



ANNUAL BRIEF 2015

EASTERN EUROPE & SOUTHERN CAUCASUS



HELVETAS
Swiss Intercooperation

HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation is a politically and denominationally neutral development organisation, which is supported by around 100,000 members and patrons, as well as 12 regional volunteer groups. In the main text in this Annual Brief HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation is abbreviated to Helvetas.

Imprint

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Dear partners, colleagues and readers,

2015 has been marked by the pictures of desperate people seeking their way from war-torn countries in the east and middle-east, through Turkey, Greece – the Balkan countries – towards Western Europe. We have also witnessed an exodus of people from within the Balkans, who seek better lives for themselves and their families elsewhere because their home countries offer little future perspectives. The refugee and migration crisis has brought out some of the darkest sides of humanity, the challenge and weakness of our European institutions and leaders, but also revealed compassion among the many who care and act. The crisis has thrown a spotlight on the countries of the Balkan region: once again, the urgent need for true and inclusive political, economic and social transformation has become apparent.

HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation' vision is a just world in which all men and women determine the course of their lives in dignity and security, using environmental resources in a sustainable manner. This vision is the basis for the organisation's mission to help disadvantaged men, women and communities in developing and transition countries. As HELVETAS we believe that sustainable and inclusive development can only be achieved with an approach that builds on local ownership and initiative and focuses on root causes of under-performance and not just symptoms.

We are grateful towards our clients, in particular the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), and other donors for providing us with the means to realise our goals and for supporting and trusting in our approach and work.

This brief will provide an insight into our work in 2015, our lessons learned, the challenges and achievements. In doing so, the focus of this year's Annual Brief is on topics that are transversal throughout our organisation: gender and social equity, partnership and capacity development, and knowledge sharing and learning. For each of these topics, we provide insights as to how HELVETAS thinks about them and how they are practically applied in our Eastern Europe portfolio. The articles build on our partnerships with various organisations and individuals in each of the countries, to whom we are deeply grateful for their commitment and sharing of knowledge and experience.

Last but not least, we would like to thank our teams in the countries and the Head Office in Switzerland: the quality of our work is the result of many highly motivated and competent staff members who demonstrate leadership and commitment every day. We are in particular proud of having received the 2015 Knowledge Sharing Award of HELVETAS, which recognises the regional exchange between the project teams and clearly shows that regional boundaries can be overcome for a mutual future!



Regional exchange and learning is critical to our work: Management retreat, May 2015, in Ohrid (Macedonia)

Jens Engeli & Matthias Herr
Co-Team Leaders of the regional unit Eastern Europe
& South Caucasus
HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation

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HELVETAS' presence in the Western Balkans is based on a longstanding track record that dates from the early 1990s. Building on this long-term regional involvement, we bring in-depth understanding of regional trends, issues and expertise in different fields as well as strong and longstanding partnerships. In the recent years, our presence has increased significantly with new programmes and partners supporting our activities financially. The strong budget increase of the last years was consolidated in 2015 to a total of around 13 Mio CHF. We operate with a lean structure that builds on our project teams and presence in countries, combined with a direct portfolio management by our Head Office in Bern. We operate under our organisational strategies, which provide guidance towards our projects.

As an organisation, we are committed towards facilitating local ownership, capacity development and sustainable outcomes and therefore apply a systemic approach to all our projects. Moreover, we put special emphasises on regional and, wherever relevant and possible, international exchange to encourage joint learning and sharing of good practices among the projects and the wider communities.

Our most recent project, in the area of social science and policy dialogue, started in 2015 and is called PERFORM (Performing and Responsive Social Sciences in the Western Balkans).

In 2015, we achieved significant progress

in our projects and managed to reach the set targets together with our partners. In Eastern Europe, we focus mainly on local good governance (political/administrative reforms linked to inclusive quality service delivery) and economic development (focusing on youth employment and rural economy/poverty reduction).

"The success of Helvetas' work depends to a large degree on the efforts of our partner organisations..." that work as implementing organisations/consortia, co-facilitators, service providers, and/or beneficiaries. Our partners are coming from all sectors and include private companies, the government and civil society. We highly respect and encourage the contribution our partners make and we are investing significant efforts in building technical competences and strengthening leadership capacities of our local partners.

Our objectives for 2016 and beyond are to further increase the tangible results of the contributions of our projects in the partner countries, to solidify our presence in the region and to further develop our portfolio. We are open and interested to explore new thematic areas and partnerships. We will keep emphasising on communication, knowledge sharing and learning and continue to invest in our staff and partners. We see this as key factors for reliable partnerships and sustainable change in the region.

From one of our projects in Kosovo

While many young people want to leave Kosovo, Merfida Jerliu is not interested in leaving. "What would happen to our country if all young people would go abroad in search of happiness?" No, instead, she has taken a very different path and joined a Reality Tv-show where the winner gets a job. Not an adventurous dream job that you would get in a tv-show somewhere in the USA. No, in the second youngest country of the world, where about 70% of the youth is unemployed, every permanent job is a dream. The show "PunPun", was created by the agency Trembelat on behalf of Helvetas, which implements a program financed by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) to fight youth unemployment in Kosovo.

"Via Facebook I learned about the search for candidates for the tv-show", says Merfida. She did not want to let this opportunity slip, as she hoped that this would save her from having to spend months or even years looking for work. While she could imagine becoming actively involved in politics one day for the moment she wants to further develop her career in her new job as a finance officer. But she has ambitions: "This job is just the beginning ...!"



6 OUR PROJECTS IN THE REGION

BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA

MARKETMAKERS (MM)

MarketMakers encourages employment opportunities for young women and men (aged 15-29) in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). Together with the co-facilitator (Regional Development Agencies) and many other key partners, the project aims to unlock the unrealised growth potential of the Information and Communications Technology (ICT), business support services, food production and processing, and tourism sectors in the country.

Highlights 2015

- ❖ HUB387, the first technology hub in the country, does not only create many high-value jobs, but has also evolved into a powerful driver of change in the country's IT landscape. It is now the private sector representative on the Canton of Sarajevo Development Strategy Committee and has propelled ICT to one of the Canton's top priorities.
- ❖ Tourism Package Development – offering more content to tourists Through the development of new attractive tourism packages, the project's partners have ensured that in 2015 nearly 700 additional tourists visited BiH, which translates to over 55 additional jobs created.
- ❖ Securing jobs in natural disaster-prone areas through Disaster Risk Management (DRM)
Following the widespread flooding in 2014, the project continues its support to, municipalities and private companies to prevent flooding in areas with high economic activity, securing both businesses and jobs.



