

# FOUNDATION OPEN SOCIETY – MACEDONIA

**ANNUAL REPORT | 2015 |**



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## SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES IMPLEMENTED BY THE END OF 2015

*Foundation Open Society – Macedonia (FOSM)*, under the strategy for the period 2014-2017, focuses its resources and efforts towards rebuilding democracy and democratic governance as the final long-term goal, by means of:

- Supporting 12 civil society organizations (CSOs) to advance state-of-affairs in fields identified as the most threatened: 1) freedom of expression; 2) challenging the health establishment to advance human rights; 3) youth engagement for social change; 4) combating government corruption; 5) human rights monitoring and documentation; and 6) budget transparency. These CSOs hold adequate expertise, access to relevant target groups, and have developed coalitions and alumni networks, allowing them to efficiently articulate their own strategies and respond to emerging challenges and circumstances.
- Implementing four concepts, those being: Civic Empowerment and Mobilization, Model of Citizen-centric Municipality, Roma Integration, and Humanitarian and Legal Assistance to Migrants.

## SUPPORT TO STRATEGIC FIELDS

### Key outcomes and/or activities that marked work of CSOs supported under FOSM's strategic fields in 2015

#### FIELD 1:

#### FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

##### ▪ ONLINE MEDIA

Four news online media (*A1on*, *Plusinfo*, *Potalb* and *Okno*) provided citizens with information about events and current affairs which, in spite of their significance and scope, were not treated or were marginalized in mainstream media. Impact factor and rating enjoyed by these media outlets among citizens, including data about visits and views, are best represented by statistics obtained from *YouTube*, *Google Analytics*, *GRID.MK*, which demonstrate increased number of viewers and readers. Number of visits to the news portal *Portalb* was increased from 2,484,152 visits in 2013 to 9,786,367 visits in 2015. This was also confirmed with the survey conducted by the *International Republican Institute*, according to which *Portalb* is the most popular Albanian web-portal for political news in Macedonia. Compared to the same period last year, significant increase was noted in 2015 in terms of visits and popularity of the news portal *A1on*. More specifically, in October 2014 *A1on* had a total of 456,033 visits and 146,146 individual viewers, i.e. users. In October 2015, the number of visitors was increased by almost three times, reaching 1,294,080 visits in total and 425,008 visitors from individual web-units. According to *Google Analytics*, *Plusinfo* registered a total of 21,882,232 visits (i.e. an average of 59,951 visits per day), 3,909,572 users and 58,115,987 views (i.e. an average of 159,221 visits per day). Throughout 2015, the portal *Okno* maintained its focus on analytical texts addressing regional, Europe-wide and global topics and remained truthful to its profile as the dominant place for cultural contents. It should be noted that *Okno* is not a commercial website, but from its establishment to date, its viewer rating is continuously increasing by 20% to 30% each year.

## ▪ MEDIA DEVELOPMENT CENTRE ▪

In 2015, the *Media Development Centre (MDC)* was actively engaged in discussions about reforms required in the media sphere, i.e. changes needed in terms of media policy and related legislation, for the purpose of developing truly free, open, democratic and pluralistic media landscape in Macedonia.

In April 2015, *MDC* organized the debate “What Kind of Media System Macedonia Needs?” when it presented the publication titled “Media Legislation: Challenge for Media Freedoms”, followed by open debate around the need to reform or redesign the media system in Macedonia. The need for such reforms was later confirmed by the international community, in particular by giving media reforms central place in the interparty agreement brokered to overcome the perpetual political crisis in the country. In June 2015, *MDC* organized a regional conference titled “Media and Public Interest” attended by representatives of journalist and academic communities from the broader region of the Western Balkans, including Hungary. Conference participants discussed the aspects of public interest in the media and the role of media in protecting public interest and interests of citizens.

As part of activities aimed to promote necessary reforms in the media sphere and related legislation in Macedonia, *MDC* developed a series of policy briefs, as follows: “Online News Media and Media Legislation in the Republic of Macedonia”, “Media in Electoral Legislation” and “Public Information Campaigns of the Government of Macedonia and State Institutions”. As regards monitoring of media legislation, *MDC* developed and published 3 quarterly reports on monitoring of defamation action cases and 3 quarterly reports on monitoring performance of media regulatory bodies, the Parliament, the Ministry of Information Society and Administration, and the Macedonian Radio Television (public broadcasting service).

As part of activities in the field of professionalization of online news media, *MDC* organized two workshops for representatives of online news media. Moreover, after completion of the programme on testing alternative revenue sources for online media, which included 10 online news media outlets across Macedonia, *MDC* summarized research results in the publication “Media Sustainability in the New Digital Environment”. This publication is intended to serve publishers of online news media and assist them in achieving greater sustainability, notably by enlisting methods for revenue generation that have been proved as more or less successful during the testing process.

## ▪ METAMORPHOSIS - FOUNDATION FOR INTERNET AND SOCIETY ▪

In the course of 2015, *Metamorphosis - Foundation for Internet and Society* continued to strengthen its alternative infrastructure for information and mobilization of citizens in Macedonia by using new technologies. Starting from the need to promote and exercise fundamental human rights of freedom of expression and privacy, *Metamorphosis* continued to develop synergy among different stakeholders interested in development of democracy in Macedonia, by combining resources and tools developed and maintained under the project “Free and Open Internet” and other projects, such as *Media Fact Checking Service*, *Truth-Meter*, *Portalb* and news agency *META*. At the same time, activities were intensified in terms of

breaking information isolation in international media on current events in Macedonia, i.e. political crisis, citizen protests, Kumanovo events, Przino Agreement and consequences thereof. In that context, *Metamorphosis* succeeded to maintain and promote cooperation with domestic non-governmental organizations and independent media outlets, and especially cooperation with international networks dedicated to freedom of expression. *Metamorphosis* applied a broad range of innovative methods for online-promotion and thereby increased visibility of the struggle on the part of non-governmental organizations and activists against political corruption, contributing in motivation of citizens to join this effort by public awareness raising about their rights in the digital sphere, as well as about obligations of ruling authorities, media and other factors affecting quality of life in Macedonia.

Visibility of developments taking place in Macedonia was increased in the foreign media with the use of international networks of CSOs, media and/or activists/bloggers, as an important element for mobilizing support of international community and diplomatic corps, international institutions and associations. Direct and active cooperation around issues related to freedom of speech in Macedonia was established with the networks of *Reporters without Borders*, *EDRI – European Digital Rights*, *APC*, *IFEX*, *Global Voices*, etc., including OSCE and its Representative on Media Freedom, UNDP, and diplomatic offices in the country.

For the purpose of including all interested parties, these efforts were combined with training and public events dedicated to networking, lobbying and advocacy, including conferences organized by *Metamorphosis*: “e-Society.mk”, “Freedom and Privacy on the Internet” (December)”, and international days of the action “Freedom Instead of Fear” in Skopje (October), POINT conference in Sarajevo (March), and others, attended by hundreds of representatives from civil society and the media, state and educational institutions, and the private sector.

## **FIELD 2:**

### **CHALLENGING THE HEALTH ESTABLISHMENT TO ADVANCE HUMAN RIGHTS**

#### **▪ COALITION “SEXUAL AND HEALTH RIGHTS OF MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES” ▪**

In 2015, the *Coalition “Sexual and Health Rights of Marginalized Communities” (Coalition SHRMC)* continued to work on improving the situation in terms of sexual and health rights of members of several socially marginalized groups: LGBTI community, drug users, people living with HIV, and sex workers. As a result of longstanding efforts for comprehensive and meaningful engagement of competent institutions in work with marginalized communities, in cooperation with the Institute for Social Work, *Coalition SHRMC* developed the “Manual on Working with Marginalized Communities/Groups at Risk” that was officially adopted by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. The Manual, also known as MODULE 19, became part of the official training programme for continuous development of professionals in the social protection system, and was used to train 50 social workers from different towns across the country. One seminar on health rights was organized and was attended by medical doctors, members of ethical committees and oversight committees established at general hospitals (Kumanovo, Ohrid, Strumica, Stip), clinical hospitals (Bitola, Tetovo, Skopje), psychiatric hospital Skopje, PHI

City General Hospital “8<sup>th</sup> September” Skopje, as well as representatives from the Commission for Protection of Patients’ Rights in the City of Skopje, Commission for Prevention and Protection against Discrimination and the Ombudsman Office in the Republic of Macedonia. In the context of debates on human rights, this seminar represented an opportunity for members of health care committees and state anti-discrimination bodies to openly discuss, for the first time, health rights of marginalized communities.

