



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

ARMENIA

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

Date: August 26, 2013
Subject: Request for Information RFI-111-13-000001
Title: USAID/Armenia Advanced Civil Society for Accountable Governance Program, Draft Program Description for Comments

Dear Sir/Madam:

The United States Government, represented by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), Armenia, is seeking comments and/or questions on the attached Draft Program Description for Advanced Civil Society for Accountable Governance Program. These comments will be helpful as we finalize this program description.

Responses to this request for comment are not binding on the U.S. Government and do not obligate USAID to issue a Funding Opportunity, nor does it commit USAID to pay any cost incurred in the preparation and submission of comments.

The deadline for receipt of comments and/or questions is September 9, 2013 at 15:00, Yerevan time, and shall be submitted to Narine Sarkisian, Acquisition and Assistance Specialist, at nsarkisian@usaid.gov and Armen Yeghiazarian, Acquisition and Assistance Specialist, at ayeghiazarian@usaid.gov.

Thank you for your interest in USAID activities.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Chappell
Regional Agreement Officer

Advanced Civil Society for Accountable Governance Program

Draft Program Description for Comments

I. Overview and Purpose

USAID/Armenia intends to award up to three cooperative agreements for civil society-led programs aimed at strengthening civil society engagement in and oversight of selected, high priority reforms implemented by the Government of Armenia (GOAM). This Program Description is based on GOAM's expression of interest in USAID's assistance for implementation of the USAID/GOAM draft Development Objective Cooperation Agreement (DOAG) commitments (to be signed) and is designed to complement the GOAM's reform goals as described in Armenian Development Strategy (ADS) for 2012-2015. The results of this program will contribute to USAID/Armenia's draft Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) for 2013-2017 goal: "A more engaged, prosperous and well-governed Armenian society." The overall objective of this program is to ensure that key government reforms reflect the interest and needs of Armenian citizens and other stakeholders, citizens are engaged in the reforms process, and civil society can hold the responsible government institutions accountable for implementation of these reforms.

To meet this objective USAID/Armenia is expected to fund up to three Civil Society programs in three policy reform areas, namely decentralization, transparency and accountability, and social sector. Each program will be implemented by a consortium of civil society organizations for a period of up to five years with an approximate budget of \$3.5 million per consortium. While each consortium will pursue common results related to citizen engagement, advocacy, access to information and sustainability of the sector, the activities and approaches may be different due to the nature of the reform on which the consortium is focused. Each consortium, while expected to cooperate with the other two, where appropriate, will focus on one reform area.

By focusing attention around the reform areas civil society actors will develop more sustainable capacity to (1) engage citizens and articulate their interests, (2) monitor government institutions, officials and policy reform processes, and (3) increase citizen access to independent and reliable information about selected reforms. In addition, the program will promote civil society-led initiatives to strengthen and sustain the CSO sector by advocating for improvements to the legal enabling environment and promoting transparency within the sector.

By awarding these programs directly to Armenian civil society organizations, USAID hopes to develop the capacity and leadership of civil society to continue to advocate on behalf of civil society long after USAID funding ends.

II. Background

A. Democracy and Governance Challenge

Armenia's post-Soviet transition to a democratic state has largely come to a standstill and political power remains concentrated in the hands of a ruling elite linked closely with oligarchs. The corrosive effects of corruption pervade every aspect of society and impede economic and

political reforms. The imbalance of power that exists between the Executive and other branches of government, between the political and economic elite and the rest of the populations, between the parties of government and those in opposition, and between central and local government, contributes to the lack of recent advances in democratic development.

Marginalization of citizens from policy-making and politics, insufficient access to reliable information represent significant obstacles that stem from an underlying issue – the concentration of power. The Armenian Constitution and laws establish a set of checks and balances within the political system, but these do not operate effectively. According to Caucasus Barometer surveys, a clear majority of Armenians do not consider the existing regime to be democratic. But while most Armenians state a belief in democracy as the preferred political system, further analysis of data reveals that citizens' expectations for democracy are strongly associated with a higher level of economic development, better social protection and accountable and transparent governance which in its turn will lead to and be associated with democracy.

B. New opportunities

To address the deficiencies of the system the GOAM set new targets and areas for reform in the 2012-2015 ADS and has explicitly requested USAID technical assistance in advancing pension, local governance, and e-governance reforms. Currently USAID/Armenia is negotiating a Development Objective Cooperation Agreement (DOAG) with the Government of Armenia. The draft DOAG reflects mutual priorities for USAID and GOAM and includes GOAM commitments to reforms which will serve as conditions for receiving assistance.

In the ADS, the GOAM provides targets for governance according to the dimensions within the World Bank's government effectiveness indicators. While trends have been declining in all dimensions since 2008, the largest gaps between rank and targets are in voice and accountability and control of corruption. With the goal to sign an Association Agreement with the EU by 2017, the GOAM has set targets which are equal to the average indicators for Eastern European states and committed to achieve these indicators. Taking the advantage of this and other commitments by the GOAM the Advanced Civil Society for Accountable Governance Program will create opportunities for citizens and civil society to engage in and monitor the reform process, as well as create pressure on the GOAM to advance the reform thus contributing to the improvement of voice and accountability indicators.