Financing agency and project value

Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) – CHF 4,576,500

Implementing partners

HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation and Kolektiv d.o.o./ Posoa.ba

Duration

June 2013 - June 2017 (phase I)

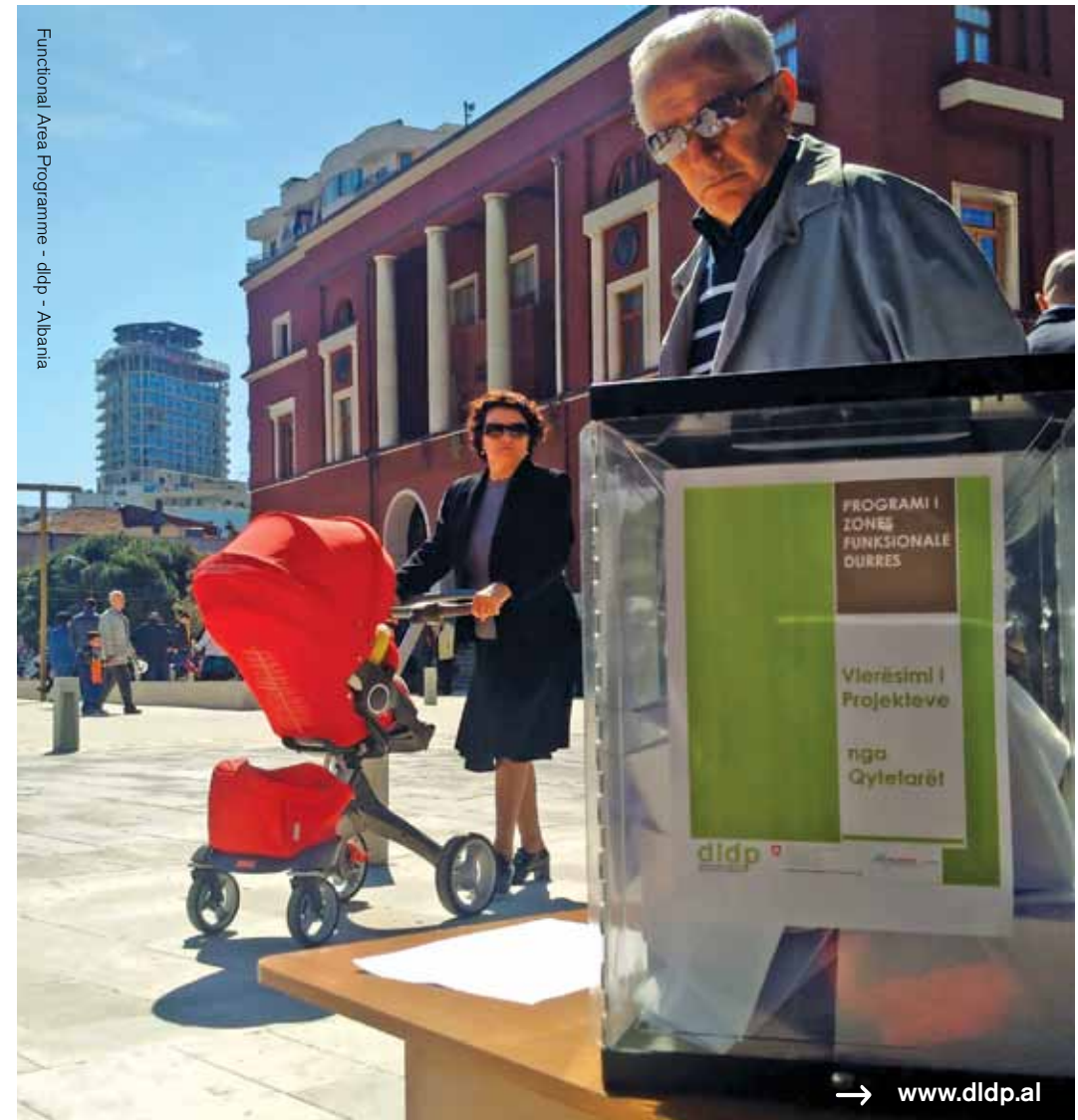
ALBANIA

THE DECENTRALIZATION AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECT (dl dp)

Dldp seeks to improve quality service delivery to all citizens by strengthening skills of local governments in the north of Albania, anchoring dldp products at national level and contributing to a legal framework that supports the needs and rights of citizens. Working directly with local governments using participatory approaches, dldp aims to put local governance issues on the national agenda and to ensure that national strategies are implemented in close collaboration with local municipalities .

Highlights 2015

- ❖ From local to international
Three models developed by dldp are now being used not only nationally, but even internationally. The “cost and tariff model” made it to Kosovo and Peru, the planning manual is applied in Kosovo and Bolivia, and dldp’s unified list of local services is used by UNDP for an integrated One-Stop Shop (OSSH) model.
- ❖ First class knowledge sharing
Sharing and disseminating the project’s experiences is at dldp’s core. For example, the experiences in waste management and integrated OSSH have been taken up by the national government and other donors.
- ❖ Influence national policy and legal framework
Dldp contributed to a national decentralisation policy and legal framework, increasing the impact of local level government on the national policy agenda. Consultation and dialogue platforms with actors from local and national level have been established (e.g. Crosscutting Strategy on Decentralization and Local Governance and the Law on local self-government).
- ❖ Developing quality public services
By strengthening the technical and financial capacities of Local Government Units (LGUs) dldp ensured that LGUs consolidated their abilities in delivering quality and social inclusive services to the citizens.



Financing agency and project value

Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) – CHF 7,280,000

Implementing Organisation

HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation

Duration

January 2014 –
December 2017
(phase III)

RISIALBANIA (RISI)

RisiAlbania aims to improve access to employment for young Albanian women and men. It does so by stimulating job creation in businesses of three sectors (agro-processing, tourism and ICT), by developing skills demanded by the job market, and by making job intermediation between employers and young job seekers more effective.

Highlights 2015

- ❖ Exploiting the power of MOOCs
Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) are not just a hype: in only a few months since the launch of 26 new IT courses by the platform almooc.com over 7,800 students have upgraded their IT skills.
- ❖ Diversifying Albania's touristic offer
The RisiTuristike Award developed by RisiAlbania is poised to become a landmark in the Albanian tourism industry, stimulating innovation and product development year after year. For example, new bird-watching and biking packages are now available for tourists to discover the North of the country.
- ❖ The media, an essential source of information
RisiAlbania has successfully stimulated national media in TV, print, radio and online to disseminate labour market information to young people and their parents, allowing them to take informed and realistic education and career decisions.
- ❖ Efficient and large-scale job matching
Job matching services are now providing a wide range of services previously unavailable in the country to over 40,000 young people and 3,300 businesses.



→ www.risialbania.al

Financing agency and project value

Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) – CHF 4,600,000

Implementing partners

HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation and Partners Albania

Duration

November 2013 – October 2017 (phase I)

SERBIA (MAIN OFFICE) AND ALBANIA

PERFORMING AND RESPONSIVE SOCIAL SCIENCES (PERFORM)

PERFORM aims at improving the relevance of social science research to policy-making and the social reform process. The project contributes to strengthening the social science community and facilitates the development of systems for enhanced collaboration between social sciences and civil society, private sector, media and other actors that influence political reform processes. Implementation will focus on Albania and Serbia in the first phase and may be extended to Bosnia & Herzegovina, Kosovo and Macedonia in a second phase .

Highlights 2015

- ❖ From project working groups to an institutional Advisory Group Initially, PERFORM facilitated the formation of a Working Group with experienced social scientists in order to develop a “Rulebook for Allocating Research Funding” through public calls for the period 2016-2020. Following the positive experiences, the responsible Serbian Ministry decided to establish a permanent Advisory Group for social sciences. It now provides recommendations to the Ministry on rulings related to social sciences, such as the Development Strategy of Science and Technology for 2016-2020.

- ❖ Pilots for evidence-based policy-making PERFORM is collaborating with Serbia's central body for coordinating policy-making “the Secretariat for Public Policies (SPP)”, in order to foster systemic linkages between social science research and policy making. Pilots for evidence-based policy-making have now been launched, enabling the SPP to develop, test and institutionalise procedures and mechanisms for communication and cooperation between social science research groups and respective ministries, resulting in better quality policies.



Social science - PERFORM - Balkans

Financing agency and project value

Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) – CHF 4,998,310 (phase I)

Implementing Partners

HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation and University of Fribourg

Duration

January 2015 – December 2018 (phase I)

KOSOVO

THE DECENTRALISATION AND MUNICIPAL SUPPORT PROJECT (DEMOS)

The overall goal of DEMOS is to support Kosovo in its transition process towards a democratic, decentralised state. It supports municipalities to improve service delivery in waste, public space and mobility, and strengthens downward accountability and financial management processes. DEMOS also aims to contribute to an improved policy framework for local governance.