*Coalition SHRMC* developed and published an analysis titled “Drug Use and Living with HIV in Education” which includes expert analyses of textbooks for secondary and higher education in subjects like sociology, pedagogy, ethics, criminal law, security, psychiatry, and other related sciences. For the first time, this type of analysis includes an overview of contents related to treatment of drug users and people living with HIV.

In the course of 2015 and as part of activities on protection of sexual and health rights of members of marginalized communities, *Coalition SHRMC* initiated several procedures for transgender persons: one request for legal recognition of gender, and three appeals in front of second-instance bodies, of which one appeal was approved and the lawsuit continues before the Basic Public Prosecution. In addition, procedure was initiated by the Supreme Court upon motion for revision of the lawsuit related to violation of rights enjoyed by a person living with HIV. Request was submitted to the Public Prosecution, Institute of Forensic Medicine, and an urgency letter to the Ombudsman Office concerning the course of investigative activities into the death of one person while serving an imprisonment sentence. Two clients accused of drug use were provided legal advice and were assisted in preparation of written submissions, and were secured defence representation in court.

In compliance with the Law on Media and related to direct linking of HIV status with homosexual orientation, six media outlets were presented with requests for retraction and correction. All of them published corrections, with the exception of one media outlet which deleted the said news article from its website. Two appeals were lodged against decisions taken by the Basic Public Prosecution in cases related to hate speech, whereby the Higher Public Prosecution rejected one appeal and returned the other case for repeated reconsideration at the Basic Public Prosecution. Commission for Appeals at the Media Ethics Council approved the appeal related to hate speech promoted as part of TV show “Jadi burek”.

Several activities were implemented for international advocacy aimed to improve rights of marginalized communities: shadow reports were drafted and presented to the Committee for Civil and Political Rights and the Committee against Torture; in the wake of preparation and publication of the country’s progress report, brief report on the situation related to LGBTI issues was submitted to the European Commission; *Transgender Europe* was presented with updated information in terms of the situation with transgender persons in the country; oral presentation on LGBTI issues in Macedonia was delivered before the Human Rights Committee, whereas at the closed meeting HRC expert members were informed about problems faced by LGBTI people.

For the purpose of promoting documentation of cases of violation of sexual and health rights of marginalized communities, 2 training seminars were organized with activists and representatives of target groups in Bitola and Strumica, resulting in 10 new persons trained on

this matter, while underway are activities to design the web-platform on documenting cases of violence against LGBTI persons.

In 2015, *Coalition SHRMC* was active in the field of promoting activism for rights of marginalized communities. In particular, the third Pride Week was organized and included several cultural events, lectures delivered by researchers from the region, training for activists and three protest events addressing the Public Prosecution, the Government of Republic of Macedonia and the Macedonian Radio Television. For the purpose of creating hubs of activists across the country, training on creative activism was organized for civil society activists from Tetovo, Bitola, Kumanovo, Prilep, Sveti Nikole and Skopje.

#### ▪ **HEALTHY OPTIONS PROJECT - SKOPJE** ▪

In 2015, as part of its programmes on legal and social aid for sex workers and drug users and advocacy for rights of underage drug users, *Healthy Options Project - Skopje (HOPS)* provided a total of 438 services to 42 drug users (37 male and 5 female), and 8 family members of drug users, of which 4 services concerned advice on the right to medical treatment. Court representation was provided to one Roma client who uses drugs and is facing criminal charges, but on the account of deteriorated health status after having suffered a stroke has speaking difficulties and is unable to defend himself in court. Continuous legal aid was provided to sex workers in the lawsuit concerning numerous violations of their human rights in the police raid "Repression of Street Prostitution" executed by MOI in November 2008. Moreover, international advocacy efforts were made by means of submitting inquiry request into systemic violation of sex workers' rights in front of the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

In the course of 2015, several activities were taken to actualize the absence of adequate treatment program for underage drug users. Comprehensive campaign targeting children using drugs users was implemented and included airing of 5 videos and participation in several morning shows broadcasted on TV stations with national concession. The campaign was supported by 18 CSOs, while the closing press conference taking place on 26<sup>th</sup> June was covered by number of national TV stations and other media outlets reporting in Macedonian and Albanian language. Training was delivered for 16 participants from inter-municipal social work centres in Skopje, Veles and Stip, representatives from educational and social institutions and CSOs; 2 workshops were organized at day care centres for street children in the Municipalities of Kisela Voda and Aerodrom; social services were provided to families with children using drugs, in particular concerning information about personal identification documents, information about exercising the right to social and health protection, etc. Protocol on medical treatment for children using drugs was developed. Use of methadone as treatment medicine was re-registered, thus revoking the age threshold for its administration.

*HOPS* conducted 15 visits to street children aimed to raise awareness and disseminate information about their health rights and rights to medical treatment, and contacts were established with 7 new children (6 boys and 1 girl aged 7 to 16 years), or total of 18 different children. Among the new group of children with whom contacts are established one injects methadone, while the others engage in glue sniffing.

As regards international advocacy efforts, several reports were prepared and presented to international human rights bodies concerning the exercise of health rights among Roma drug users, with focus on children using drugs. *HOPS* contributed in the drafting of the shadow report concerning the status of children with provision of information based on its work with children using drugs. In May 2015, together with other partner organizations, *HOPS* submitted the shadow report to the Committee against Torture, which addressed issues related to Roma people being frequent victims of police brutality and absence of medical treatment for children using drugs. In its concluding observations and recommendations for the state, the Committee against Torture enlisted that actions are needed to prevent police discriminatory conduct and excessive use of force. All allegations on violence against Roma must be documented and promptly investigated, prosecuted and punished.

Moreover, the issue of children using drugs was addressed before the Human Rights Committee in June and already in July - as a result of advocacy efforts - the Committee published its concluding observations and recommendations for the state concerning promotion of rights of children using drugs. The same issue was reported before the Commission on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, thus in its concluding observations and recommendations the Committee expressed concerns with the registered increase of children using drugs, especially young Roma, whose situation is further complicated due to their parents' poverty and the legal barriers for children below the age of 18 years to access medical treatment.

In support of empowering sex workers to engage in self-advocacy, teams of paralegals were established, 6 sex workers from Skopje and two paralegals from Gostivar, Ohrid and Strumica each benefited from training. Paralegals from Skopje started work in May, and in the course of May and June they established contacts with 35 sex workers (29 women and 7 transgender women).

Advocacy efforts aimed at securing unhindered funding for services organized around HIV prevention after the completion of the Global Fund's support in 2017 included *HOPS*'s budget analysis of the HIV/AIDS Prevention Programme, Programme on Health Protection from Addiction Diseases and the Social Protection Programme. In cooperation with the HIV Platform in the Republic of Macedonia, public hearing was organized at the Parliament of Republic of Macedonia which included presentation of monitoring findings.

### **FIELD 3:**

#### **YOUTH ENGAGEMENT FOR SOCIAL CHANGE**

##### **▪ YOUTH EDUCATIONAL FORUM ▪**

In 2015, more than 1,000 young people took part in activities of 48 youth clubs on *Debate, Street Law and MediArt* in 14 towns, whereby they attended regular weekly lectures on argumentation, rule of law, civil and political rights and freedoms, and creative activism. Youth Club members organized more than 30 events for their peers and communities: volunteer actions, public debates, exhibitions and information campaigns. Capacity building activities for youth organizations and advocacy efforts for creation of youth representation bodies were organized in 12 municipalities, resulting in establishment of local youth councils in 11

municipalities in the capacity of consultation bodies representing interests of youth in the community. Moreover, 8 local youth strategies and action plans were drafted.