With the ratification of DOAG the GOAM will also commit to improving the enabling environment for CSO operations, which in its turn will boost independence, financial viability and overall sustainability of civil society organizations.

C. Armenian Civil Society Sector: Openings and Challenges

Despite the overall stagnation of democratic reforms, the capacity of civil society is faring relatively well and much better than in several other former Soviet countries. Starting from a very weak base in 1991, there has been a steady growth in the number of non-governmental organizations. The sector now consists of around 4,500 registered organizations (including public organizations, foundations and unions), though only 15 to 20 percent are estimated to be

active¹. CSOs, for instance, have organized a number of successful advocacy campaigns related to the environment, domestic violence and other issues. Organizational capacity is improving within a small (but important) subset of larger CSOs as donors, including USAID, place greater emphasis on civil society organizational capacity support. Armenian CSOs are permitted to operate with relative ease, although they do not generally yield the power or influence to be an effective check on the executive branch. The GOAM, including the Prime Minister Sarkisyan, publicly acknowledges the increasing role and impact of civil society groups and citizens in policy decision making and monitoring of government's work.

CSOs face a number of challenges that limit their effectiveness and long-term sustainability. Long-discussed changes to the CSO legal framework were not yet adopted in 2012 despite CSOs being more actively involved in steps to improve legislation and continued close collaboration with Government bodies. CSOs are mostly fragmented, heavily donor dependent, and not widely seen as representative of the public interest. The image of CSOs is generally low among both the public and government officials. Research conducted by ICHD concludes that there is a lack of mutual trust between government and CSOs.² According to the study, CSOs believe that the government discourages and marginalizes their involvement in the policy making cycle, and the government claims that some CSOs lack the necessary expertise to constructively engage in this process. That said, there are examples of successful engagement in which the government realizes the expertise NGOs can bring to enhancing service delivery and policy formulation.

The challenges that limit civil society's effectiveness in policy development process can be summed up as follows:

- Many CSOs continue to rely heavily (or solely) on the funding of external donors and are accountable more to those funders and not to their beneficiaries or to Armenian citizens.
- Government actors do not view CSOs, particularly those advancing democratic reforms, as powerful actors or major stakeholders, let alone legitimate representatives of powerful constituency groups which could hold them to account.
- CSOs often jump from one issue to another (often in response to donor priorities) and do not have the chance to deepen their expertise in a particular area.
- Citizens are often reluctant to engage in civic activities, either because they do not understand their role in civil society, politicization of some CSOs, confusion about how to affect change and a belief that their effort will have no impact.

Persistent weaknesses in the enabling environment, particularly those restrictions affecting financial viability, further exacerbate the problems mentioned above.

¹ USAID Civil Society Sustainability Index for Europe and Eurasia, June 2013.

² USAID Civil Society Sustainability Index for Europe and Eurasia, June 2012.

III. Relationship of the Advanced Civil Society for Accountable Governance Program to the Draft USAID's Strategy

A. USAID's Strategic Approach to Democracy and Governance in Armenia

The stated vision of USAID/Armenia's draft CDCS is "a government in which power is more evenly distributed, governance is responsive to citizens' concerns, more democratic governance has taken hold especially at the local level, and the incidence and perception of corruption are declining." To achieve this vision, USAID has developed a Results Framework to achieve the *Development Objective: More participatory, effective and accountable governance*. More accountable, participatory and effective governance is critical to ensuring a well-governed Armenia in which progress, stability and more equitable prosperity are sustained over a long term.

USAID/Armenia's strategic approach to achieving the Development Objective (DO) in democracy and governance entails targeting areas where agreement for reform, in broad outlines has already emerged between civil society and the government, including decentralization, social sector and accountability and transparency reforms.

Employing a democratic and participatory approach to advancing reform across sectors, the impact of USAID's interventions will permeate the entire portfolio and not be limited to traditional areas. Working more collaboratively with the government in select reform areas, USAID will employ a "learning by doing" approach using the reform areas as tools to develop and reinforce a set of key competencies, institutions, and practices within civil society and the government. Civil society and the media have vital roles to play in ensuring government effectiveness in reform as advocates and watchdogs while also promoting the government's own capacity to monitor its progress toward reform. Through this collaborative approach, civil society will gain a sense of accomplishment as reforms progress, transparency increases and efficiencies are gained; while the government will gain valuable input, legitimacy, and support in realizing reforms while mitigating corruption.

Citizens and civil society institutions are critical to ensuring that there is a competition of ideas and mechanisms for debate of public policy, and to the success of a bottom-up inclusive, participatory approach to democratic development. Thus, the purpose of this activity is to enlarge the nexus in which government reform and citizen engagement meet, paying special attention to supporting youth and women to play a greater role in civic and political life. Demand for good governance and civic engagement will be strengthened by the momentum gained in reform and working in rural areas that can benefit most from increased representation. USAID will support the GOAM in effective implementation and monitoring of reforms and with the civil society to improve participation, transparency and accountability.