Highlights 2015

- ❖ Performance Based Grants for improved public services
The Performance Based Grants Scheme (PBGS) has been DEMOS flagship intervention in 2015. It incentivises Kosovan municipalities to improve efforts in public service provision, financial responsibility and democracy.
- ❖ Tailored support for municipalities
The project has supported Kosovan municipalities to address issues specific to each municipality such as registration and management of municipal assets. In addition DEMOS facilitated the process of using new tools to collect property tax and contributed to drafting 19 municipal plans on waste management, mobility and public spaces.
- ❖ Establishing a capacity development system
A feasibility study has identified options for the future institutionalization of a capacity development system for local civil servants and political elected representatives. The study provides insight in the designs of capacity development systems in similar countries in the region and elaborates the pros and cons of each option.



Financing agency and project value
Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) – CHF 10,794,945

Implementing organisation
HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation

Duration
July 2014 – December 2017 (phase I - succeeds LOGOS)

Enhancing Youth Employment (EYE)

EYE increases job opportunities for Kosovo youth by developing and matching their competencies with market needs. EYE promotes access to skills development services that meet the requirements of the private sector and facilitates job-seekers to gain better access to vacant positions and make informed decisions about their career paths. Focused private sector investments (in particular through an Opportunity Fund providing matching grants) seek to further stimulate job creation and increased employability.

Highlights 2015

- ❖ **Industrial Boards: linking academia and private sector**
The collaboration with seven new academic units has resulted in the establishment of Industrial Boards, essential consultative mechanisms between academia and private sector that will ensure teachings match labour market needs.
- ❖ **Highly performing job matching services**
Thanks to EYE, the private job-matching sector continues to grow, leading to a large increase in jobs advertised via job-portals. Where in the past these services were regarded as ineffective, nowadays a growing number of job-seekers rely on job-matching services. In the public sector, adoption of the performance measurement systems and internal training systems by the Public Employment Services has resulted in a doubling of the number of job vacancies advertised between 2014 and 2015, with the number of employed jobseekers through PES increasing from 4,667 to 6,612.
- ❖ **Broadening the portfolio**
EYE is now working in two new sectors: Traditional Sweet Producers as well as Wood Processing. Exciting new work is also being initiated with the media in order to increase the awareness of wider audiences about labour market issues.



Financing agency and project value

Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) – CHF 7,157,430

Implementing Organisations

HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation and MDA (Management Development Associates)

Duration

January 2013 – December 2016 (Phase I)

12 Our Projects in the Region

Skills for Rural Employment (S4RE)

The overall goal of Skills for Rural Employment (S4RE) is to increase income and employment opportunities for youth, in particular women and minorities, and rural households in the municipalities of the Sharr Mountains and the Southeast of Kosovo. The project addresses both the supply and demand sides of the labour market - stimulating local economic development (demand) and improving the skills of the local population (supply).

Highlights 2015

- ❖ Institutionalizing the learning group methodology
The significant results of applying S4RE's "learning group methodology" has prompted local institutions to take it up, thus providing sustainable support services to young job seekers. S4RE is therefore developing local institutional capacities and providing start-up support.
- ❖ Developing skill services
S4RE has successfully facilitated the improved integration of small producers, leading to higher productivity and quality of produce – and subsequently to higher incomes for farming households. Most importantly, many contracted services providers that have trained rural youth for the S4REs programme are now delivering skills development services independently
- ❖ Local investments in non-formal trainings
Businesses in the target municipalities have changed their perception regarding the need to invest into human resources. Many of them have invested own funds for non-formal training for existing and future employees, having observed the positive impact of such trainings on business performance.



Financing agency and project value

Medicor, Julius Baer Foundation and Helvetas - CHF 1,452,301 (phase 1)

Implementing organisations

HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation

Duration

Jan. 2013 - Dec. 2015 (phase 1)
Jan. 2016 – Dec. 2018 (phase 2)

MACEDONIA

The Nature Conservation Programme (NCP)

The programme aims to improve the conservation of nature in the eastern Bregalnica region of Macedonia, based on the principle of sustainable resource management while fostering socio-economic development. In order to achieve this goal, the framework conditions for natural conservation are improved through national and regional strategies and plans. Capacity of local authorities is built up and local projects implemented to support sustainable management of natural resources and the introduction of energy-saving technologies.

Highlights 2015

- ❖ Mapping the ecological treasures of Macedonia
A team of 30 experts has brought to light unknown natural treasures in the region and concrete data on the diversity of habitats, the cultural landscapes and species. Based on the collected data a network of protected areas for the entire region is now being proposed.
- ❖ Local projects for energy efficiency and natural resource management
NCP supported the implementation by civil society organisations and local municipalities of 33 small projects to promote sustainable resource management or introduce energy-saving technologies.
- ❖ Linking nature conservation with socio-economic development
Socio-economic development linked to natural resources is another key pillar of NCP. The outstanding beauty of Bregalnica's landscape is of high potential for tourism development, and thus socioeconomic development. This is why NCP supported the elaboration of a comprehensive strategy for sustainable tourism and a related activity plan for the region.



Financing agency and project value

Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) – CHF 4,800,000

Implementing Organisations

Farmahem with secondment of International Team-leader from HELVETAS

Duration

November 2012 – December 2016 (phase I)

ARMENIA

Markets for Meghri (M4M)

HELVETAS provides technical advice to the Markets for Meghri (M4M) project which is funded by SDC and implemented by CARD. The project contributes to a lasting economic development and poverty alleviation in the Meghri region. The project is working with different actors of the horticulture sector, from farmers to traders and service providers, in order to increase the income of poor fruit farmers.

Highlights 2015

❖ **Rehabilitating and expanding irrigation**
M4M cooperated with IFAD in rehabilitating and expanding irrigation canals in Meghri. Around 45% of Meghri's agricultural land is not cultivated, mainly due to the absence of irrigation. With the schemes currently under construction, more than 2/3rd of the fallow land will come under production. 470 households or roughly 30% of all target households will benefit from this development.

❖ **Early cherry varieties as new cash crop**
A very promising innovation has been the introduction of early cherry varieties, which fetch very high prices because of the time window during which cherries can be supplied into markets. For example, only 10 mature cherry trees provide an income that is 20 times higher than the current average household income from horticulture in Meghri.

❖ **International exchanges**
M4M undertook study tours with farmers and traders to Israel and Turkey, learning in particular practices related to orchard management and dried fruit production.



Financing agency and project value

Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) – CHF 3,510,000

Implementing organisation

Centre for Agribusiness and Rural Development (CARD) with backstopping support from HELVETAS

Duration

December 2012 – November 2016 (phase II)

GEORGIA

Market opportunities for Livelihood Improvement (MOLI)

The main objective of MOLI is to strengthen the livestock market system (dairy production and meat) by supporting small businesses such as dairies, village based feed mills, machinery service providers and veterinary pharmacies. The interventions focus on connecting farmers with businesses that can provide the necessary inputs, services and advice to increase their production and gain better income.

Highlights 2015

❖ Improved inputs and services for livestock farmers
Partnering feed mills have successfully diversified their business operations, providing essential feed services and inputs to pig and cattle farmers, reaching close to 2,000 farmer families. Furthermore, through their veterinary technicians, veterinary pharmacies operating in three districts of Kakheti provided services to 42 nakhiris (traditional informal herding groups). More than 750 members of nakhiris, benefited from improved veterinary services, including prophylactic treatments. The provision of embedded services is now also being taken up by local dairies that have improved their business practices and increased their engagement with farmers.