*Youth Educational Forum (YEF)* organized the annual social activism conference *ENGAGE* attended by more 400 young activists, with active participation in presentations, discussions and workshops. Two events were organized around *Argument: Organized Expression*, aimed to enable quality debate in the public sphere. Topic discussed at the February event was titled “This House Would (Not) Leave Macedonia Forever”, while the December event - considered to be record-breaking in terms of attendance to date - was organized around the thesis “This House Believes that Inter-Party Negotiations (Don’t) Lead to Crisis Resolution”. Said public debates were attended by more than 700 guests in person and around 5,000 online viewers, and were broadcasted on *TV 24Vesti*. Due to *YEF*’s advocacy for public debate in the society, in 2015 this organization become partner of the National Democratic Institute (NDI) in organization and implementation of two seasons of TV debates with studio audience on important political issues - *Open*.

*YEF* implemented and published 3 research studies: “Students as Social Change Holders”, “Mobility of Students and Academic Staff from the Ss. Cyril and Methodius University” and “Legal Analysis of Students’ Organization and Participation in Macedonia” for the purpose of which it submitted 500 FOI applications to secondary schools and municipalities inquiring about the situation related to existence and regulation of high-school communities and local youth councils.

*Radio YEF* secured on-air space for youth organizations and groups, in particular by airing radio programmes on topics that are rarely in the focus of attention, such as the rights of high-school students, sexual and reproductive health, multiculturalism, alternative culture. *Radio YEF* broadcasted the first radio programme on LGBTI rights in Macedonia, titled *STR8 OUT*, as well as the first radio programme dedicated to persons with Down syndrome, hosted by a person with Down syndrome - *I am Cako*. Throughout the year, the radio had more than 1 million visits, 500,000 unique guests and the radio shows were followed by 2,000 persons per month, with the team of young journalists creating 5,000 news stories. Protests organized by high-school and university students respectively were intensively covered by *Radio YEF*, including liveblogging, panel discussions, livestreams and talk shows with guests. *YEF*’s team offered paralegal assistance, advocacy and action advices and technical support to high-school students participating in the high-school plenum and encouraged communication with the Ombudsman Office.

Capacity building was provided to total of eight high-school communities, by means of training, workshops, development of programmes and support for organization of events. *YEF*’s debate programme organized 2 national debate events for 300 participants, one of which was international and involved 80 participants from across the world, and several regional debate events. *YEF*’s debaters qualified for the semi-finals at the World University Debating Championship and won 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> place, respectively, as orators in the EFL category (English as Foreign Language).



#### **FIELD 4:**

#### **COMBATING GOVERNMENT CORRUPTION**

##### **▪ MACEDONIAN CENTRE FOR EUROPEAN TRAINING ▪**

In 2015, the *Macedonian Centre for European Training (MCET)* published several policy briefs and papers, thus considerably strengthening the organization's research component. Publications included: "Quality of Jobs Offered by Companies Operating in Technology and Industrial Development Zones", "Five Traps and Chances of the EU-Sponsored Talks", "Constitutional Complaint - Light at the End of the Tunnel", etc. As regards the accession watch process, *MCET* developed the following report: 24<sup>th</sup> Accession Watch Report titled "Common Agricultural Saga" and 25<sup>th</sup> Accession Watch Report "Tick-Tack in the Nick of Time", as well as the comparative analysis of 2012–2015 EC Progress Reports for Macedonia titled "Backslide – Checked!". In addition, three research studies were developed: "IPA Study", "Good Governance – Experiences and Challenges" and "From Obedience to Occupation: 2014 Student Movement in Macedonia". *MCET* relied on its research studies and policy briefs to advocate for and strengthen pro-European side in the public discourse, including the multilateral fight for acceptance of European values and standards. In that regard, *MCET* regularly participated in consultations organized by the EU Delegation in Skopje for the purpose of developing the European Commission's Progress Report for Macedonia, consultation events organized by the Secretariat for European Affairs, and events of other institutions and organizations.

*EUROTALK* sessions served as an important instrument for serious strengthening of CSOs' influence on domestic political actors and international community in the process on resolving the political crisis in the state. Moreover, *MCET* worked intensively on its regional establishment within activities of the Regional Cooperation Council from Sarajevo and the Regional Convention for European Integration in Montenegro. Along these lines, *MCET's* representatives participated in more than 10 regional conferences organized around EU integration and the Western Balkans, including sessions on the impact of think-tank organizations in these processes.

*MCET* delivered around 160 days of training and mentorship of various type and duration, covering around 300 persons (from local governments, CSOs, journalists, attorneys and students). Training sessions were organized on topics such as EU history, EU institutions and decision-making processes; EU funds programming; application for EU funds; study of the European human rights framework; democracy, human rights and rule of law in the EU; policy making and policy document writing; advocacy and monitoring, etc..

#### **FIELD 5:**

#### **HUMAN RIGHTS MONITORING AND DOCUMENTATION**

##### **▪ HELSINKI COMMITTEE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA ▪**

In the course of 2015, mass violations of human rights were noted in the Republic of Macedonia. Illegally intercepted conversations, disclosed by the opposition, have revealed corruption and

violation of constitutional principles such as power sharing, rule of law and legal state. Immediately after the opposition disclosed a set of wiretap recordings on 5<sup>th</sup> May 2015 high number of citizens gathered in front of the Government's building to express their revolt against the cover up of Martin Neskovski's murder. On the account of police's excessive use of force at this protest, citizens continued to protest in the days that followed, ending on 17<sup>th</sup> May 2015 with mass rally organized by the joint opposition. Throughout this period, the *Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in the Republic of Macedonia (MHC)* was the first organization where citizens reported violations of rights, and the central place addressed by domestic and foreign media (in particular *BBC*, *Al Jazeera*, national TV stations from Turkey and Croatia, French private television, etc.) for information, positions and legal opinions. In this period, *MHC* cooperated with representatives from international organizations, especially the *United Nations*, *OSCE*, *Human Rights Watch* and *Amnesty International*.

Legal aid was provided to 15 participants in protests from 5<sup>th</sup> May who had reported violation of their rights to *MHC*, whereas 10 persons also reported excessive use of force by the police, but they refused to initiate court procedures because of distrust in the system. As regards discrimination, legal aid was provided in 14 cases, of which 5 cases concerned discrimination on the grounds of political affiliation, 4 cases on the grounds of ethnic background, 2 cases on the grounds of intellectual disability, 2 cases on the grounds of gender and 2 cases on the grounds of sexual orientation. Having in mind *MHC's* strategic operation in the field of racial profiling of Roma at border crossing points, court representation was provided in 2 such cases, with court proceedings underway.

In 2015, the European Court of Human Rights was presented with and approved for reconsideration one new application concerning an underage person who had been victim of inhumane and degrading treatment on the part of employees at the Public Facility "Institute for Protection and Rehabilitation - Banja BANSKO".

Important activities in relation to the Network for Protection against Discrimination included development and publication of the annual report enabling continuity of information about state-of-affairs in terms of discrimination and submission of the shadow report to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. *MHC* members were actively involved in the work of the National Network against Domestic Violence, especially by means of providing legal advice due to the increased number of domestic violence cases reported.

#### **FIELD 6:**

#### **BUDGET TRANSPARENCY**

#### **▪ ASSOCIATION FOR EMANCIPATION, SOLIDARITY AND EQUALITY OF WOMEN – ESE ▪**

In the course of 2015, based on its budget monitoring and analysis activities, the *Association for Emancipation, Solidarity and Equality of Women (ESE)* prepared five reports on financial and content implementation of the Ministry of Health's 2015 preventive and curative health protection programmes.

Six appeals were lodged in front of the Commission for Protection of the Right to Free Access to Public Information on the basis of administration silence against the Ministry of Health and two appeals contesting the decision on nondisclosure of data against *NL Agency, Division NL EVD International, ORIO*. These appeals concern requests on extending analysis of ORIO project implementation. In addition, ESE published and broadly distributed the analysis “What Happens with Money from the Dutch ORIO Grant Intended for Promotion of Health Protection for Mothers and Children?”.