B. The Draft Results Framework



The civil society consortia will make a direct contribution to Intermediate Result (IR) 2.1 and its sub-IRs in USAID’s draft Democracy and Governance Strategy shown in the Strategic Framework above. By involving civil society in transparency and accountability, decentralization and local governance, and social service sector reform, there will be greater civic engagement and oversight of reforms. In addition, when combined with greater capacity and motivation on the part of government, governance in Armenia will become more participatory, effective and transparent.

IV. Principles Underlying the Program

Principles underlying the strategic and operational approach of this program and the proposed interventions include the following:

- A. Local leadership and ownership:** Local CSOs and other stakeholders will take ownership of the project from the outset to achieve and ensure the sustainability of project outcomes. Leadership involves an interest and capacity to engage multiple stakeholders and facilitate the development of a common agenda in respective reform. However local leadership does not mean that the consortium members can not include international organizations or networks in their program.
- B. Cooperation and networking among multiple stakeholders at multiple levels of society:** To ensure sustained change, multiple stakeholders, including civil society, government, and the private sector, among others, will work together at multiple levels. Cooperation involves working together over a sustained period to jointly identify problems and potential solutions and to actually work together to bring change. It also requires engagement with a broader network of citizens and CSOs beyond formal

members of the consortium and linkages between civil society in Yerevan and the regions/rural areas.

C. Emphasis on results that track accountability: Civic monitoring and evaluation mechanisms need to be in place to encourage accountability and to incentivize local partners' interest in understanding how their efforts are viewed by fellow citizens, beneficiaries and other local stakeholders, and in being able to track the actual impact of their efforts.

D. Sustainability: While the above principles will enhance sustainability, it is important to note that other strategies and approaches to strengthen sustainability will need to be integrated into every aspect of the program. Sustainability will be viewed as a multi-dimensional concept that includes financial viability, institutional and political incentives, attitudes about civil society and government, among other dimensions.

V. Detailed Program Description

As noted in the introduction, USAID expects to fund three consortia – one for each of the policy reform areas targeted. Each consortium will work toward common objective of increasing civic engagement and oversight of selected government reforms. However, USAID anticipates that each program will be different depending on the policy reform area. Specific information on each policy reform area is provided below followed by a narrative of the intended common results for all three consortia.

Civil Society Consortium 1: Decentralization and Local Governance

The focus of the Civil Society Consortium for Decentralization and Local Governance is to increase civic engagement and oversight of decentralization policy reform at both the national and local levels.

With over 900 municipalities, which vary greatly in population size, Armenia faces significant challenges in administering regional development. Findings of recent project evaluations demonstrate that the local level provides the greatest opportunity for improving political processes. Further decentralization will also provide the opportunity for better civic representation where marginalization is the greatest. Increased accountability and performance is a part of this process, along with the improved capacity to monitor, regulate and evaluate progress. The ability of civil society to hold local governments accountable is a critical factor in the success of decentralization reforms.

The program will mobilize citizens and insert their voice in the decentralization policy development process by disseminating independent and reliable information about decentralization, engaging citizens in public dialogue on the framework for decentralization reform, conducting monitoring and oversight of the reform process and progress, and strengthening civil society advocacy and oversight role at the local level. The consortium will also promote greater participation at the municipal and community level and oversight of local government performance and budget processes and promote accountability of decision makers to citizens. By giving citizens a voice in decentralization reform, there will be greater civic engagement and government accountability. In cooperation with the other consortia, the

program will also work towards sustainability of the CSO sector by working to improve the CSO enabling environment and promote greater transparency and accountability of CSOs to the public.

Civil Society Consortium 2: Social Sector Reforms

The focus of the Civil Society Consortia for Social Sector Reforms is to increase civic engagement and oversight of targeted social sector reforms at the national and local levels.

The overarching goal of DG involvement in social sector systems reform is to maximize the Mission's investment in pension reform implementation, integration of social services, and support to persons with disabilities in a way that will complement the other aspects of the new strategy, which focus on decentralization and anticorruption. USAID will support the Government to manage social services and social insurance systems better and to improve further the capacity to target social assistance benefits to the most vulnerable groups. Statistics from 2011 show that approximately 35 percent of Armenia's population live in poverty. Recognizing the need to protect poor and vulnerable groups, the Government has initiated a range of actions aimed at increasing efficiency and sustainability of social protection system such as pension reform, reforms related to protection of persons with disabilities and reform of the overall system of provision of social services. So far most information about social sector reforms has been generated by the government.

The Civil Society Consortium for Social Sector Reforms will engage citizens in reforms aimed at increasing efficiency and sustainability of the social protection system such as pension reform, protection of persons with disabilities and reform of the overall system of social service provision.

