

TACSO BiH Report on Educational Cycle on Project Proposal Writing-towards domestic/local sources of funding based on using logical frame approach (EU application procedure)

Sarajevo, Banja Luka, Mostar, Tuzla, Pale/ Jahorina
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TACSO BiH Report on Educational Cycle on Project Proposal Writing-towards domestic/local sources of funding based on using logical frame approach (EU application procedure) was prepared based on TACSO BiH staff observations and presence without participation of the Educational Cycle but also on findings of the reports on the educational cycle sent by the engaged trainers.



I Overview of the Educational Cycle

According to the specific objectives of the educational cycle following outputs were produced through these activities:

- four two- day tailored made workshops according to the findings related to the each of four groups (10 CSOs per each group) were organized;
- 40 CSOs received initial feedback from the trainers on their rejected project proposals;
- 40 CSOs defined their log-frames (vertical logic, indicators, assumptions, source of verification) at the two-days workshop;
- 33 (which makes 82% of CSOs involved in the Educational cycle) CSOs received on-line mentoring, based on the already partly improved projects and their own commitment;
- 40 CSOs developed internal monitoring indicators system for their project;
- Tested model of having 2 participants per CSO at the workshop proved to be successful for two reasons:
 - a) project proposals were improved at the workshop through dialogue of the participants,
 - b) capacity of human resource- nucleus of CSOs' staff was improved.

The aim of the education cycle was to enhance project proposal writing skills of civil society organizations representatives located out of bigger centres in order to:

- increase the capacity of rural CSOs in understanding administrative and evaluation criteria for selection of applications;
- increase a number of small and rural CSOs to be able to diversify their fundraising portfolio.

Based on TACSO BiH Needs Assessment, municipalities in BiH are single largest source of funding of civil society. In synergy with LOD 2 project findings it was confirmed that capacity building should be tailored made for CSOs who apply for local sources of funding according to level of development and needs of CSOs. With organization of these events, TACSO BiH is approaching CSOs with both tailored coaching and mentoring after the educational events.

After announcing the Open Call, TACSO BiH has received 85 CSOs applications for participation at in the education cycle with requirement to have two representatives of single CSO attending two-day coaching workshops that served as a test model of human resource development/CSO management within the particular CSO. In the first series of the trainings, 80 representatives of 40 mostly rural civil society organisations from all over of Bosnia and Herzegovina were involved in the training.

Two short term experts/trainers engaged to conduct educational cycle were given following tasks:

- Assess the training needs, based on inputs from summaries of rejected projects received from CSOs;
- Design the training plan, tailor made to the needs of each group of participating CSOs;
- Develop the training material (handouts), annexed with the appropriate info documents;
- Deliver two, two-day training courses for 20 participants (10 CSOs);
- Provide online mentoring support to each and everyone, as to review project adjustments and advice on further improvements, where appropriate;
- Facilitate “lessons learned” one-day conference, with all 20 CSOs together;
- Report on findings, achievements and overall project results;
- Prepare Final Report, analytical and comprehensive, with related recommendations.

Educational cycle is based on TACSO Training manual ”Developing and Managing EU Funded Projects”.

II Design/ Structure of the Educational Cycle

Educational cycle was consisted of three phases:

a) Two Day Tailored made Training focused on logframe development

First part of the educational cycle referred to two day tailored made coaching workshop, based on inputs provided by the CSOs in their project summaries (with or without logframe matrix) sent within set of application documents. Requirement was to have two representatives per organization attending one of four workshops organised in Banja Luka, Tuzla, Mostar and Sarajevo. Based on project applications recently rejected by local donor, consultants got an overview and acquired basic understanding of each project proposals sent by CSOs and made initial analysis of possible causes for failure of the proposals.

Four two-day tailored made trainings were organized in four different towns for 80 representatives of 40 CSOs from all over Bosnia and Herzegovina divided by geographical regions Herzegovina, Northwest, Northeast and Central Bosnia:

- Banja Luka, February 20-21, 2012
- Tuzla, February 23-24, 2012
- Mostar, March 5-6, 2012
- Sarajevo, March 12-13, 2012



Two- day tailored made workshop – working group discussion



Two- day tailored made workshop- working groups discussion

By combining theory lectures, small groups discussions and analysis and direct feedback provided by the trainers, two- day workshops enabled participants to:

- improve knowledge and skills in PCM, focused on project idea development process;
- re- assess own project, using newly-gained knowledge and shared experience;
- test knowledge acquisition by assessment of the other participating CSO's project;
- improve presentation skills and ability to summarize and lessons learned.

After the training participants succeed to:

- Improve knowledge on PCM – overall methodology and the structure;
- Improve understanding of critical success/failure points in project ideas applications;

- Familiarize themselves with the process of project proposals evaluation as a tool in pro-active analysis during the process of own ideas development;
- Advance problem analysis techniques, understanding and importance of its relevance to the entire project.