❖ Improving fodder crops
Machinery Service Providers (MSPs) reformed their business strategies and are supporting more than 1,000 small farmer families on improving the production of fodder crops.



Financing agency and project value

Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) – CHF 4,000,000 (phase I)

Implementing Organisations

Phase I: HEKS/EPER with backstopping support and secondment of International Team leader from HELVETAS
Phase II: HEKS/EPER

Duration

November 2011 – November 2015 (phase I)

THEMATIC FOCUS:

Gender and Social Equity

Analysis of different systems and experience of working in diverse countries tend to show that economic poverty is strongly correlated with being socially disadvantaged. A woman is more likely to be discriminated or isolated, so is a person belonging to a minority ethnic group, practicing a minority religion, or someone of a young or old age. Living in a geographically isolated region or having physical or health challenges tends to increase economic and social exclusion. It is for these reasons that gender equality and social equity is a cross-cutting theme in our organisation.

The cases presented in this annual brief demonstrate three interrelated strategies and experiences of addressing core problems, or enhancing good practices in gender and social equity. First, sustainable and large-scale solutions require building the “business case”. This goes beyond arguing for the moral imperative of inclusion – that is, ensuring gender and social equity is more than the right thing to do. Greater innovation and creativity that benefits everyone in a society comes from increased diversity. For example, the ‘gender dividend’ is considered a potential opportunity for economic growth that comes from an increase in women’s labour force participation. There is growing evidence supporting such a positive linkage.

Second, successful interventions towards improved gender and social equity necessitate better understanding of root causes that inhibit women and men from participating and benefiting in social, economic and political arenas. Effective targeting of poor and disadvantaged women and men is possible when strategies are based on local poverty dynamics and address real needs and potentials. Moreover, better results can be achieved when strategies take into account the ability and aspiration of poor and disadvantaged women and men to make their own effective choices and to transform these into desired outcomes.

Third, there is no denying that economic, political and social inclusiveness is fundamental to achieving healthy, stable and prosperous societies. Inclusiveness is primarily about poor and disadvantaged women and men. Yet this requires working with a range of actors – from public institutions to the private sector and civil society. An improved enabling environment requires engaging policy makers and influencers, as successful development is about a “package of overlapping mechanisms that progressively enable the exercise of a growing range of freedoms”. Innovation and investment from private enterprises drive growth.



“I’m extremely happy with our hairdressing business. The sales during the first summer season even exceeded our expectations. Being the only source of income in my family, this achievement gives me strength and encourages me to endure challenges, so I can offer a better life to my children,” says Minire, a very energetic and strong woman from Kosovo who participated in S4RE’s training programme.

THE BUSINESS CASE FOR WOMEN – WHY A GENDER-DIVERSE WORKFORCE MAKES BUSINESSES STRONGER

The three youth employment projects EYE, Market-Makers and RisiAlbania advocate for greater female inclusion in the workforce by promoting the “business case for women”. Rather than just focusing on why gender-diversity is the right thing to do, they focus on why it is also the smart thing to do.

If women were fully included in the labour market, USD 28 trillion (or 26%) could be added to global annual GDP by 2025 alone. This is just one staggering figure that illustrates what more and more research corroborates: gender-diversity is good for business. Indeed, a more gender-diverse workforce improves innovation, efficiency and productivity, enhancing the performance of businesses significantly¹.

One way of approaching this topic is through mainstream media. RisiAlbania, for instance, is working with large national media in TV, print, radio and online, to ensure that media messages convey positive images of women in ‘atypical’ professions to their audiences. The project seeks to offer a counter-narrative to gender stereotyping that leads to occupational segregation and limits choices and opportunities for young women. It also limits business performance!

In the Balkans, women are often more highly educated than men. So, why waste this talent pool?

The EYE project in Kosovo has developed a HR strategy programme to help companies strengthen their hiring procedures. One of the programme’s conditions requires companies to pay more attention to attracting female candidates during recruitment processes. Arben Avdiu, the CEO of Arizona Partner, a bookkeeping outsourcing company, states that through this process he was able to hire more highly qualified (female) employees: “I realised that my company was missing out from having reliable, committed and detail-oriented staff”. Arben filled two key managerial positions with women. He is convinced that a more diverse workforce will have a positive effect on the company’s bottom line.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, MarketMakers explores ways to encourage more women to choose IT as a career option. IT companies seek diversity in the workforce. However, they are also often unaware of the biases and social constraints that women face in male-dominated industries. In a recent workshop on the topic, a female participant explained how she consciously avoids work-dinners with male clients as women are generally expected to be at home in the evenings. She only schedules lunches with clients. Making employers more aware of how women have to navigate societal expectations and pressures is imperative to realising a diverse workforce. This fosters creativity and innovation, and ultimately helps a company develop better quality products.

The youth employment projects have just started to scratch the surface of how to encourage greater gender-diversity in the workplace. Feedback from partner companies on the topic is highly encouraging. There is still a big gender-biased challenge in the Balkans. The business case for women requires more innovative and successful cases. It also requires systematic monitoring and documentation/sharing of such cases to stimulate

participation by additional actors for large-scale changes.

Projects are funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)



Pezana is a young female carpentry business owner. The largest customer and user segment of her products are woman. She therefore needs to understand their preferences to design products that are commercially viable – hiring female staff who understand the customers does exactly that. In “Drejt Punës” (Towards Work), Albania’s first ever newspaper supplement dedicated to employment issues, she explains why more female carpenters makes business sense: “In the beginning I never thought that the work I am doing would draw people’s attention, but soon I understood that it was considered odd for a girl to do work that is still considered “masculine”. In terms of capacities I think there are no differences between a man and a woman doing such a job. And I hope over time the example of our company will attract more women to work in jobs like carpentry.”

1. McKinsey Global Institute Report, <http://www.mckinsey.com/global-themes/employment-and-growth/how-advancing-womens-equality-can-add-12-trillion-to-global-growth>, September 2015



ALBANIA: WOMEN IN POLITICS - WORKING ACROSS PARTY LINES

Support for women in politics is something encouraged in all HELVETAS local governance projects. Yet what is different in Albania is the way the dldp project decided to work directly with all the different political parties. The project facilitates women's political engagement through a Women in Politics Network (WiPN). Dldp works in all the regions in the north of Albania. Much of this part of the country is very rural and conservative; men dominate public office, and political representation is carved out along essentially clan-based lines. Stark, polarised differences exist between the two major parties. This all makes for significant

social barriers to women being elected as politicians – barriers that were not overcome by an amendment to the electoral code in 2008 stating that 1 in every 3 candidates should be of the other gender – that is (since men always dominate), a woman. The amendment did, however, encourage more women to stand for election in Albania overall; thus in parliamentary elections in 2009, women made up 31.9% of candidates, and 16.4% of those elected – against a previous 6.4%.

The WiPN came into being prior to local elections in 2011, and strove to encourage women to stand for election as well as building their capacities in public speaking and relevant knowledge. Activities included linking with international actors such as UN Women and the OSCE; study tours to other projects in the region; and, for a lucky seven, support to attend formal training at the Albanian Academy of Political Sciences. One important principle stressed in this respect was, and is, neutrality – with equitable opportunities for women of different political parties.