The consortium will endeavor to create demand for information that citizens need in order to understand and participate fully in the new pension system as well as other social sector reforms. The consortium will also monitor and report on the effectiveness of the implementation of the above mentioned reforms. With increased citizen participation, improved advocacy, transparency and oversight of the reform process, as well as greater citizen access to information about social sector policy, the program will ensure fuller and more efficient implementation of the reforms.

In cooperation with the other civil society consortia, the program will work towards sustainability of the CSO sector by working to improve the CSO enabling environment and promote greater transparency and accountability of CSOs to the public.

Civil Society Consortium 3: Transparency and Accountability

The purpose of the Civil Society Consortium for Transparency and Accountability is to increase civic engagement in and oversight of reforms which increase transparency and accountability within governance. The program will support Civil Society Organizations in giving voice to and increasing engagement of citizens in promoting government transparency and anti-corruption reforms. By mobilizing citizens, advocating on behalf of their interests, engaging in monitoring of reforms at the national (such as Armenia's commitments to the Open Government Partnership) and local (such as collecting data on bribes demanded and paid) levels and ensuring

that citizens have access to independent and reliable information about corruption, the program will diminish the space for corruption. The program will also monitor implementation of transparency and accountability actions and reforms which the GOAM is anticipated to commit once the draft DOAG currently being negotiated with USAID is finalized. Such activities may include the establishment of an independent Ethics Commission, the use of community consultative processes in the development of local budgets in the pilot regions and the development of a whistleblower protection law. In cooperation with the other consortia, the program will also work towards sustainability of the CSO sector by working to improve the CSO enabling environment and promote greater transparency and accountability of CSOs to the public.

Lack of transparency and weak accountability is a significant issue in Armenia. Poor governance impedes the efficacy of reform and contributes to citizen dissatisfaction and lack of engagement. Citizen apathy creates an environment in which government transparency and accountability is not expected or demanded by citizens as a normal aspect of a functioning democracy. Transparency as defined in this program refers to greater government openness and access to public information, which implies, first, a reduction in the degree of discretion by government officials, and second, increased accountability of those government officials for the decisions they make.

Each of the three consortia under USAID Armenia's Advanced Civil Society for Accountable Governance Programs will seek to achieve the following results:

Result Area 1: Civil society's ability to engage citizens and advocate for their interests improved and sustained.

One of the challenges facing Armenian CSOs is the gap between the CSO and the public and that the interests of citizens are not well articulated. Voice of people/citizens is not included from the beginning of the policy making process, decision making is top down, and the opportunity for citizen input only occurs after main policy is decided. This situation frequently results in the public perception that CSOs are more interested in funding than in advancing the public's interest. The lack of citizen engagement also contributes the poor outcomes of CSO advocacy efforts as they are not seen as credible by either government or the public.

Success in this area will require CSOs to engage citizens, have them understand issues, collect views and ideas, demonstrate positions, etc. and carry out advocacy campaigns in which they reach out to and mobilize citizens around selected policies, improve their ability to aggregate citizen's interests and better articulate their recommendations to decision-makers and other audiences. As a result broader groups of citizens will be informed, engaged and influence decision making on important policies that impact people's lives.

Special attention will be made to ensure that relevant stakeholders are encouraged to participate in local, community level decision making processes, especially those in rural areas and those who would otherwise be marginalized. Advocacy efforts will also be evidence-based, drawing on the results of systematic monitoring and/or independent research. Advocacy campaigns are more likely to be successful when CSOs work together in coalitions, networks or platforms since there is strength, and influence, in numbers.

Another key to their effectiveness will be the participation of grassroots CSOs both in advocating at the local level, and engaging in national level policy reform. Finally, this too will require coordinated CSO engagement with relevant government entities such as the Ministry of Justice (for transparency and anti-corruption reforms), Ministry of Territorial Administration (MTA) and local governments (for decentralization and local governance reforms) and the Ministry of Social Protection (for social service reforms) and others.

However, civil society should not just be seen as a technical assistance provider to government (although they may play that role in certain instances) or an advocate on behalf of the government. It is essential that in this program, civil society be in the position of providing independent, evidence-based and constructive policy recommendations and input to the government in order to advance selected reforms on behalf of citizens.

Assistance under Results Area 1 is expected to lead to following results:

- Citizens more involved in CSO activities
- CSOs aggregate and analyze citizen interests and priorities on selected policy reforms and convey to government
- CSOs produce and utilize high quality independent research and CSO monitoring results as part of advocacy efforts
- Increased receptivity of government to CSO advocacy
- Citizens' understanding of policies increase.

Illustrative Activities:

The following activities are not mandatory and are provided only as an example of the type of activities that could be done to support the results in this result area. USAID strongly encourages applicants to come up with other illustrative activities under concrete focus areas and identify other innovative approaches that they feel will best achieve the desired results as described above.