Based on the analysis, letters with specific draft-measures aimed at promotion of reactive and proactive budget transparency by the Government, Ministry of Health and Ministry of Finance were submitted and concerned spending of funds under the basic budget, the budget from self-financing activities, the budget from donations and the budget from credits, as follows: one letter with four draft-measures was addressed to the Minister of Finance; one letter with eight draft-measures to the Minister of Health; and one letter with three draft-measures was addressed to the Deputy Prime Minister for European Affairs. Individual letters addressed to these institutions were accompanied with the proposal submitted to the Ministry of Health and copy of the analysis.

*ESE's* active participation in the working group on monitoring the implementation of 2014-2016 Action Plan for Open Government Partnership resulted in the Government of Republic of Macedonia adopting a conclusion (at its 79<sup>th</sup> session held on 15.6.2015) and tasking the Ministry of Health to establish a working group comprised of all coordinators of ministry's preventive and curative programmes by 30<sup>th</sup> June 2015 the latest and to organize meeting with *ESE* for the purpose of defining contents and frequency of reports concerning content and financial implementation of all programmes under the Ministry of Health.

Analysis findings and recommendations related to content and financial implementation of the component on early detection of cervical cancer (under the Programme on Early Detection of Malignant Diseases) were presented in all regions covered by individual public health centres in the Republic of Macedonia and other representatives from public institutions, gynaecologists, experts and CSOs. Draft-measures were presented to the Minister of Health, Minister of Finance and the Government of Republic of Macedonia, while the celebration of the World Cancer Day (4.2.2015) was used for information dissemination on analysis findings to all media outlets. The information was covered by 22 printed and electronic media.

Continuous technical support was provided to partner Roma CSOs in regard to planning social accountability activities for the period 2015–2016. Joint national strategy and local advocacy plans were drafted on immunization coverage of Roma children aged 0 to 15 years in 2015 and advancing coverage of Roma women aged 24 to 60 years under the Programme on Cervical Cancer Screening. *ESE* developed short analysis with key findings about the Programme for Active Health Protection of Mothers and Children and the Programme for Systematic Check Ups of Pupils and Students, while on the occasion of World Roma Day, in cooperation with partner Roma CSOs, press conference was organized to present key findings related to Roma health and based on community and budget monitoring activities. Findings and recommendations were published in 9 printed and electronic media and were promoted on the social networks. Public debates were held on following topics: “Preventive Health Services and Immunization of Roma

Children in the Republic of Macedonia” and “Promotion of Roma Women Coverage with the Programme on Cervical Cancer Screening”.

Technical support was provided to paralegals from three Roma CSOs by means of training, continuous updates and additions to contents published on the website [www.healthrights.mk](http://www.healthrights.mk), changes and supplements made to existing work templates and the electronic database, as well as by means of monitoring and performance evaluation of paralegals and, in general, assessment of implementation of paralegal assistance programmes. Representatives from partner Roma CSOs benefited from additional training concerning strategic litigation possibilities on national, regional and international level. Plan was developed for merging two programme components (social accountability and legal literacy and empowerment) and introducing new concept of work, including activities for new distribution and mapping of Roma communities, and introducing new concept of work that implies Roma animators and facilitators.

In support of CSOs interested in budget analysis, three-day training on budget monitoring and analysis and other tools for community participation was delivered for 19 representatives from CSOs, followed by activities to translate and publish two guides: “Detailed Overview of Priority-Based Budget Planning” and “Opening Government –Guide of Best Practices for Transparency, Accountability and Civic Participation in the Public Sector”.

In 2015, *ESE* developed the following documents: report based on findings from the assessment of public institutions’ proactive transparency; publication based on research findings concerning the failure to disburse third party care allowance for terminally ill people; brochure with recommendations for promotion of implementation of the Programme on Cervical Cancer Screening (early detection); shadow report to the International Covenant on Economic, Cultural and Social Rights; report on implementation of the Strategy for Protection against Domestic Violence; and short video for promotion of importance of regular gynaecology examinations with PAP test. Moreover, the thematic website on transparency and accountability – Fiscal Transparency Macedonia – was designed and operationalized, including banners for its promotion on several news portals and other media.

## **CONCEPTS in 2015**

### **Progress in terms of 2015 milestones**

#### **CONCEPT 1:**

#### **CIVIC EMPOWERMENT AND MOBILIZATION**

The overall aim of *FOSM*'s concept on Civic Empowerment and Mobilization is to contribute to the revival of democratic governance.

First objective under this concept is for empowered individuals, informal groups and CSOs, coordinated within an open, inclusive and non-partisan platform, to address acute and contentious issues in response to backsliding democracy.

(1) Platform for Citizen-Oriented Politics AJDE! (AJDE!), established in 2014 by 150 activists, continued to actively organize civic actions and performances aimed at alerting the public about non-functional institutions and erosion of democratic values. In 2015, activities of this platform primarily concerned public action against censorship, as envisaged under the draft-law on prohibition of publication of intercepted materials, as well as actions to oppose the erection of fence and limited access to the building of the Government of Republic of Macedonia called “We Fence Ourselves from the Government”.

(2) “Culture and Politics” is FOSM’s training program aimed to provide broader knowledge to representatives from CSOs, informal groups and activists around topics such as: arts and power, culture of the regime and culture of the resistance. Two sessions were organized and attended by 56 participants.

(3) For the purpose of facilitating civic reaction to eroding democratic practices, grants were awarded to 8 initiatives whose activities, *inter alia*, focused on protection of the right to peaceful protest by provision of legal aid; youth and local policies, especially those aimed at strengthening interethnic relations and integration of persons with disabilities. In addition, 13 social media activists were supported in order to encourage critical thinking and debate in new media.

As part of support for the coalition “Citizens for Macedonia”, comprised of 75 CSOs, the action “We Deserve Better” was organized for the purpose of familiarizing and mobilizing citizens around problems noted in numerous in-country and international reports developed in reaction to the political crisis. To this end, 17 CSOs and number of activists were supported to take part in implementation of activities in various fields (youth issues, freedom and justice, honest government, environment, health, education, standard of living, etc.). Field-based communication with citizens and 20 public interventions resulted in distribution of 52,000 brochures, 12,000 leaflets and 98,000 copies of the three issues of the newspaper “That’s Why”. This action was massively promoted in the social media via broad range of communication channels and tools, and was supported by more than 20,000 citizens, with radio and video advertisements being broadcasted on 7 local, 3 regional and 3 national media networks.

(4) In 2015, 7 ALARMS were published and promoted in printed and on social media covering topics in the field of economy and human rights.

(5) Citizens for European Macedonia Club (CEM Club) continued to operate as the single alternative to the narrowed public space. FOSM and around 70 CSOs, informal groups, civil initiatives or coalitions, independent applicants, embassies and publishing houses organized a total of 225 events attended by more than 5,000 people. Great public interest was triggered by events organized around the promotion of Macedonian language editions of “Loyal Unto Death” by Keith Brown, “The Origins of Albanian Nationalism” by Nathalie Clayer and “Memoirs, Second Volume (1912 – 1925)” by Eqrem bej Vlora, accompanied with public debates; the lecture delivered by Marija Todorova PhD on the topic “Is There Weak Nationalism and Is It a Useful Category” and debates about the future of Europe and the report prepared by the European Policy Centre titled “EU Member States and Enlargement Towards the Balkans”.

In the course of 2015, total of 41 grants were awarded to CSOs by means of open call for project proposals under the **USAID Civil Society Project**, which *FOSM* is implementing since 2012. Grants were awarded under the three project components: 14 grants for CSOs acting as democracy hubs in their communities, 13 grants for CSOs engaged in government oversight and research-based advocacy and 14 grants for CSOs' joint actions. Their respective projects are implemented for a period of 10 to 18 months (by the end of July 2016).

For the purpose of CSOs' capacity building to implement grants awarded, *FOSM* organized 4 initial training sessions (procedures governing project implementation, financial and narrative reports, branding of public materials and events, communication and coordination), as well as 20 training sessions on project monitoring and evaluation, strategic planning, volunteerism and volunteer management, civic engagement, public communications and free access to public information. For the purpose of CSOs' capacity building in the field of monitoring and advocacy, training sessions were organized on issues such as: EU funds programming and application; rule of law, democracy and human rights; monitoring public spending; budget transparency and accountability. These training workshops were attended by total of 558 participants. Representatives from grant beneficiaries also attended 5 networking meetings (Kriva Palanka, Tetovo, Bitola and Skopje) and social hackathon organized for preparation and implementation of joint campaign. Forum organized by *the Platform for Citizen-Oriented Politics - AJDE!* was attended by 56 platform members.