From capacity building, activities expanded to networking – creating regional and local forums of politically interested women and supportive men. One member of the Municipal Council of Durrës, Jolanda Mustafaraj, is quoted as follows, “We came out of that Forum with a clear objective in our head: we should support each other in order to include as many women as possible in the lists of the candidates and cooperate with each other...” Various specific activities were devised to show how women politicians can make a difference. They included an awareness-raising campaign for women about breast and cervical cancer plus the provision of free screening (not regular practice in Albania); and the enrichment of school libraries with new books. Gender responsive budgeting was also introduced in the municipal council of Shkodër. According to Dave Rusta, member of the Municipality Council of Lezhë “Besides the awareness

campaign, we achieved another goal: the increase of our reputation as councillors in the community. We made people say: these women do things, they achieve what they say!”

Earlier this year, a new law on Territorial and Administrative Reform in Albania led to the number of municipalities being greatly reduced, from 374 to 61. One result in the June 2015 elections was far fewer available seats – and greatly increased pressure on would-be candidates. Although it had been expected that women would make considerable strides and gain 40% representation in municipal councils, the actual result was more mixed – some municipalities surpassed the 40% mark, and others failed to reach it. This has apparently only confirmed WiPN members' commitment to capacity building and networking. In the words of Lindita Doda, member of the Municipal Council of Burrel, “The new administrative map and the new law on electoral quotas obliged us to include in the lists of candidates many women who have no previous experience in policy-making. The Network should work heavily with these women once [they are] councillors, because they will soon face discussions and decision-making moments”.

The WiPN (which now covers about 30% of the population of Albania) has also established links with the (non-party political) Alliance of Parliamentary Women of the Albanian Parliament. This offers opportunities for joint initiatives in influencing policy at national level. Cases of women politicians of different political beliefs working together for a common cause exist elsewhere – but doing so in such a systematic cross-party manner is exceptional. The WiPN is a concept worth spreading.

The project is funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)

Spotlight on: Job matching in Kosovo - how technical changes lead to behavioural changes

As part of the mission of Kosovo's "Enhancing Youth Employment" (EYE) project to support youth employment, improving the performance of job matching services is a core intervention area. The objective is to ensure steady growth through diversifying and marketing services to both employers and job seekers. Three years after the intervention started, the project has been successful not only in improving the offer of private job matching services but also in significantly increasing the use of these services by businesses and job-seekers.

The results demonstrate the increased interest of both young unemployed women and men and private employers in actively using professional job matching services.

Private job-matching providers, such as KosovaJob and PortalPune, continue to diversify their services to clients, from recruiting to providing specific tailored-made trainings demanded by the private sector. They have now expanded their services throughout Kosovo and in regional and international market. They have adopted "state of the art" technological innovations to support business development and growth.

The results are not confined to quantitative changes; they also include behavioural changes of market players. There is a shift towards recruitment and other value added human resource development services; many more companies are buying more sophisticated recruitment and human resource services. This behaviour was not evident before because providers mostly offered simple services, such as job posting and advertisements. Behavioural changes in job seekers include trained job seekers, who have paid for training, transferring soft skills

to other job seekers. Job seekers are more willing to pay for soft skills trainings; a testimony to their value. The public sector has not been blind to these changes and has now formally recognised the role of the private sector in the provision of job matching and other employment services. For example, the public sector is collaborating with private providers on the development of multimedia training and guidance platforms. Other behavioural changes in the market system include the willingness of public and private media to broadcast programs relating to the job market, targeted at job seekers and employers.

Behavioural and practical changes are critical elements that offer opportunities for the project to explore. Looking at behavioural changes provides a rich, detailed picture about why actors act in certain ways, and their feelings about these actions. Not effectively analysing and using qualitative data may lead to 'ignoring vital signals', ultimately limiting the impact a project can achieve.

The project is funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)



Impressive growth of job matching services

- Job vacancies advertised annually increased from 10,000 in 2012 to 18,000 in 2015.
- In 2012, job portals had just over 490,000 times, growing to 1.5 million in 2015.
- Job matching service providers have increased their revenues threefold from 2012 to 2015.

THEMATIC FOCUS:

Partnerships and Capacity Development

Goal 17 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) concerns revitalising the global partnership for sustainable development. This envisages building and strengthening inclusive partnerships that include principles and values, and shared vision and goals at the global, regional, national and local levels.

The different projects presented in this Annual Brief work with a range of stakeholders. Some are co-facilitators supporting the projects in implementation of key interventions. Others are actors that have their own defined goals but are willing to and capable of joining hands with projects to achieve specific objectives. The partnerships are means to engage the different stakeholders – from primary stakeholder (targeted women and men) to funding and collaborative partners – based on mutual and strong commitment to take collective actions through defined roles and responsibilities.

The stories documented in this Annual Brief show that three critical factors are integral parts of forging partnerships that ensure sustainability and large-scale impacts.

- Sustainable results include not only durability beyond the life span of projects, but also ownership by initial and other partners. This, in turn, calls for building

networks and relationships for informed decisions, cooperative solutions, increased effectiveness and outreach, and knowledge sharing.

- Partnership is two-directional or mutual. Projects do not select partners with the sole objective of building their capacities. Partners are complementary in their capacities and offer learning opportunities to unleash, strengthen, create, adapt and maintain capacities over time.

- Partnerships are more than formal and material commitment. Projects seek partnership not merely because potential partners possess deeper local knowledge and are well rooted in the context. This is 'partnership by association' – it has a narrow focus and tends to be limited in its contribution to long-term impacts. Projects always seek to shift such partnership by association to 'strategic partnership'. This is built on trust, mutual respect, sharing of common interests and goals, and having clear roles and responsibilities. Areas for such collaborative partnership include thematic exchanges, trainings and workshops, exchange of learning and experience, and stimulation of further regional and international collaboration.



“The partnership with RisiAlbania has triggered a chain reaction: we are facing great challenges but also have enormous potential to bring lasting change for sustainable tourism in Albania. The dream we had since the beginning - to see young people in Albania passionately engaged in promoting the country and professionally building successful careers in the tourism industry - is now an objective that is becoming a daily reality”, says Ms Ardiola Alikoj – Exec. Director of the National Albanian Tourist Guide Association (NATGA)



Social sciences - PERFORM - Balkans

SERBIA: OWNERSHIP AND TRUST AS A PREREQUISITE FOR POSITIVE REFORMS

Social sciences have much to contribute to resolving the more complex social, economic and political problems of societies. The transition from a centrally planned, socialist system to an open society based on democratic values and institutions has been rather challenging for most of the countries in the Western Balkans. And while the potential for social sciences to support governments to manage complex reform processes is high, the practical contributions have been very limited. The reasons are manifold. A history of turbulent

relations with the political power has created a large gap between the social science community and the government. Subsequently, social sciences have experienced significant restrictions in terms of funding and few incentives exist for excellence.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development (MoESTD) in Serbia acknowledges the above conditions and is keen to invest in changing this situation. The objective is to ensure higher levels of excellence, accountability and relevance of the social sciences. MoESTD approached PERFORM with the request to facilitate the development of new bylaws that will regulate the funding of social sciences by the Ministry and will promote high quality research. The main objective was to develop a Rulebook for Financing Social Science Research Projects to be invited through public calls for the period 2016-2020.

In its interventions, dealing with and mediating between government and research institutions, PERFORM took on the role of a low-profile intermediary. The main challenge was to secure the participation of senior social science researchers and facilitate the development of ownership of the ownership and ultimately the building of trust. First, the project needed to have a good understanding of the systems and their stakeholders. Second, it was also necessary to have the ability to respond quickly to emerging opportunities. These were the two success factors for managing complex relationships. As clientelism continues to be pervasive, it is important that PERFORM, as a facilitator, adheres strictly to the principles of impartiality, objectivity and transparency.