- Promotion/facilitation of creative mechanisms and interventions to foster civic awareness and participation in selected reforms such as town hall meetings, community events, school-based programs, media outreach, etc.
- Conduct citizen surveys to identify interests and priorities related to selected reforms.
- Mapping of “value chain” for civil society in selected reform areas, functional gaps, roles in and areas of prospective engagement with citizens
- Strategy/visioning sessions for partners to identify core issues, reform agendas, and relevant stakeholders, and to share information with one another
- Promoting collaborative action among representatives of key groups (formal and informal) at the local level and national level – including community-based organizations, NGOs and local and national government – to improve selected reforms.

- Training/ TA on building and strengthening platforms, cultivating trust and ownership among partners, and on policy advocacy related to selected reforms
- Roundtables with legislators and/or government officials on selected reforms
- Strengthening advocacy capacity of CSOs.
- Support local civil society to advocate for institutionalization of citizen participation mechanisms with local governments. In particular promote the inclusion and participation of female leaders and activists in mobilization, advocacy, outreach and awareness raising efforts, as well as in community councils.
- Educating the public on government policy initiatives to implement policy reforms, such as the MTA's piloting of local government consolidation, the MOJ's establishing one-stop shop offices for government services, and plans for the new pension system.

Result Area 2: Monitoring of government institutions, officials and policy processes strengthened

Citizens play an important role in holding their governments accountable to the commitments made regarding selected reforms. Rather than carrying out diverse and disconnected monitoring of activities, each consortium is encouraged to focus on certain issues or services that are most important to citizens and for which findings can be aggregated and presented to both government and the public. Anecdotal evidence may be used to illustrate the findings of systematic monitoring, but not in place of it. Monitoring and oversight activities need to be conducted with a sound methodology and systematic approach, and be carried out in cooperation with CSOs in both Yerevan and the regions. Special attention will be given to promoting the participation of women, youth, disadvantaged groups and Armenians from the regions.

While the monitoring itself will be an independent civil society activity, CSOs will need to collaborate with relevant GOAM officials to ensure that the measures and targets by which government policy/decision making process, reform implementation and overall transparency will be assessed are understood by both government and civil society alike. Doing so early on in the process will help create a common starting point for establishing means for measurement and useful data that can be more readily accepted.

In the transparency and accountability area, CSOs will need to focus monitoring of government transparency in areas that government has already committed to, such as e-governance, budget transparency, freedom of information, enforcement of ethics for government officials, extractive resources or other types of public service/resource. Monitoring activities will be carried out at the national and local levels.

In the decentralization and local governance area, CSOs will carry out monitoring at both national and local levels. At the national level, this could include ensuring that that decentralization policies and legislation that the MTA and other GOA entities draft reflect the issues and concerns of civil society and monitoring the GOA's progress on implementing reforms related to the strengthening of local governments. At the local level, this will require strengthening the capacity of local civil society to oversee/monitor local government budgets and

performance and ensure that local government's budget priorities and services are responsive and accountable to the citizens they serve.

In the social service reform area, civil society monitoring efforts will address the needs and priorities of key constituents of certain social sector reforms. This includes implementation of pension reform, integrated social service system and protection of persons with disabilities.

Assistance under Results Area 2 is expected to lead to following results:

- CSOs engage citizens and the media in monitoring of selected reforms and the local and national level
- CSOs use systematic and evidence-based approaches to monitor, assess impact of and report on Government commitments to reforms.
- CSOs collaborate with local and national government in monitoring of selected policy reforms
- Monitoring results are published broadly and disseminated by the mass media.

Illustrative Activities

The following activities are not mandatory and are provided only as an example of the type of activities that could be done to support the results in this result area. USAID strongly encourages applicants to come up with other illustrative activities under concrete focus areas and identify other innovative approaches that they feel will best achieve the desired results as described above.

- Monitor implementation of the selected reforms by Ministry of Justice, MTA, Ministry of Social Protection or other government entities, informing the public on the status of these reforms, and sponsoring channels for citizens to express their views on the implementation of specific reforms.
- Negotiate with government mutually agreed upon indicators and targets and reform agenda goals so that both government and civil society clearly define their expected outcomes of selected reforms. The indicators will also allow civil society to hold government accountable in case they fail to implement agreed upon reforms.
- Support mechanisms developed by civil society groups to monitor progress on transparency and accountability reforms to keep the public informed and actively involved. Mechanisms could include establishing observatories of budget development and expenditures, websites that track reform development, passage and implementation, corruption surveys and analyses, publications that monitor corruption cases, investigations of how implementation of reforms match their expected results.
- Engage citizens in monitoring progress in regions piloting local government consolidation.
- Support CSO budget monitoring of local government budgets.

- Introduce systematic monitoring by citizens and clients of integrated social service centers or other government service.

Result Area 3: Citizen access to independent and reliable information increased

In order to have more civic engagement in and oversight of selected reforms, citizens need access to independent and reliable research and information. The consortium will need to engage universities, think tanks or independent policy research institutes to generate high quality policy studies on selected reforms that are needed by civil society for use in their advocacy and oversight efforts. To promote better access to independent information, CSOs will need to utilize a variety of dissemination and public education tools including new media. The consortia will work in tandem with the USAID supported new media activity seeking to enhance competition of ideas through access to information and mechanisms that foster citizen input and debate and facilitate civil society's efforts to engage citizens and articulate their needs.