As part of advocacy activities and in cooperation with project partners and grant beneficiaries, six public debates were organized: "Civic Engagement in Macedonia 2012-2014: Experiences and Challenges", debate and promotion of comparative analysis on civic engagement 2012-2014 (in cooperation with *Reactor – Research in Action*); "Manual on Active Citizenship", promotion and debate (in cooperation with *FORUM – Centre for Strategic Research and Documentation*), "Engage" conference on social activism and two public debate events i.e., "ARGUMENT – Organized Expression" (in cooperation with the *Youth Educational Forum*) and "Way Out from the Impasse!?" (in cooperation with the *Macedonian Centre for European Training*). Partner organization *Youth Educational Forum (YEF)* organized the fourth youth summer school with 80 participants, as well as 12 thematic training targeting 163 young people, 6 volunteer actions with 170 participants (Bitola, Veles, Debar, Kicevo, Negotino and Skopje), local initiatives in Resen and Skopje, national youth campaign for promotion of argumentation and competitive debate, expert lectures, student hackathon, national debate tournament for beginners with 114 young people, debate tournament for mixed teams with 50 participants. *YEF* initiated debate clubs at two universities, produced 5 short animated educational videos about the role and rights of students whose promotion event was attended by 60 persons and included presentation of *YEF's* analysis of student organization and engagement in Macedonia.

As part of its School for Active Citizenship, the partner organization *FORUM – Centre for Strategic Research and Documentation* covered total of 51 participants from the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> generation and organized two reflexion workshops for 35 students from the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> generations, meeting with 30 alumni of this school and two alumni actions. *Reactor – Research in Action* published a policy brief based on its research results for civic engagement in the period 2012-2014 and conducted another research on civic engagement in 2015. The partner organization *Centre for Civil Communications* published 5 periodic reports on monitoring of public procurements at national and local level and 2 indices of rationality. Three Accession

Watch Reports and comparative analysis of 2012-2015 EC Progress Reports for Macedonia were developed and published in cooperation with the *Macedonian Centre for European Training*.

The concept's second objective aims to empower and mobilize citizens to develop alternative laws and policies in participatory manner, thereby demonstrating benefits of civic engagement and mobilizing civil society actors to take actions and actively engage in issues of public interest.

(1) Under this objective, activities were completed to draft alternative laws (on social protection and on referendum and civic initiative), initiated back in 2014. The draft proposal for Law on Social Protection anticipates introduction of minimum income set in amount above the poverty threshold (for ex., 12,000 MKD per family), whereas novelty introduced in the Law on Referendum implies definition of referendum questions, SEC's role in this process, as well as roles of initiative boards for referendum. *FOSM* started preparatory work for development of analyses aimed to contribute towards improvement of particular practices, primarily those closely related to Chapter 23 on EU accession and focused on human rights and judiciary. The first research topic concerns definition of public interest in the legislation, while the second research topic covers implementation of judgments taken by the European Court of Human Rights.

Under the **Regional Research Promotion Programme (RRPP)**, regional workshop on the topic "Research Design of Public Policy Documents – Building Basis to Influence Public Policies" was held in Skopje in February 2015 and was attended by 24 young researchers. On 26<sup>th</sup> May, round table was organized in Skopje on the issue "Macedonia 2015: Between Authoritarian Temptations and Europeanization?". This event was attended by 69 participants, including researchers, representatives from the academia, CSOs and the media. By the end of May, RRPP organized its annual international conference on the topic "Social, Political and Economic Changes in the Western Balkans" in Ohrid, with participation of 108 researchers. Three regional projects supported by RRPP were successfully completed in the period October – November, while the remaining three projects will be completed in 2016. The month of December marked the start of second phase activities under the project "National Policy Dialogue in the Field of Social Sciences in Macedonia". Main goal of this project is to propose new financial model for supporting scientific and research projects that would improve quality, effectiveness and impact of research activities in Macedonia.

## **CONCEPT 2:**

### **MODEL OF CITIZEN-CENTRIC MUNICIPALITY**

This concept anticipates creation of the model of citizen-centric municipality which implements participatory local policy making and offers quality services for citizens. Activities under this concept are pursued in three big, urban and multi-ethnic municipalities: Strumica, Centar and Struga. In early 2015, cooperation agreements were signed with mayors of these municipalities for continuation of activities implemented in 2014. By the end of 2015, external evaluation was conducted of activities taken under this concept.

First objective under this concept is geared towards participatory local policy making, which included organization of public debates and creation of possibilities for citizens to participate in development of action plans for already adopted local strategies in 4 fields: education, youth, social protection and cooperation with the civil society, as well as series of activities aimed at capacity building for municipal administration, civil society and schools.

(1) Total of 244 participants from the ranks of municipal administration employees, council members and employees at local schools and civil society representatives in the three municipalities benefited from targeted training sessions on topics such as: anti-discrimination and social justice; interdepartmental cooperation; children's rights and inclusion; monitoring of local public procurements, and developing applications for funding available under EU programmes. External evaluation findings showed that training sessions (as a whole, and separately) have contributed to strengthened capacity of municipal administrations, as well as of municipal council members. Another important benefit thereof included stronger cohesion among municipal administration staff. Moreover, they have enabled establishment and/or operationalization of communication channels between incumbent and newly employed staff at municipalities. The cohesion effect had not been planned, but in the course of the external evaluation participants reiterated it on multiple occasions. At the same time, all three municipalities consider such training as opportunity for team building, information sharing and joint planning, in particular because meetings of such type are rarely or are not organized at all by municipalities. Organization of workshops on EU funds with mixed composition of participants, i.e. municipal administration employees and civil society representatives, opened possibilities for development of joint initiatives and project applications for EU funds.

School representatives surveyed by the external evaluation have indicated the high level of usefulness of training delivered, with particular emphasis on knowledge acquired in terms of children's rights and inclusion. This was confirmed by findings from focus group discussions, indicating that training sessions have contributed to strengthened individual capacity among representatives from participating schools. Knowledge they have acquired by means of training would, to great extent, be applied in their regular work.

Training on strategic planning and participatory decision-making was followed by practical application, i.e. participants had an opportunity to be involved in planning and developing action plans for previously adopted local strategies, whereby a total of 12 public discussions were held in 2015 and included 387 citizens from the three municipalities, resulting in finalization of action plans on youth, education, social protection and cooperation with the civil society.

(2) In the last quarter of the year, 6 project forums were held, with participation of 522 citizens (166 citizens in the Municipality of Centar, 130 citizens in the Municipality of Struga, and 228 citizens in the Municipality of Strumica), for the purpose of selecting activities from the action plans to be implemented by means of co-financing from *FOSM* and the municipalities. The process on priority setting conducted by participants at these forums resulted in 4 grants awarded to municipalities (two grants for the Municipality of Centar under its strategy on education and social protection, one grant for the Municipality of Struga under its strategy on social protection, and one grant for the Municipality of Strumica under its strategy on youth). For the purpose of implementing portion of activities envisaged under their respective school development plans, local schools submitted project-proposals and 3 co-financing grants were



awarded. In addition, for the purpose of participatory planning of priority programs under municipal budgets 6 budget forums were organized by the end of 2015, with participation of 480 citizens in all three municipalities (122 citizens in the Municipality of Centar, 167 citizens in the Municipality of Struga, and 191 citizens in the Municipality of Strumica).

Second objective under the concept aims to provide quality services to citizens and strengthen civil society for active participation in community life. It was pursued by a combination of several tools and approaches.

(1) Community Centres established in all three municipalities provided direct administrative assistance to 129 citizens. In addition, for the purpose of clarifying citizens' doubts about certain administrative issues, 2 manuals were developed and printed on competences, procedures and services in the Municipality of Struga and the Municipality of Centar, as well as leaflet with information on urban planning services in the Municipality of Strumica. All three Community Centres organized 23 training sessions on various topics with participation of 646 civil society representatives, including students and teachers.