PERFORM continues to be a low-profile facilitator in the newly created permanent Advisory Group for social sciences (the Group provides recommendations to the Ministry on rulings related to social sciences, such as the development of the Strategy of Science and Technology for 2016-2020). The formation of this Advisory Group is a clear indicator of increased trust between the two parties. By taking an active role in the reform process, the SSR community is more likely to take ownership of the reform agenda. The community will also help implement it, rather than putting up resistance, as often happened in the past. Recently, a high-ranking official of the Ministry and one of the representatives of the SSR community said: "I wish we had PERFORM for natural sciences as well!" While this expansion is not in the pipeline, the statement is certainly an encouraging sign of success for the continued collaboration. country.

The project is funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)



ICT Intervention - MarketMakers - BiH

BIH: REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCIES (RDAs) - SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS

MarketMakers in Bosnia and Herzegovina operates through a unique co-facilitation model: its partners in the implementation of the project are local Regional Development Agencies (RDAs). RDAs are organisations founded by the public, private and non-governmental sectors and represent the main economic regions of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Their objective is to support

economic regeneration, job creation and human resources and infrastructure development within their respective regions.

Part of MarketMakers' mandate is to motivate and develop the skills of these organisations to effectively implement Market Systems Development (MSD) initiatives . The reach of the project is not only significantly extended through its work with RDAs, but it also builds the foundation for more effective regional development activities in the future – well beyond the lifespan of the project.

Prior to becoming co-facilitators in the MarketMakers project, none of the RDAs had ever worked with a facilitative approach. Initially, there was a fair amount

of resistance to adopting a MSD approach by the RDA staff seconded to the project. The approach appeared overly research and analysis-intensive, with no quick-wins. Yet by 2015, all the research and reflection began to pay off: RDAs started to identify important market systems constraints and found partners who had the right interests, incentives and capacities to experiment with new and innovative business models. These positive results has led to changes in attitudes among RDAs.

In fact, NERDA (the RDA in the country's northeast) invited HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation to conduct a MSD training targeting staff currently not seconded to the project. All of NERDA's project managers as well as financial administrators have had an introductory MSD training, creating further understanding and support for MSD projects in the future. SERDA (the Sarajevo Economic Region Development Agency), the project's co-facilitator in the ICT sector, recently submitted a winning proposal for a multi-million agricultural project basing its entire implementation strategy on an MSD approach. This was initiated by two SERDA staff who had been seconded to MarketMakers.

These examples demonstrate how MSD is increasingly internalised by the RDAs. As a matter of fact, they are already preparing themselves to implement MSD projects in the future without the involvement of MarketMakers.

The project is funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)



KOSOVO: PERFORMANCE BASED GRANTS SCHEME TO BUILD CAPACITIES OF LOCAL MUNICIPALITIES

The Performance Based Grant Scheme (PBGS) is a new and promising tool to strengthen the capacities of local municipalities. With the help of financial incentives, plus some healthy competition, municipalities are encouraged to improve the provision of public services.

Like most local governments in Kosovo, the municipality of Peja/Peć, a mountainous area in the West of the country, has found it very difficult to collect taxes from

local citizens. Many municipalities are not considered very competent, because they are not providing basic public services (e.g. waste collection, traffic safety measures, etc.). As a result many citizens do not feel obliged to pay taxes. But things are slowly beginning to change in Peja/Peć and several other municipalities. Services have shown improvements and local tax income is starting to increase.

The DEMOS project implements the PBGS to help municipalities improve the system. The PBGS rewards municipalities for improving the quality of public services provided and municipal financial management and democratic decision-making. Municipalities that provide the best services, or make the biggest improvements in financial management of decision-making, receive the highest amount in grants. According to predefined performance indicators, Peja/Peć ranked as the

second most successful municipality in the 2015 PBGS competition. Apart from Peja/Peć, 16 other Kosovan municipalities that demonstrated improvements in reform implementation and better service provision took part in 2015's competition. The mayor of Peja/Peć, Mr. Gazmend Muhaxheri, believes the impact of the Grants Scheme has motivated municipal workers and the intensity of work in the municipality sectors and departments increased. The mayor worked hard to convince citizens to follow through with their financial commitments to the municipality. According to the statistics, citizens of Peja/Peć paid in 2015 around 50 percent of the total sum of property tax invoices. The mayor is confident that the tax collection will further improve as the number of paying citizens continues to increase.

Following frequent public meetings, citizens have gained a better understanding on how taxes are used and how individual citizens benefit from the paid taxes. "Along with my team, I focused our efforts to mobilise the community of Peja municipality. And I meet with citizens every Tuesday in my office", adds Muhaxheri. Peja municipality also digitalised the documentation of provided public services and made this information available to the public via the municipal website. While the mayor is uncertain if the positive steps in public service provision would have been taken if it weren't for the PBGS initiative, he appreciates the incentive that the PBGS offers and the collaboration with DEMOS, also with regards to technical support and capacity building that DEMOS provides to municipalities. The collaboration motivates and supports local institutions in Kosovo to design long-term strategies of good governance and implement the necessary reforms and decentralisation processes.

The project is funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)

Spotlight on: Albania's Integrated One -Stop Shops - supporting local governments' service delivery

The territorial reform that took place in 2014 in Albania comes with technical, political and cultural challenges for Albania. The integrated one-stop shop model promoted by dldp plays an important role in helping the 'transition' country to move from a post-centrally planned economy to a citizen-oriented society.

On 31st of July 2014, the Government of Albania approved the law on Territorial-Administrative Reform, (TAR). This landmark decision means that Albania is now administratively organised in only 61 Municipalities, instead of 384! The objective was to reduce the scope for corruption, foster a citizen-focused culture for public services, and reduce the time and cost of service delivery both for citizens and the government. This fundamentally changes how public services have to be provided. One solution to this issue is the creation of one-stop shops (OSSH) that bring public services closer to citizens. In essence, this means that it is now possible for residents to go to their local communal office and request one of many different types of public services (e.g. issuing birth certificates, building permits, family tax reduction, etc.) without having to go to the new and enlarged municipality. The requests are handled electronically thanks to the integrated OSSH model and customers receive their permits, licenses or certificates at their local commune.

The example of the new Kallmet-Lezha municipality, where dldp piloted the introduction of integrated one-stop-shops, is an excellent illustration of their impact on improved public services. The main challenge to

introducing the integrated OSSH was the distrust of the new administrations to new rules and procedures using a digitalised system. Lack of qualified staff and a paper-based work environment is persistent. The main results of the integrated OSSH in the Lezha municipality include improvements in the quality of service offered to citizens and greater time efficiency; and services are offered at reduced cost. The service provision also prevents corruption and contributes to the skills development of personnel at the municipality. Corruption, for example, is reduced because the integrated OSSH model avoids direct communication between citizens and the municipal administration. It is therefore not possible to influence a civil servant's behaviour through bribery.

The integrated OSSH project is a new concept of public services delivery and although its introduction

was complicated, the results and recognition for the integrated system came quickly: one-stop-shops have won over both local and national officials, to the extent that the Ministry of Innovation even selected the piloted project in Lezha and Kallmet to promote during the "Smart City" day in May 2015.

After the successful piloting in Lezha and Kallmet, the model is now being expanded to municipalities of the country. The government is not guiding the expansion process of the integrated OSSHs, yet it encourages other municipalities to also adapt or replicate the model. Based on this success, the national Government has invited dldp to participate in the legislative process for drafting the new law on public services.

The project is funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)



Integrated one-stop shop - dldp - Albania

THEMATIC FOCUS:

Knowledge Sharing and Learning

Projects in Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus are designed and implemented under the main guiding principle of HELVETAS and its organisational strategy on Knowledge and Learning 2015-2019.