Assistance under Results Area 3 is expected to lead to following results:

- High quality, research-based, independent information and analysis on selected reforms produced.
- CSOs and media disseminate information on reforms to the public in user-friendly formats.
- Citizens more informed about the content of selected reforms and the progress and effectiveness of their implementation.

Illustrative Activities:

The following activities are not mandatory and are provided only as an example of the type of activities that could be done to support the results in this result area. USAID strongly encourages applicants to come up with other illustrative activities under concrete focus areas and identify other innovative approaches that they feel will best achieve the desired results as described above.

- Development of policy research agenda on selected reforms in consultation with the government, think tanks/universities and the public
- CSO and think tanks collaborate to produce studies and reports that systematically analyze selected reforms and provide information to different stakeholders (citizens/membership, government, media, business sector, etc).
- Conduct periodic surveys to assess public opinion and citizens' perceptions of reforms.
- Conduct periodic "cost of corruption" surveys to measure the estimated amount paid in petty corruption.
- High quality, research-based, independent information and analysis on selected reforms produced by think tanks and universities.

- Publication on a regular basis of “citizen policy bulletins” or similar document (on-line and in-print) that concisely communicate citizen perspectives, findings of monitoring activities and results of research on selected reforms for sharing with government and the public
- NGOs organize public information campaigns on selected reform implementation for public at large or targeted groups
- Support independent research to diagnose various aspects of corruption of importance to the public.

Result Area 4: Civil society enabling environment improved

All three consortia will work collaboratively with each other to promote the passage and implementation of legislation and regulation that increases the rights and freedoms of civil society and improves their organizational and financial sustainability. It is expected that the consortia will support the creation of a network of civil society organizations to advocate for improvements in the legal enabling environment. With substantial input and support from civil society, the consortia will advocate towards key improvements in legislation such as NGO law amendments to allow revenue generation, adoption of a law on endowments, reclassification of not-for-profit organizations according to their mission, clarification of tax code provisions on volunteerism and the definition of volunteerism. Consortia members will also monitor GOAMs implementation of CSO-related legislation and, where possible, collaborate with the government on implementation of new processes and procedures for improving the CSO enabling environment. Under this result area, the consortia will also work engage other CSOs in promoting greater transparency of CSOs to the public such as publishing of annual reports and adherence to a code of ethics.

Assistance under Results Area 4 is expected to lead to following results:

- CSOs identify and advocate on specific improvements to CSO legal framework
- With the improved legislation CSOs are able to utilize increasingly diverse funding sources
- New mechanisms to promote greater CSO transparency and accountability to the public established in line with international best practices

Illustrative Activities:

The following activities are not mandatory and are provided only as an example of the type of activities that could be done to support the results in this sub-purpose. USAID strongly encourages applicants to come up with other illustrative activities under concrete focus areas and identify other innovative approaches that they feel will best achieve the desired results as described above.

- Roundtables with government and civil society held on CSO revenue generation, endowments or similar topics

- Seminars and study tour for CSOs and government to learn about best practices to promote CSO transparency
- Campaign for the adoption of CSO transparency measures such as adherence to code of ethics or public disclosure of annual reports

Provision of technical expertise to the Ministry of Justice in developing legal and regulatory changes necessary to implement enabling environment recommendations

The following table illustrates the relationship between the civil society consortia activities, the results anticipated, and the program objective. The three consortia will contribute to all four Result Areas and will be responsible for achieving specific program results. USAID/Armenia expects that all three consortia will work together in achieving results under Result Area 4.

Program Objective: Increased Civic Engagement and Oversight of Selected Reforms			
Result Area 1: Civil Society's Ability to Engage citizens and articulate their interests improved and sustained	Result Area 2: Monitoring of government institutions, officials and policy processes strengthened	Result Area 3: Citizen access to independent and reliable information increased	Result Area 4: Civil society enabling environment improved
Expected Results: • Citizens more involved in CSO activities • CSO's more effectively aggregate and analyze citizen interests and priorities and incorporate them in their input and recommendations on selected policies • CSOs utilize high quality independent research and CSO monitoring results as part of government advocacy	Expected Results: • CSOs engage citizens in monitoring of selected government policies, programs, institutions or budgets at local and national level. • CSOs use systematic and evidence-based approaches to monitor, assess impact of and report on selected government reforms and reform processes • CSOs collaborate with Government on the monitoring of	Expected Results: • High quality, research-based, independent information and analysis on priority reforms produced • CSOs and media disseminate information to public in user-friendly format • Citizens more informed about selected reforms	Expected Results: • CSOs identify and advocate on specific improvements to CSO legal framework • CSOs access increasingly diverse funding sources • New mechanisms to promote greater CSO transparency and accountability to the public established in line with international best practices