One of the best practices incentivized by Community Centres in all three municipalities included organization of so-called open days with the municipality, intended to address two aspects of local governments' operation. The first aspect concerns establishment of direct communication of municipal councillors and municipal employees with citizens. Established communication concerns various topics of citizens' interest and is pursued with support from Community Centres. Innovation in this regard is seen in the fact that councillors act as members of municipal council's committees and so far municipalities have not organized this type of interaction (in terms of format, but also in terms of topics covered). Benefits thereof are best represented in discussions taking place between councillors and citizens, as a direct form of accountability and transparency. The second aspect and practical benefits thereof concern action to address one systemic challenge common across all municipalities in the country, i.e. marginalization of the role played by the municipal council, as opposed to the mayor's role and influence. Mobilization of municipal councillors through committees and open days contributes to strengthened fulfilment of their legal obligations as regards adoption of local policies and budgets, oversight on performance of the mayor and the municipal administration, as well as representation of citizens' interests, who had elected them. According to the concept's external evaluation findings, the benefits from organization of open days in practice include the mayor's increased accountability and transparency before the municipal council, and of the municipality before citizens. In the course of 2015, 16 open days were organized with representatives from municipal councils' committees and municipal administration employees, and were attended by total of 361 citizens, benefiting from the opportunity to discuss issues and topics of their interest and need.

In all three municipalities, Community Centres supported the process for development of social maps that would assist towards more structured planning of activities and their financial implications in the following period, in particular the strategy and action plan on social protection. Several important research studies and public debates were organized on topics such as youth migration in Struga, volunteerism and demand for new educational profiles in Strumica, or changes to the detailed urban plan in Centar. In the Municipality of Struga, survey was conducted and resulted in creation of database with companies offering internship programs on local level.

Community Centres actively supported several civic initiatives, such as “I Love GTC” and the referendum organized for preserving the architectural design of the City Trade Centre in the Municipality of Centar, *AJDE!* joined the group petition lodged to the Constitutional Court contesting the Law on Salary Contributions for Honoraria Workers (521 endorsements were gathered in the municipalities of Strumica, Struga and Centar), while the Community Centre in Strumica supported the initiative for re-opening and enrolment of new students at the Institute of Gender Studies in Skopje, etc.

(2) *FOSM's* efforts within the project **Access to Justice in Macedonia** aimed to improve access to justice in Macedonia, with focus on poor and marginalized groups, funded by the European Union (European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights), are pursued by means of supporting 6 CSOs providing free legal aid, which have secured legal advices and preliminary legal aid to 815 citizens. 14 of the total of 28 applications for free legal aid submitted to the Ministry of Justice are pending approval, state-funded court representation is secured in 11 cases, 2 applications were withdrawn and 1 application was rejected. For the purpose of providing strategic litigation in 3 cases of denied free legal aid, the project secured attorney representation and lodged one individual appeal. The monitoring report on implementation of free legal aid was prepared and presented at the project's closing conference and was distributed to all relevant institutions. The advocacy strategy focused on improving the Law on Free Legal Aid was developed with a view to continue efforts for equal access to justice for all citizens and strengthen capacity of CSOs profiled in the field of human rights.

### **CONCEPT 3:**

#### **ROMA INTEGRATION**

Committed to decreasing the gap between policies and practices as prerequisite for Roma integration, this concept aims to achieve the following objectives:

- empowering Roma to enjoy health rights and improve education outcomes; and
- holding the Government accountable for shaping, budgeting and delivering effective and just education and health systems.

The long-term goal is to keep the integration of Roma high on the national agenda beyond 2015 and to accelerate progress towards meeting the goals and objectives on health and education from the new National Roma Strategy. As regards promotion of joint work and partnership with the OSF Public Health Program, 13 Roma and non-Roma CSOs were of central importance in attainment of milestones set for 2015.

#### **(1) Empowered Roma to enjoy health rights**

- *Providing legal protection and paralegal assistance for exercise of health rights*

High number of requests for paralegal assistance in the recent years is indicative of the fact that Roma people are still facing fundamental existential problems and inability to exercise rights they are entitled to, thus giving rise to the need for long-term continuous efforts aimed at attainment of visible changes. On the other hand, experiences from past work show that

progress in this process (in addition to knowledge, skills and quality pursuit of advocacy efforts) also depend on immediate and active involvement of the affected community as key factor of change. Therefore, in the course of 2015 *FOSM* continued to support Roma CSOs in application of approaches on legal empowerment and literacy for the Roma community. Field visits and engagement of paralegals resulted in provision of paralegal assistance to 1,300 persons from Roma settlements in Suto Orizari, Delcevo, Pehcevo, Vinica and village Crnik, while 313 persons from Delcevo, village Crnik, Pehcevo and Vinica benefited from free-of-charge tuberculosis and gynaecological medical examinations. Paralegal programmes in Roma communities were promoted by distribution of 1,000 leaflets and 900 promotional cards, resulting in 744 households informed and acquainted with work of paralegal assistance programmes. Moreover, total of 372 persons attended 21 educational workshops organized around the following topics: exercising the right to third party care allowance; the role of sanitary inspectorate; exercising the right to emergency medical services; procedures for obtaining personal identification documents for persons who are not nationals of the Republic of Macedonia; rights and liabilities of social allowance beneficiaries and recent amendments to laws and bylaws in this field; amendments to the Law on Health Insurance and exercising rights in the field of health protection. As a result of community's raised awareness and acquired knowledge, the level of cooperation and coordination with relevant local actors was promoted and total of 43 meetings were organized with representatives from the Health Insurance Fund, healthcare institutions, municipalities, committees on protection of patients' rights, social work centres, sanitary inspectorate, etc. At the same time, Roma citizens more frequently demand exercise of their rights in front of competent institutions. An example thereof is the procedure initiated for establishment of health consequences from polluted drinking water in village Crnik, whereby the Food and Veterinary Agency tasked the local government with resolution of this problem.

Provision of legal representation before the courts in the Republic of Macedonia resulted in attainment of the following outcomes: 2 positive rulings were taken by first instance courts and established violation of health rights and confirming erroneous practices (referral to method treatment of patient's choosing and confirmed medical error); one ruling became enforceable and is the first ruling by means of which the judiciary has awarded monetary reimbursement for invalidity suffered due to medical error); one ruling became enforceable and concerns indemnity for non-material damages suffered as result of violation of right to mental health of two parents whose child suffered invalidity due to medical error; an appeal was lodged claiming indemnity and is the first one where one of the grounds indicated concerns violation of the right to information about the health status and will imply application of the European Court of Human Rights' case law; 3 cases were successfully completed in front of the Administrative Court of the Republic of Macedonia and concerned regulation of civil status.

Well organized, joint advocacy, which included simultaneous application of several approaches (legal and media evidence-based advocacy), has led to adoption of amendments to the Law on Health Insurance, by means of which 20,000 insured persons (against which the Health Insurance Fund lodged criminal charges) were released from criminal prosecution. Although initially planned for Roma people, the joint and coordinated initiative for legal protection concerning the right to health insurance, implemented by an informal coalition of 12 CSOs and 4 attorneys, eventually addressed all health insurance beneficiaries irrespective of their ethnicity. In 2015, continued monitoring and advocacy efforts resulted in revoked obligation for unemployed and low income people to re-register for health insurance, as this process is now

pursued ex officio by the Health Insurance Fund and beneficiaries are later informed about their right's extension by means of decisions delivered to their home address.