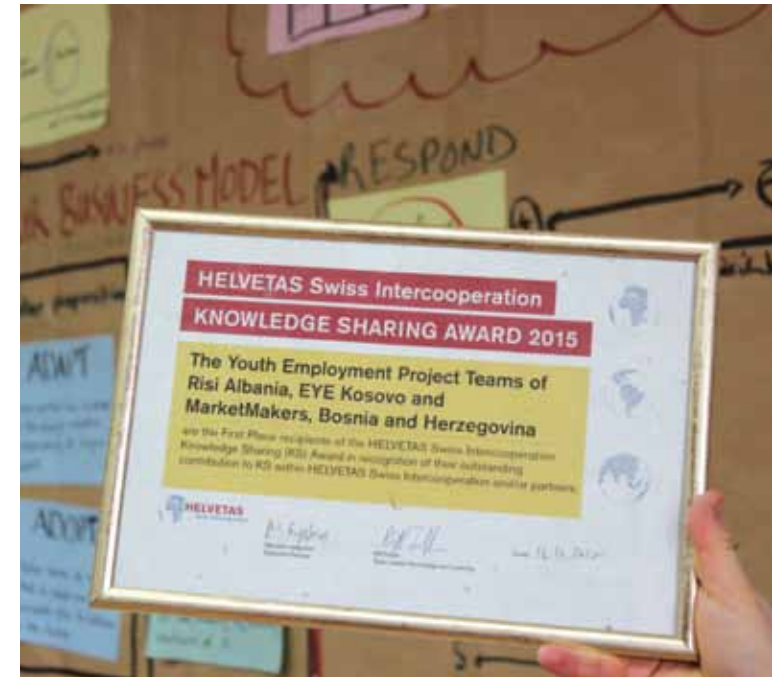
The knowledge sharing and learning experiences documented in this Annual Brief show that the process has been participatory for learning and development of improved “retrievable knowledge”. Projects often hold regional exchanges and events. The publication of the Annual Brief since 2015 as well as use of communication tools and cases have increased the culture of embracing mistakes, planning with different people from different background/experience, and linking knowledge and action.

Projects also use multiple levels and pathways to knowledge sharing, learning and innovation. The projects collaborate through peer-to-peer exchanges. They also use different sharing channels that range from one-to-one “mentoring relationships” to using knowledge platforms (e.g. blogs, webinars and conferences). At the organisational level, projects explore existing networks with other projects and initiatives for the purpose of creating flows of learning to a wider community. As such, the focus for projects is more than meeting targets in LogFrames;

it includes sharing relevant and good stories to multiple audiences (e.g. other projects, the Swiss public, the broader development community).

Four key takeaways from the experiences of the projects in knowledge sharing and learning include:

- Continuous, conscious efforts of each project and the Eastern Europe Unit (EEU) to improve conditions for effective knowledge sharing (e.g. promoting leadership such as “knowledge champions”; elaborating structures, roles and responsibilities; availing infrastructure such as online forum, IT tools and applications for project management);
- Common perspectives and frameworks developed and strengthened within the projects and the EEU that knowledge sharing must be inspired by a common vision that provides the “hook” around which to build a common language and momentum for knowledge sharing.
- The increasing recognition by the projects and the EEU that achieving success in addressing development challenges sustainably and in large-scale depends on effective knowledge sharing.



“The KS Award Committee 2015 has decided to grant the 1st place to the project teams of the Youth Employment Projects, Risi Albania, EYE Kosovo and MarketMakers Bosnia and Herzegovina for their impressive collaboration efforts and participatory processes for learning and further development of their projects.”



ICT Intervention - EYE - Kosovo

sectors. These are relatively unusual conditions that have undoubtedly helped the projects succeed in developing a high degree of knowledge sharing. Yet, these are not the only reasons for success. Other factors also contributed to such success that other projects and development organisations may be interested to learn.

The achievements are the result of a shared understanding that project team members can learn from each other's experiences and help each other develop more successful interventions. The latter is essential as knowledge sharing should not only help you develop your own capacities, but also have a direct effect on your project's results. For example, through sector-specific workshops and peer-to-peer exchanges (e.g. on MRM and preparations for mid-term reviews), projects learn how others are dealing with certain (shared) problems.

There are also periodic peer-exchange workshops to get to know each other and identify areas of collaboration. The workshops help increase exchanges of information through the intranet platform and, most importantly, to foster direct exchanges between the members of the different projects.

Extra efforts are needed to encourage knowledge sharing with other projects in the region and beyond. The YE projects are also becoming more mature and the results more complex and thought-provoking. This requires different forms of analysis and information-sharing (e.g. case studies, capitalisation reports). In order to reach out to wider audiences and share experiences with project in other regions, new tools such as webinars and global workshops will be used more frequently in the coming year.

LEARNING BY SHARING – HOW KNOWLEDGE SHARING HAS MADE OUR YOUTH EMPLOYMENT PROJECTS STRONGER

The region's projects know that they can learn a lot from each other. But like everywhere else, project staff have to run after the normal work activities, leaving too little time for reflection and sharing. The Youth Employment projects in Eastern Europe have however managed to build an effective "culture of knowledge sharing (KS) and learning". HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation recognised this achievement, awarding the projects the first prize of HELVETAS "Knowledge Sharing Award"!

So how have the projects succeeded in creating useful and practicable opportunities for sharing knowledge? And how has this strengthened the skills and techniques of project staff and ensured effectiveness of interventions?

The collaboration and knowledge sharing takes place on many different levels: projects use a regional KS strategy, they organize common events and joint trainings, they develop joint blogs and participate in webinars of KS platforms (Beam Exchange and YEO), they promote peer-to-peer-exchanges between the three countries and produce documents where they share lessons learned including case studies and the regional Annual Brief.

The projects started approximately at the same time, operate in close geographical vicinity and work in similar



ALBANIA: MASSIVE OPEN ON-LINE COURSES FOR AVANT-GARDE IT LEARNING.

One year. This is the average time it takes an Albanian IT company to train an IT graduate. There is a significant gap between the knowledge and skills of IT graduates in Albania and the industry's demands. The graduates do not have sufficient knowledge of the latest programming languages or the newest trends in application and software development. Because of the lack of skilled employees, Albanian IT companies are not able to access lucrative IT outsourcing markets, including the major EU market, where there is an estimated shortage of 250'000 skilled IT jobs!

The RisiAlbania project wants to ensure that young Albanian men and women are able to master the latest IT know-how to contribute to strengthening the IT sector in Albania. This can be done by harnessing the power of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs). MOOCs allow for the dissemination of the latest cutting-edge knowledge and skills at low cost, freely available to anyone with an internet connection, including people with a non-formal IT background.

To this effect, RisiAlbania has partnered with ALMOOC.com, a MOOC platform in Albanian launched by Real Visualz Foundation. The foundation aims to increase the number and quality IT professionals to meet the demands of Albanian and foreign IT companies. With Risi's support, ALMOOC has developed new courses, promoted them to the ICT community and increased the number of users in

a few months to almost 8000 (56% women). This is already leading to concrete job offers as freelancers or as full time employees. For example, over 20 students have been employed by Real Visualz Foundation itself. Erigers, 23, who recently finished ALMOOC courses and is now working full time for Real Visualz Foundation, is a great example of this.

"There are plenty of jobs for young people in the IT sector, but not many people have the right skills. ALMOOC is a unique platform for acquiring those skills, and therefore a great opportunity for those who want to be competitive in the market" – says Erigers.