	selected policy reforms		
Illustrative Activities: • Support and facilitate mechanisms and interventions to foster civic awareness of selected reforms • Develop formal and/or informal platforms to advance specific and relevant reforms issues • Conduct citizen surveys to identify priorities related to selected reforms • Hold roundtables with government officials or legislators on selected reforms	Illustrative Activities: ▪ Support mechanisms developed by civil society groups to monitor progress on democratic reforms ▪ Engage citizens in monitoring selected reforms at the national and local level ▪ Identify, in consultation with government, indicators and targets on which civil society monitoring efforts will be focused	Illustrative Activities: • CSO and Think Tanks produce reports that systematically analyze reforms and provide information to different stakeholders • Support independent research on various aspects of corruption of importance to the public • Organize public information campaigns on reform implementation for public at large or selected target groups	Illustrative Activities: • Roundtables with government and civil society held on CSO revenue generation, endowments or similar topics • Seminars and study tours for CSOs and government to learn about best practices to promote CSO transparency • Technical assistance for drafting legislation and procedures

VI. Consortium Approach

While the prime recipient will be the signatory to the agreement and responsible to USAID for all administration, management, financial and reporting requirements, each member of the consortia will have a defined role under its respective agreement. The prime recipient will be a local (Armenian) organization, but the consortia may include international organizations as sub-recipients. USAID expects that any international organizations partnering within consortia will successfully transfer their technical and management skills to its local partners and phase-out their involvement within the first three years of the program. Applicants are expected to determine the formal structure, legal status (if any) and nature of the consortium.

Organizations can apply as part of one or more consortium, but they can apply as a prime on only one of the consortia.

Each consortium needs to include a mix of organizational skills and experience necessary for achieving the intended results. USAID has determined that the following organizational skills

and experience will be included; however, applicants are free to include additional skills and experience they deem important to success.

- Policy analysis and development and strategy implementation related to the consortium's area of focus (i.e. transparency, decentralization or social services);
- Monitoring and evaluation (including data collection and analysis);
- Public awareness/education, media and citizen outreach;
- Building coalitions to carry out advocacy campaigns; and
- Experience in working in rural areas.

Applicants are expected to describe their consortium, each of its member organizations and their strengths and experiences, the proposed role and responsibilities of each organization. To ensure maximum success, each consortium will have:

- a clearly articulated division of labor among consortium partners so that each partner, and other stakeholders such as USAID, understand the roles and responsibilities of various partners
- a management plan and structure (including standard operating procedures) that addresses how they will ensure smooth implementation, the submission of timely and accurate information and resources, coordination and communication among the consortia partners
- an advisory board or committee that includes lead representatives for all consortia members and USAID (could include others CS representatives as well) to review progress and make recommendations on future direction on a periodic basis.
- a mechanism/agreed approach to resolve conflicts among consortia members (may be part of any of the above points)

The success of this program will depend in large part on the effectiveness of the consortia themselves. The consortia are expected to collaborate with each other and to engage other civil society actors in achieving results. As such, recipients are encouraged to set aside funds for activities to strengthen the consortium, such as team-building, strategic planning and similar activities.

VII. Capacity Development

Capacity development is a vital aspect of achieving sustainable results in relation to civil society engagement in selected reforms. USAID's interest in capacity development for this program is at three levels – (1) strengthening the capacity of each consortia to manage and carry out this and future programs, (2) strengthening the capacity of individual consortium member organizations, and (3) strengthening capacity of a broader network of civil society groups to work together on advocacy, monitoring and oversight of selected reforms.

USAID/Armenia anticipates awarding a separate activity that will run parallel to this one on Local Capacity Development through local intermediary organizations. Civil society

organizations working in multiple sectors, including those working as part of the consortia, will have access to a range of services and expertise through that program. In addition, USAID encourages each consortia to incorporate activities to assess and strengthen the technical and organizational capacity of the consortia, their own organizations and their network or partners with which they work on selected reforms.

Consortia are encouraged to use interactive and creative approaches to capacity development (such as mentoring and peer learning/exchange), rather than relying solely on traditional training models. If international technical expertise is desired, it too will be acquired in creative and economical ways, which could include subcontracts with organizations, individual consultants, engagement through networks, partnerships, etc.

Applicants will develop a notional capacity development approach as part of its technical application/implementation plan. If an applicant is selected for an award, organizational assessments, capacity development objectives and plans may be reviewed again by the USAID Mission, and if applicable, by the selected capacity development provider(s) in order to make any necessary revisions, and to identify other areas that may need development.

VIII. Coordination and collaboration with USAID partners

Each consortium will work in coordination and cooperation with other USAID programs, especially those that are primarily supporting the relevant units of government working in the same reform area. For example, through the Pension Reform Implementation Program, USAID is supporting human and institutional capacity to ensure that the Armenia's integrated social service pension systems is well-managed, regulated and supervised according to international standards and best practices. The program will also be working with target government units to promote civic engagement. The Civil Society Consortium on Social Service Reform will also work on child protection and integrated social services but from a more "bottom-up" civil society perspective. By linking independent civil society advocacy and oversight to government engagement mechanisms, both programs will be more likely to achieve their intended objectives.

