs should address building understanding of NGO mission and environment among non-profit representatives. Since development needs vary depending on the level of NGO institutional development, the services provided by donor organizations need to be diversified accordingly. In planning capacity-building efforts, the following recommendations should be taken into account:

2.1. Key for success in development programs is to ensure participative processes. In this regard Appreciative Inquiry Method practiced by EPF proved to be efficient as it brings more commitment and motivation of the staff, volunteers and government bodies for generating efforts towards institutional development. Thus such approach needs to be used further on and incorporated into other programming aspects as well.

2.2. Significant efforts should be put jointly by all stake-holders for building financial sustainability bases. Practices in running social enterprise could be popularized in this regard together with developing capacities and new approaches to support for-fee service provision by NGOs.

2.3. Major effort needs to be put on developing practices in cross-sector collaboration. Institutional mechanisms are to be developed and put in practice. Significant awareness-raising campaign should accompany these processes. In particular, mechanisms for insuring efficient communication and partnership between donor community and civil society organizations should be established beyond grant-project funding framework.

3. Recommendations to Implementers of Community Development Projects

Organizations initiating Community Development Projects (CDP) or activities need to build on the existing experience and collaborate with all stakeholders in the community, particularly in planning process, to ensure effective and sustainable results. Consolidation of efforts is essential for rational and effective use of resources and building trust. The following points should be considered when implementing CDP:

3.1. When planning community development approaches, sound, timely, and participatory need assessment has to be conducted. At the same time, participatory approach by involving community population, LSGB, private sector, other stake-holders is essential in need assessment stage. Appropriate resources and funding have to be necessarily considered and insured for assessment implementation.

3.2. Stakeholders and donors use various tools for community needs assessment, which in some cases cause significant challenges when using the assessment results and planning development efforts. While there are several methodological approaches developed worldwide and used in Armenia, the Research shows that developing comprehensive methodological guidelines would be very useful for all stakeholder groups involved in CDP. Specifics of the exiting factors (legislation, culture, etc.) are to be necessarily considered when developing the methodology. The developed needs assessment approach might be advocated further on for becoming standard and universal procedure for LSGB usage.

3.3. Stakeholder mobilization is the key for efficient community development effort. It is recommended not to concentrate on forming/working with community active group and LSGB only, but involve more stakeholders from various sectors (such as local business representatives, other CBOs and thus general population, LSGB, regional and national government entities, development agencies, etc.) in community development initiatives. Only then the community ownership and capacity development might be ensured to be in line with making the planned CDP outcomes more efficient and sustainable.

3.4. The diversified approaches aimed at mobilization of local organizations in community developments initiatives should be applied. Local organizations should be trained for involvement in community development processes. LSGB overall capacity and representatives' skills should be developed and institutionalized in planning and project management in general. An additional effort should be given for changing LSGB approach toward importance of project management. Putting an effort on developing the collaboration of various organizations acting in a community would ensure better CDP results and more efficient use of available resources.

3.5. Efforts should be put to develop practices in conducting evaluations and impact assessment, and moreover, in using outcomes of those in further planning and revision.

3.6. Experience of change in existing community culture that influence participation and contribution of community members to CDP has to be developed and extended. Significant emphasis should be put on working with overall population, creating sense of ownership and culture of giving. Formation of Community Foundations by putting together efforts CBOs, LSGBs and community business can greatly contribute to CDP planning and implementation, as well as its sustainability.

LESSONS LEARNED ON EPF DOC AND RCCD PROGRAMS

This final chapter presents lessons learned related to the specific findings on DOC and RCCD program approaches, objectives, and achievements, which can be used by EPF in further planning of similar efforts.

Overall, the DOC project and EPF's approaches in developing organizational capacities of the organizations involved in the project have had a considerable impact on further activities of these organizations in terms of developing their structures and administrative systems, services, human resources, and communication. Specific learning points derived from DOC evaluation include:

- Appreciative inquiry method proved to be effective in creating ownership of the capacity development process among various stake-holders. Accordingly, it brings more commitment and motivation of the staff, volunteers and government bodies for generating efforts towards institutional development.

- DOC implementing organizations claimed that apart from policy and procedure development, minimal material basis is not less important for NGOs to manage sustainable development of services and operational functioning

Implementation of RCCD program has had a significant influence on institutional development of the RCs: besides capacity and material resource development, the RCs' image and reputation has increased in the communities, new partnerships were cultivated. Some specific finding regarding RCCD project are as follows:

- In general RCCD is an effective mean for developing local CBOs. However, the period of RCCD projects implementation was not enough to achieve more visible results: though RCCD project aimed to provide RCs with capacity of self-sustainable service provision, donor funding is still of a key importance for RCs to provide development services to CBOs, as RCs face significant difficulties in sustaining service provision to beneficiaries in the same scope that was available during of RCCD funding.

- Resource centers can provide key role in facilitation collaboration among local and international organizations and in information dissemination, and help NGOs in more optimized utilization of resources.

- Lack of clear administrative procedures makes it difficult to develop diversified principles and approaches in providing either for-fee or free-of-charge services.

- Although RCCD provide opportunity to CBOs to organize their activities more effectively through service provision, low attention is taken toward provision of opportunities to implement gained experience and knowledge in community development activities. RC influence on community development processes has been noted mostly through partnership development among CBOs.

- RC services are very important and effective mostly for newly established NGOs with limited technical resources, lack of space to conduct their activities, low capacities of human resources, which especially referees to elementary technical, informative services and trainings. For more developed organizations more advanced trainings, more complex technological assistance is needed.