He used to spend hours with computers as a child -mainly on games- until he discovered there was more to a PC than just gaming, and thus his interests shifted to programming. Computer Engineering was Erigers's choice when reaching the age for college. However, the knowledge acquired there was not sufficient to satisfy his thirst for the newest skills in ICT. Through the courses and events at ALMOOC.com, Erigers was exposed to the latest trends in the IT world. Even at a young age, he managed to take important steps forward in his career, thanks to the ALMOOC programme.

ALMOOC.com continues to offer a wide selection of free online courses, such as Node Js, Ruby on Rails, Java for Android. It will expand its range to more advanced level courses. ALMOOC also aspires to become a training tool used by IT companies for their on-the-job training. It is looking to host on their platform courses by other training providers, making online learning a state-of-the-art platform to meet the growing IT industry's demands.

The project is funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)



The methodology has evolved over time. From a learning-oriented programme, it now focuses more strongly on income and employment generation. Learning groups were subsequently re-defined as opportunity groups, increasing the appeal to youth and local stakeholders. In practice the entire programme strongly builds on existing local knowledge, organisation and social networks. The reliance on local resources significantly contributes to a positive impact in terms of ownership and proactive participation by the community.

The project is funded by Medicor, Julius Baer Foundation and Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation

KOSOVO: LEARNING GROUP METHODOLOGY – INCLUSION OF RURAL COMMUNITY

The Skills for Rural Employment (S4RE) project has been developed to address unemployment in rural Kosovo through better skills development and practical training. It targets an area and beneficiaries that are not sufficiently serviced by the formal vocational education and training system (VET).

To address issues of access to VET facilities, including distance, transport, social barriers and required level of education prior to VET enrolment, the project introduced the Learning Group methodology for the first time in Kosovo². It is based on the understanding that the owners of the problem are also the owners

of the solution. Unemployed youth and women are empowered to use their own resources, providing an opportunity for income generation to a large number of rural young women and men who are excluded from employment and income generation opportunities. Actors involved in the approach include local facilitators, municipal authorities, employment offices, youth and women organisations.

Ten to twenty young women and men come together in learning groups to connect their expectations to their potentials, learn and apply new technical, entrepreneurial and life skills. Locally available training providers impart the training content based on the background of the learning group members, context and local available market opportunities. A Learning Network created by the learning groups has helped group members to either become employed in the private sector, or to start an entrepreneurial activity in the form of self-employment.

Key success factors of the approach

- **Universal access:** skills development reaches people where they live and takes place on-site where the learners live, ensuring that access is not hindered by distance, financial or social restrictions.
- **Holistic approach:** youth not only acquires a diversified skill set in a short period of time, but also learn to use their own resources to become economically independent and socially empowered.
- **Acceptance by the local authorities and community to build cost-sharing model:** it is essential that the whole community and local authorities support the process and has a share in the skills development by providing resources such as land, tools and materials.

2. Learning Networks approach or LearnNet see U-learn project in Uganda and Tanzania implemented by Swisscontact

OUR PARTNERS & DONORS

HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation implements projects in Eastern Europe and South Caucasus on behalf of funders. We therefore express our deepest gratitude to those that have awarded us with a mandate and provided us the opportunity to make a difference.

Our projects are often implemented together with international and national partners. Complementary expertise and experience is key to successful implementation of development initiatives. We therefore thank our partners for their collaboration.

Within the frame of specific project interventions, HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation works together

with a multitude of national and international organisations, companies, service providers and consultants. Without the support from and ownership of these partners, we could not achieve the impact that we have. The list of names is exhaustive; we would therefore simply like to extend a big thank you for your collaboration in 2015 and look forward to work with you in 2016!



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Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

medicor foundation
Liechtenstein

Julius Bär

RIETER STIFTUNG



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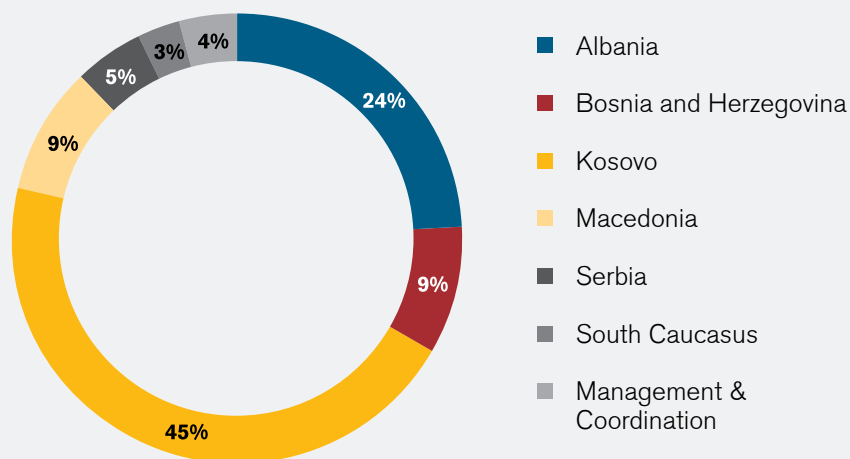
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FINANCIAL OVERVIEW FOR EASTERN EUROPE 2015

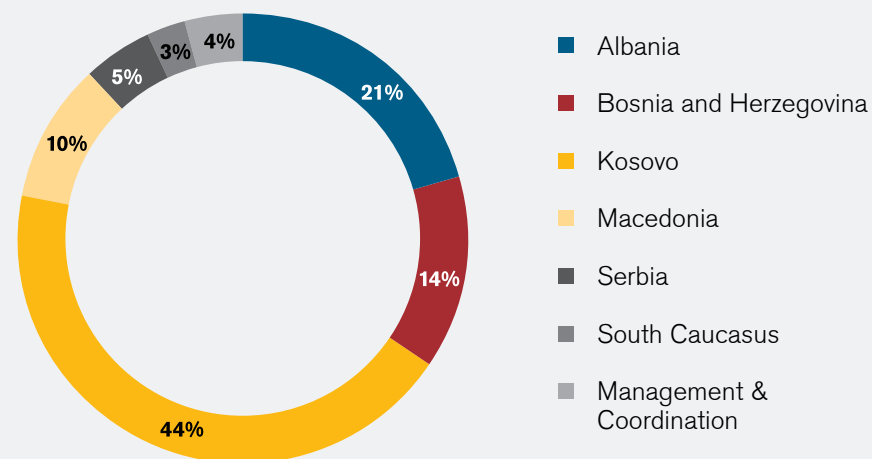
The overall expenditures of Helvetas in Eastern Europe in the year 2015 amounted to CHF 11.5 million against the approved budget of CHF 13.3 million. This sums up to an 88% budget execution, which is mainly a result of careful spending and the changing political contexts. The Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) continues to be the main donor in the Western Balkan as well as the South Caucasus (92% - all acquired mandates), followed by two foundations (Medicor and JuliusBaer - together 3.2%). 3.9% of the funds came from the organisation's own resources and was used for running the Programme Coordination in Kosovo and Head Office Switzerland.

The portfolio changed slightly in 2015 compared to 2014 with the opening of the newly acquired regional programme PERFROM (based in Serbia) and the phasing out of NOA in Kosovo, RDP in Albania and MOLLI in Georgia. The overall budget increased 33% from 2014 to 2015 mainly because of bigger annual budgets in most projects. Of the overall expenditure, approximately 21% are invested in the working area Rural Economy, 27% in Skills Development and Education, 39% in Governance and Peace, and 10% in Environment and Climate Change. KPMG audited the accounts and the financial statements on Head Office level and has approved them. All projects have been audited at country level by accredited audit firms who approved all their accounts.

Budget 2015
(Total CHF 13'023'324)



Expenses 2015
(Total CHF 11'491'200)





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