This approach applies to other new programs which USAID is currently designing, including in the areas of decentralization and local government and transparency and anti-corruption reform. It is expected that the civil society consortia working in these areas will closely collaborate with those programs.

IX. Gender

According to a 2010 Gender Assessment, a healthy democracy is one in which women and men have equal opportunities to influence the governing of their country and in which their concerns are heard. At present, significant obstacles prevent Armenia's transition to a fully functional and representational democracy, and there are important differences in the abilities of women and men to engage in democratic processes, to raise issues of their concern and to access justice to redress violations of their rights. Women have very little influence over policy decisions due to their limited representation in decision-making positions. While a quota system ensures women are represented in political parties, they face distinct barriers to entering office at the local and national level. Gender equality has not been a priority for the country and most women-oriented policies have focused on reproductive and maternal health and not civil and political rights.

Women are better represented in civil society, but women's NGOs lack the capacity to advocate for their inclusion in government policy decisions. The media is not gender sensitive, lacks professionalism, and includes few stories about or of concern to women and rarely reports the opinions of female experts. Mass media outlets reinforce gender stereotypes and in some cases use sexist images of women. Media outlets also perpetuate homophobia and the stigmatization of and intolerance towards lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people.

The programs will ensure that women have opportunities to meaningfully engage in civil society activities and with the government and that both women and men's concerns are reflected in advocacy efforts. Some examples of potential activities include:

- Watchdog organizations and citizens could monitor the local government performance in areas for which women are the most likely to be involved and negatively affected
- Gender-responsive budgeting exercises could be used to address gaps in government policies, plans and budgets, increase accountability for public expenditures and improve women's access to services and resources
- Capacity building and support for women's civil society organizations to promote their interests in selected reforms and to serve as monitors of reform processes that impact women's rights
- Support think tanks that take a gender-sensitive approach to policy analysis as well as conduct research on issues that specifically concern women (for example, constraints to businesswomen) and men (for instance, patterns of male health-seeking behavior)

X. Performance Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

A. M&E Plan and Reporting

Each consortium will develop a Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Plan which includes a set of indicators linked with multiple levels of program results. In addition to the indicators requested by USAID below, the applicant will identify other indicators specific to their program. The performance indicators will seek to measure the results for each program result area and result and establish baseline measurements and targets to assess the impact of proposed interventions. These indicators need to go beyond measuring outputs of activities (e.g., how many clients were served), and will also measure outcomes (e.g., changes in attitudes or behavior as a result of the intervention). Because the effectiveness and long-term sustainability of civil society will ultimately depend on how the sector is perceived by key stakeholders, including Armenian citizens and the government, assessment tools that assess stakeholder views about consortia activities will be used whenever possible (such as regular stakeholder surveys to gauge citizen and beneficiary perspectives on a scope/variety of issues and interventions in order to redirect interventions as necessary).

The M&E Plan will also include an explanation of how data and information will be collected, analyzed, used and reported. The recipient will conduct a baseline assessment at the start of the project. Since performance management is, by definition, a dynamic process, the M&E Plan review process needs to be clearly articulated. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that

all costs associated with the implementation of the M&E Plan are considered in the cost application. In addition to performance reporting to USAID, each consortium will need to include in their plan how performance data will be shared with other stakeholders (e.g., reported on website).

In addition to collection and reporting of data on indicators, the M&E planned will identify other assessment, evaluations or learning products that will be used to assess the effectiveness of activities and progress towards results.

Consortia will identify indicators and targets that are necessary to measure other important program outputs and outcomes. Some illustrative indicators include:

Objective or Intermediate Result	Indicator(s)
Objective: Increased Civic Engagement and Oversight of Selected Reforms	▪ # of citizens reporting that their input matters for selected reform implementation ▪ # of policies changed consistent with NGO engagement and oversight
IR 1: Civil Society's Ability to Engage Citizens and Articulate their interest improved and sustained	▪ # of advocacy initiatives carried out by target CSOs based on constituency needs/interests
IR2: Monitoring of government institutions, officials and policy processes strengthened	▪ # of new civil society-initiated mechanisms established for civic monitoring government institutions, officials and selected policy processes ▪ # of stakeholders reporting effectiveness of mechanisms to monitor target government institutions, officials and selected policy processes
IR 3: Citizen access to independent and reliable information on selected reforms increased	▪ # of independent policy studies on selected reforms produced ▪ # or % of target population reporting that they are aware of independent studies on selected reforms
IR 4: Civil Society leads inclusive effort to promote improved civil society enabling environment	▪ # of advocacy initiatives carried out by target CSOs based on constituency needs/interests ▪ Number of laws and regulations whose content the consortium affected

B. External Evaluation

USAID intends to conduct performance evaluation of its civil society and local governance initiatives as they serve as the cornerstones of the results necessary in achieving the Development Objective.