➤ *Social accountability for implementation of health services that affect Roma health status*

Strategic use of different social accountability approaches and tools contributed towards strengthened capacity of partner Roma CSOs to advocate for accountability and transparency on health services' funding and delivery. In 2015, as a result of continuous community monitoring activities, regular immunization coverage of children aged 0 to 15 years in Delcevo, Crnik and Vinica reached 90%. Such high share of immunization coverage is mainly due to enhanced advocacy activities and inclusion of representatives from public health institutions (outreach nurses and Roma Health Mediators) in implementation of 2 mass actions (September 2014 and April 2015) for checking vaccination cards of all children aged 0 to 15 years. Regular education workshops for community members, thematic radio programmes, and field visits conducted by civil society representatives increased awareness and knowledge about health services that institutions should deliver. In that, on the request submitted by the community, the number of outreach visits in the first year after giving birth was increased from 3 to 5 and then to 7 visits. Knowledge of the right to free-of-charge gynaecological examinations contributed to 297 Roma women receiving cervical cancer screening services. Moreover, active involvement of the Roma community encouraged joint actions with local level institutions, whereby the municipalities of Delcevo, Vinica and Pehcevo secured co-financing for activities implemented during the immunization week. As a result of advocacy efforts taken by Roma community members in the Municipality of Suto Orizari, competent institutions secured field vehicle for outreach nurses, the number of outreach visits was increased, and conditions for safe immunization were ensured by means of improved hygiene at the children vaccination and medical examination department in the ambulance in Suto Orizari. At the public debate organized on the topic "Preventive Health Services and Immunization of Roma Children in the Republic of Macedonia", Roma community members were able to voice their demand, in prepared and argument-based manner, for improved access to immunization and preventive health services before the decision-makers in attendance. At the meeting with the Minister of Health, representatives from Roma CSOs working on improving accountability of public health institutions presented their findings and identified obstacles faced by Roma people in terms of accessing services from the Programme on Systematic Check Ups of Pupils and Students and the Programme for Active Health Protection of Mothers and Children. At this meeting it was agreed for CSOs to present the health minister's cabinet with specific recommendations that would be taken into consideration during development of next year's programmes. In the meeting's aftermath, on two occasions the Minister of Health announced start of organized breast cancer screening and media campaign for promotion of organized cervical cancer screening (aired only on MTV 1 and MTV 2).

Indications made by CSOs, which in the past years focused on immunization coverage of Roma children, and their advocacy efforts for introduction of additional measures to increase the immunization coverage resulted in the Ministry of Health's announcement for use of polyvalent vaccines according to the regular vaccination calendar. This should lead to increased general coverage of children with vaccines and it is of particular importance for Roma children, as the most vulnerable group, because one visit to the immunization department and administration of single vaccine would immunize them from several diseases.

Media tools were used as well to strengthen advocacy for improved health services for Roma people. On the occasion of World Cancer Day (4<sup>th</sup> February 2015), press release was issued to all media outlets concerning monitoring findings for the Programme on Early Detection of Malignant Diseases (components on cervical and breast cancer screening). It was covered by 22 printed and electronic media. On the occasion of International Roma Day (7<sup>th</sup> April), press-conference was held for presentation of key findings obtained as part of community monitoring and budget analysis in the field of women health and Roma health. Findings and recommendations were covered by 9 printed and electronic media, and were further promoted on the social media. In addition, two public debates were held: “Preventive Health Services and Immunization of Roma Children in the Republic of Macedonia” and “Promotion of Women Coverage with the Programme on Cervical Cancer Screening”. Short video was produced to promote importance of regular gynaecological examinations with PAP tests, provide information about entitlements under the Ministry of Health’s Programme on Organized Cervical Cancer Screening and to present key findings from implementation of social accountability methodologies. CSOs’ representatives appeared as guests in different thematic talk shows aired on *TV Sutel*, *TV Telma* and *TV NOVA*.

- *Integrated use of social accountability and paralegal assistance approaches for promotion of reproductive health*

Aimed at promoting reproductive health of Roma women, field visits of trained Roma community members in the Municipality of Suto Orizari educated 573 Roma women about their reproductive rights (93 pregnant women and 480 women in their reproductive age). Legal assistance was provided in 37 cases of violation of reproductive rights, while legal advices were secured in 193 cases. Activities were taken to complete the third community score card on quality and availability of health services. At the 114<sup>th</sup> session of the Human Rights Committee dedicated to reconsideration of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Periodic Report of the Republic of Macedonia on the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the issue related to absence of gynaecology practice in the Municipality of Suto Orizari was raised. As a result of advocacy efforts on the part of several partner Roma CSOs, common practices implying illegal charges for gynaecology services at 5 private gynaecology practices were discontinued, and gynaecology services were secured for Roma women from Suto Orizari three times a week.

- *Changing the negative narratives for Roma at healthcare institutions*

Despite achievements from implementation of multiannual projects for promotion of health rights and access to health services for Roma people, experiences in the field and research results showed unchanged attitudes and behaviour towards Roma among health professionals at public health institutions. Stereotypes and prejudices are still predominant and determine health professionals’ behaviour towards Roma patients. On the other hand, Roma have their own perspectives and prejudices about health professionals and manners in which they address them for health services in general.

Therefore, in the course of 2015 *FOSM* continued to support activities aimed at changing negative narratives for Roma at healthcare institutions. Pilot projects were initiated with target groups comprised of medical staff at healthcare institutions in Skopje, Kumanovo, Prilep,

Tetovo, Gostivar and Delcevo, and Roma citizens from these towns. Project activities included different interventions aimed at changing narratives such as: forum theatre, comic book messages, joint events at which health professionals had opportunity to learn about Roma lifestyle and traditions, second round of baseline research on attitudes was conducted in Prilep and Bitola regions, etc. At the same time, activities were taken to ensure sustainability of interventions on changing negative narratives for Roma by introducing special contents on non-discrimination and work with vulnerable groups in subject curricula at undergraduate medical schools and faculties.

(2) Improved completion rate of Roma primary school students and increased number of Roma high-school and university graduates

In academic year 2014/2015, *Romaversitas* continued to support informal education of Roma students, providing training for 42 students on different topics of interest (career portfolio, hate speech, academic writing and effective use of computers for academic writing), designed and delivered by senior and more experienced alumni. Moreover, 15 high-school students, beneficiaries of *Romaversitas*, acquired knowledge on *Street Law* by participating in 10 cluster activities, while 14 high-school students improved their debating skills at 8 sessions.

In mid-2015, *Romaversitas* transformed from *FOSM* project to citizens' association initiated and managed by students, former recipients of scholarships and beneficiaries of *Romaversitas*, financially supported by the Roma Education Fund and became part of the international network of *Romaversitas*. With that, the exit strategy on discontinuing further financing and operation of *Romaversitas* as part of *FOSM* was successfully completed.

As part of its efforts for inclusive education, *FOSM* delivered a three-day training titled "How to Achieve More Inclusive Education?" for 40 teachers from 4 primary schools. After the training *FOSM* allowed the project schools to apply theoretical knowledge acquired and to improve their inclusive policies and practices. For that purpose, grants were awarded for 4 small school initiatives related to improved accessibility of schools for students with physical disabilities, increased participation and improved cooperation with parents, detection of students' individual needs for additional assistance in mastering the curricula, as well as improved school performance of Roma students. In cooperation with the Faculty of Education in Ljubljana, *FOSM* developed and promoted publication on students' participation in schools, comprised of 4 action research studies conducted by project primary schools in Kumanovo. Ultimate objective pursued under this activity was strengthened research capacity of teachers by conducting action research studies with a view to improve work of teachers and schools.

The Roma Memorial University Scholarship Program (RMUSP) and the Roma Health Scholarship Program (RHSP) significantly contributed to increased number of Roma high-school and university students in the country. In the academic year 2015/16, total of 114 RMUSP scholarships (60 boys and 54 girls) and 23 RHSP scholarships (18 girls and 5 boys) were awarded (2 for high-school students and 21 for medical students); 100 RMUSP and RHSP scholarship beneficiaries graduated, and 44 of them are employed (majority of them are employed at public administration bodies, portion of them are employed as medical staff and the remaining graduates work in the civil society sector); 56 high-school students benefiting from RHSP scholarships completed their secondary medical education with the Program's

support, while 23 Roma university students finished their medical studies and some of them continued towards completing residency programmes in different fields. RHSP scholarship beneficiaries benefited from mentorship assistance provided by 14 teachers, took part in the summer school and follow-up training on advocacy, and were given opportunity to participate in 4 small research efforts, together with their mentors, on topics related to Roma health. RHSP additional components implied small grants for three scholarship beneficiaries to participate in academic events, while two scholarship beneficiaries were awarded grants to learn foreign language.