During the course of the workshop, logframe was also presented to the participants, and the different levels and terminology discussed and where necessary, elaborated further in comparison to other donor descriptions of the same terms and meanings. The 'logic' of the logframe was discussed and the interrelationships that were developed in the analysis phase were described in relation to the different levels in the logframe.

All workshop participants were given hard copy of the TACSO Manual: "Developing and Managing EU Funded Projects".

b) Mentorship/ One to One Coaching

Second part of the educational cycle referred to the technical assistance (TA) provided through mentorship to selected CSOs. Focus of the assistance was on addressing specific needs of each CSO involved (preparation of OOPP in-house session, further work on specific segments of project proposals: problem statement, goal, results, source of verification etc). After two day tailored made training all CSOs representatives were asked to revise their project proposal based on trainers feedback and knowledge they gained during the training, and send them back to the trainers for further online commenting. Knowledge gained during the process is intended to be transferred to other members of CSO.

On-line mentoring related to the projects improvements, review and guidance was focused on:

- re-design of the projects based on coaching and the group work results at the workshop;
- communication in relation to re-designed project with the trainers;
- transfer of knowledge and sharing information within the CSO.

Out of 40 CSOs involved in two day training, 33 were sent revised project proposals to the trainers for online consultations. Trainers' observation was the projects received for further review greatly improved in comparison to the original versions while evident improvements were done in several aspects of existing project proposals: problem redefinition, goals, target groups, assumptions, writing style and size.

c) Final One Day Workshop focused on developing monitoring system

Final one-day workshop enabled participants to share lessons learned in structural manner on process and results of TA provided and develop monitoring indicators. One representative of each of 40 CSOs involved in the first two phases of the education cycle was invited to participate in the workshop. Workshop itself was divided into three parts: experience/lessons learned sharing and final feedback of the trainers, development of monitoring and SMART indicators and evaluation of the full education cycle based on *World Café* methodology.



VI Evaluation

Beside evaluation trainers conducted after each of the four two-day workshops, at the final one-day workshop, TACS BiH has organized final evaluation session of the education cycle based on *World Café* methodology. During the final interactive and highly participatory evaluation session, participants were asked to answer questions related to assessment of the following four aspects:

1. Methodology applied each of phases of the educational cycle,
2. Communication with trainers during the whole educational cycle,
3. Results achieved during the educational cycle,
4. Logistic and organization of all phases of the educational cycle.

Results- Participants evaluated four questions within this area:

- a) Level of improvement of project proposal- on the scale from minimum, enough to maximum, 59% of the participants estimated that they managed enough to improve their project proposal while 41% did it to the maximal level.
- b) Filed of improvement- Majority of participants made improvement in area of goals definition and budgeting but also in logframe preparation, definition of target groups, result and development of indicators.
- c) Level of improvement of skill for project proposal writing- on the scale from minimum, enough to maximum, 72% of the participants estimated that they managed enough to improve their project proposal writing skills while 28% did it to the maximal level.
- d) Source of funding improved project proposal will be sent to:
 1. municipal level (20 PP)
 2. cantonal level (14 PP)
 3. entity level (6 PP)
 4. state level (12 PP)
 5. EU (5 PP)
 6. Other donors (15 PP)

Logistic- Over 95% participants estimated logistical organization of the educational cycle, including communication with TACSO BiH, as excellent.

Communication- Participants were inclined that appropriate amount of time was dedicated to the process of improvement and correction of project proposals followed with interactive and suitable way of communication with trainers. In relation to the time dedicated to process of improvement, some participants stated that the first group that commenced the work before other three had slight advantage in this regard. Trainers' feedbacks and comments on project proposals were evaluated as clear, constructive, concrete and focused on the issue. In addition, they were applicable, received in timely manner and followed with practical examples and clear guidelines that helped participants to identify real issues and space for improvement.

Participant's feedback:

"Great, feedback information was clear and concrete, now I do know exactly where improvement should be made. I even have got practical example. In any case, it was of great help."

Methodology – Estimating structure of the educational cycle evaluation results showed that majority of participants considered three phases of the cycle to be well structured, efficient and effective, equally enabling participants to improve their skills and project proposals.

Participant's feedback:

"I do believe that it is more useful to work on individual project proposals as it is easier to notice weaknesses to be improved."



Interactive evaluation sessions

V Trainers' feedback and recommendations

According to the feedback received by the trainers following was stressed:

- participants welcomed the approach applied in the educational cycle;
- there is a lack of strategic planning and approach within most of the CSOs involved in the educational cycle;
- CSOs involved need continuous valid info supply, related to the project ideas development and application;
- CSOs involved need further support in own capacities development, to the extent of becoming the resource center in individual core activity (environment, lobbying and advocacy, youth, women, disabled children, poverty reduction).

It was recommended that following steps would further develop good quality project proposals of small/rural CSOs:

- a) potential partners searching/ matching events in the local communities;
- b) well developed database with data for Baseline studies.

Some participants repeatedly expressed interest in having a separate training on project idea development, which should include much more elements from the very beginning, like: monitoring plan, data collection plan, management plan, development of multistage projects, aimed at long-term implementation and graduate funding.