### (3) Research data and recommendations produced to support informed advocacy work

In order to ensure informed advocacy work of partner Roma and non-Roma CSOs to hold the state accountable for delivery of education and health services to Roma, *FOSM* promoted findings and recommendations of previously developed analyses and research studies: 1) national public opinion survey titled “Do Roma Have Better Education Today?”; 2) “Analysis of Roma Segregation in Education in the Republic of Macedonia”, and 3) “National Roma Strategies in the Republic of Macedonia: Analysis of Educational Aspects”.

Two training sessions were delivered to 16 activists from Roma CSOs profiled in the field of Roma education and health rights: the first concerned writing effective policy papers and the second focused on data collection and analysis. These training sessions resulted in development of 5 policy briefs, prepared with mentorship assistance, on the most urgent topics in these two fields, including recommendations aimed to overcome/improve problems identified. Policy briefs were published in electronic format under the title “Roma Activists for Informed and Efficient Roma Integration Policies”.

*FOSM* presented the United Nations with submission on state-of-affairs related to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, with special focus on issues faced by Roma students in the education system. Also, *FOSM* is part of the initiative raised by 5 CSOs, *European Roma Rights Centre* and *Helsinki Committee on Human Rights in the Republic of Macedonia*, for opening *actio popularis* court procedure against segregation of Roma children in special education schools and special classes at mainstream schools.

### (4) Informal Roma advocacy network was created to enable effective advocacy and participation of Roma

*FOSM* and its partner organizations presented the Minister without Portfolio in the Government of Republic of Macedonia tasked with implementation of the Decade on Roma Inclusion with findings and recommendations from their submission aimed at improving education and health policies and measures under the new National Roma Strategy. *FOSM* representatives attended the 7<sup>th</sup> meeting on Roma and Roma refugees, and contributed in discussions organized by the Government of Republic of Macedonia around EC’s 2015 Progress Report for Macedonia, in regard to Roma issues. An array of different advocacy activities was taken, including participation in series of work meetings, conferences and workshops with national and international factors, organized as part of consultation processes for drafting the National Roma Strategy, whereby *FOSM* presented its recommendations concerning contents of future national action plans.

## ❖ **Right to education**

With a view to inform its strategy and facilitate establishment of future strategic priorities and actions in the field of education, in cooperation with the OSF Education Program in London *FOSM* conducted a public opinion survey about education reforms on a representative sample of parents and students, and control group of teachers and high-school students.

This research concerned opinion of different actors about education reforms in the last 10 years and their effects, about trends related to their participation in reform design and implementation, possibility to influence such reforms, and organization of high-school students and teachers. An analysis was performed of contents and discourse promoted by curricula and eight textbooks in the fields of humanities in primary education in terms of social justice, respect for diversity, human rights of all society members and respect for universal values. At the same time, brief analysis and overview was developed about interventions related to inclusive education in the Republic of Macedonia, accompanied with recommendations for future activities.

In parallel, *FOSM* supported *YEF's* project "Youth Engagement" which includes research focused on quality of secondary education, through increased information for youth disseminated by creating multilingual video and multimedia contents broadcasted on *Radio YEF*, as well as by increasing media literacy of high-school students.

### **CONCEPT 4:**

#### **HUMANITARIAN AND LEGAL ASSISTANCE TO MIGRANTS**

Overall goal of the concept is to improve protection of rights and services for migrants and asylum seekers when transiting Macedonia, in cooperation with partner organizations *Legis – Skopje*, *Helsinki Committee on Human Rights in the Republic of Macedonia (MHC)* and *Macedonian Young Lawyers' Association (MYLA)*.

The first objective under this concept concerns improvement of current policies and practices by means of public debates, policy papers and capacity building activities.

*FOSM* and its partner organizations - *MHC*, *Legis* and *MYLA* - are present with activities and staff at transit camps on the country's northern and southern border, and have been granted entry permits by relevant institutions. *Legis* distributed more than 250,000 food packages and an almost equal number of clothing items at two border-crossing points. *MHC* established and trained four teams (2 mobile, 1 mobile from office and 1 office-based) to monitor performance of police officers and enable access to rights for victims of violence or other human rights violations at the two border-crossing points. In that, 24 incidents against refugees were documented and posted in special tab on the website [www.zlostorstvaodomraza.mk](http://www.zlostorstvaodomraza.mk); observers that have contacted refugees-victims lodged 5 complaints to the Ministry of Interior. In addition, *MHC* publishes weekly reports from the field. Total of 2 complaints were lodged against police officers that have abused their authorizations or used excessive or disproportionate force. *MYLA*



delivered inception training for around 30 attorneys and lawyers on the legal aspects of court representation and provision of legal aid to asylum seekers.

In September 2015, *FOSM* organized and delivered regional training for activists and representatives from grass-root organizations, thus enabling at an early stage education in the field “Documenting Human Rights Violations in Crisis Conditions” for more than 30 activists and civil society representatives from Macedonia, Serbia, Croatia, Greece and Hungary. In addition to knowledge acquired, training participants established cooperation and communication along the Balkan route, which is still active and contributes to exchange of accurate and timely information beyond state borders.

Furthermore, *FOSM* facilitated active participation of local activists, representatives of partner organizations and other stakeholders at regional and international meetings on information exchange, networking and implementation of actions with related organizations, formal and informal movements, thus ensuring unhindered communication, coordination and cooperation across state borders. *Legis*, *MHC*, *FOSM* and *MYLA* contribute in exchange of information and ideas as part of local groups on social media, such as *Help the Refugees* - an informal network of local and international organizations working in the field, by means of organizing monthly or impromptu meetings according to the needs in the field through the Google Group *Migrants2015*, and in number of regional and pan-European networks such as: *Balkan Route* (protected e-mail communication), the pan-European informal network *SolidarityBeyondBorders* with its protected communication platform through the tool *Slack.com* comprised of more than 100 activists reporting and exchanging information about the situation in 20 countries, including Turkey.

With the opening of transit camps, *FOSM* facilitates and encourages cooperation with state and international institutions, organizations and bodies. Moreover, *FOSM* and its partner organizations signed the Memorandum of Cooperation with the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, underway is the procedure for signing such memorandum with the public enterprise Macedonian Railways Transport JSC - Skopje and memorandum with border deployed teams of the international organization *Doctors Without Borders* in Serbia and Greece, for the purpose of collecting findings on human rights violations of people falling victims to violence while transiting Macedonia. In addition, our partner organizations *MYLA* and *MHC* signed the Memorandum of Cooperation with the Ministry of Interior, which allows them access to closed institutions, such as the detention department for irregular entry of foreigner nationals located in Gazi Baba.

As regards improvement of current policies and practices, *FOSM* organized two public debates and made its contribution to two actions of activists in front of the EU Delegation Office in Skopje. *FOSM* and its partner organizations’ public press releases are aimed towards making individual and joint contribution to voice messages, problems and needs of refugees and migrants transiting Macedonia or facing problems in the region and Europe, as a whole. To date, partner organizations held two joint press conferences appealing to the Macedonian Railways Transport JSC – Skopje to discontinue their discriminatory policies in setting prices for public transportation services for refugees and presenting specific demands to the Government and the EU Delegation in Skopje on the occasion of International Day of the Rights of Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, when they organized protests and actions to celebrate 18<sup>th</sup> December 2015. With their individual/thematic performances in the public, and according

to their field of operation, partner organizations disclosed information to citizens which the institutions refused to disseminate or attempted to misinform the public.

*FOSM* develops regular weekly reports for the *Open Society Foundations* network.

The second objective under this concept concerns public campaign against xenophobia, implemented at several levels, including the media, Internet-based information, social actions at local level and established partnership with media and journalists.

For that purpose, preparatory activities were taken to organize and deliver local training for journalists and foreign experts on anti-xenophobia, ethical and moral reporting at times of humanitarian crisis, by using legal and specific terminology aimed at respecting the basic tenets when working in or reporting about humanitarian crises: Do Not Harm!

*Total amount of funds spent for implementation of FOSM's activities in 2015 accounted for 310,130,413 MKD, of which 209,998,890 MKD were funds provided by the Open Society Foundations and remaining 100,131,523 MKD are funds from other donors.*