

Protocol for inclusion of citizens and community representatives in the CASA programming

Purpose of the document and background

NGO CASA seeks to facilitate an active and productive engagement of authentic representatives of the Kosovo Serb community in initiatives contributing to the genuine progress of the community. This strategic direction is in line with the main organization objective (mission) **which is to assure sustainable livelihood and viable future for Serbian and other non-majority communities in Kosovo, safeguarded by attainable laws, accomplished by equal developmental opportunities, and valued by recognized ethnic distinctiveness**. Through such an approach, NGO CASA aims to, authenticate the interests of the non-majority communities, promote the people agenda in the decision-making process, and create grass-root interethnic dynamics resistant to imposed politically driven animosities.

To do so, NGO CASA strives expansion of organization's ties with grassroots communities through the development of a wide and diverse grass-root members portfolio of the organization. To that objective CASA **established of Casa Consultative Council (CCC)** – *a group of 12, geographically dispersed, professionally diverse, and gender-balanced individuals*. Its mandate is to actively participate in civic initiatives at the local level, identify genuine community interests, assist the organization in the development of remedies to such a need, and finally participate in the activities/actions in fulfilling the genuine needs (policy level, advocacy action, networking, community mobilization, etc.). By this CASA operations will become arguably tuned with the genuine needs of its constituency and inclusive citizen practices embedded in the core operational practice of the organization. The document before you aim the operationalization of these mechanisms into organizational operational and decision-making procedures ensuring veracious inclusion of citizens in its work.

General principles

Citizens' participation is essential to the success of any non-profit work. It helps to build a sense of community, encourages collaboration, and fosters accountability. Citizens' participation also serves to increase awareness of the cause, as well as provide valuable resources, such as volunteers and donations. Furthermore, citizens' participation helps to ensure that the goals of the project are met, as well as providing a platform for feedback and dialogue.

NGO CASA should strive to assure and operationalize a broad-ranging and cogent inclusion of citizens (and their interests) in the work of organization. To that objective, the organization should develop a procedural mechanism that facilitate an efficient implementation of following principles¹:

- NGO CASA programming is based on genuine and attested needs of its constituency
- NGO CASA applies principles of Inclusive design in development of program addressing the identified needs of citizens. ²
- The NGO CASA should strive to design and implement intervention that targets the genuine causes (roots) of the addressed problems.
- The NGO CASA programming is holistic, inclusive and indiscriminative.

In line with these principles, this document strives to layout internal operational procedures for facilitation of wide-ranging citizens participation in the work of organization that includes the (1) identification of needs; (2) development of remedies; and (3) inclusive implementation methods.

1. Identifying needs

Participation of citizens in program developments is instrumental to ensure that planning will work towards reflecting the priorities and interests of all major groups and that they will be committed to playing their role in translating planning into action. To that objective NGO CASA should apply following procedures:

- 1.1 **Hold regular (quarterly meetings) with CASA Council** to discuss the overall situation in the respective communities and identify the pressing problems that need/can be addressed through the work of the organization. The responsible body for the implementation of this measure is Program Office and Executive Director that are obliged to identify the funds (through timely budgeting) and organize quarterly gatherings and prepare a short note (report) on the findings.
- 1.2 **Consult with CASA Council members upon publication of the call for applications by donor agencies.** Once the major/relevant call for applications are published, the CASA Program Office should develop a call summary (main outtakes) and distribute them to members of the CASA Council encouraging the contribution/suggestions of concepts/ideas/inputs that portray the needs of grass-root communities. Should such feedback come, the Program Office should engage in discussion/coordination with the proposing member to effectuate the proposal or dismiss it clearly communicating the arguments. The proposals for interventions accumulated through this process should be documented and considered in forthcoming calls (as testified need of the community) .
- 1.3 **Support the members of CASA Council on active participation in local decision-making and planning process.** The active attitudes of CASA Council members are of crucial importance for the

¹ NGO CASA – Code of Ethics – Programing Principles, page 3

² Inclusive design entails application of **methodologies to create intervention based of full consideration and understanding of needs and interest of people of all backgrounds and abilities.** Inclusive design may address accessibility, age, culture, economic situation, education, gender, geographic location, language, and race

meaningful process of citizen inclusion in the work of the organization. The members of the Council should be built into recognized civic leaders within their respective communities and take an active part in local sociopolitical dynamics. The organization should support this process through networking, capacity building, coordination, and by any other means that enable the CASA Council members to actively engage in the promotion of the interests of local communities. As this element of NGO CASA work bears immense importance its operationalization should be treated as a strategic objective of the organization and as such portrayed in the Development Strategy of NGO CASA 2022-2025.

- 1.4 **Facilitate participation of CASA Council members in the development of strategic documents of the organization.** This includes the preparation of the Annual report, Development Strategy, and Annual objective documents. The objective is to enable Council members opportunities to contribute in the planning process of the organization. Through this NGO CASA will assure optimal reflection of community views/interest in its operational and strategic documents. The procedural requirements that operationalize this element should be embedded in the pertaining protocols for the development of the above-listed documents.

2. Identifying solutions

Development of programs/projects/initiatives that target the genuine priorities of the communities is a process that requires the same level of insightfulness and local know-how as the very efforts in the identification of these needs. Efficient solutions are those serviceable in a given socio-political environment. More precisely those solutions take into account the very roots of the problems, a diversity of invested interests, existing capacities, and attitudes of local stakeholders. Such insightfulness is best achieved through the inclusion of local representatives in the design of the intervention. To that objective, NGO CASA should:

- 2.1 **Introduce a *brief situation analysis* as a standard procedural step in the process of project development.** Such analysis is to be performed in cooperation with local members of the CASA Council or/and relevant local experts. It aims to determine the causes of the problem that is to be addressed, identify involved stakeholders, gain insight into previous civic/public efforts (projects/programs) to address the same problems, and finally, learn from those mistakes and suggest possible solutions. The Program Office of NGO CASA should build and maintain internal competencies for the execution of brief situation analyses.
- 2.2 **Include at least 1 (in needed more) relevant member of the Council in the project development task group.** The selection of participating member(S) is entrusted to the chair of the task group and should be based on the merits of sectoral competencies and if applicable geographical representations. Nevertheless, the imperative is that this mechanism is crafted as adaptive and flexible to the extent that efficiently accommodates the incorporation of local know-how in the interventions undertaken by the organization.
- 2.3 **The draft proposal on projects of critical importance to the mandate of the organization is shared for comments/contributions by CASA Council.** The members should be encouraged to propose

alternative approaches to addressing the problems, identify the accompanying risks, suggest synergies and local partnerships, and in general propose any other measure that increases the serviceability of the proposed intervention.

2.4 Throughout the project development process support/encourage the engagement of CASA Council members in consultation and coordination with relevant stakeholders at the local level.

Utilization of the CASA members as a link with local stakeholders will enable the consultation process to extend to other community members involved in the addressed matter, i.e those instances with invested interests (beneficiaries, local advocacy groups, local authorities, CSOs, civic activities, etc). The objective is to identify efficient but also serviceable solutions. This means that intervention design should take into account diverse interests, strive inclusion of wider social and beneficiary groups, and if relevant local service providers. The capacity of the Council to undertake such advocacy and liaison activities should be structurally built. The same applies to organization resources to support this process.

2.5 The draft proposal is shared with Council members in charge of gender mainstreaming policies.

This is a crucial procedural step in line with organization policies on gender mainstreaming. The member of the Council in charge of gender policies should be encouraged to suggest alternations in the design of the project that assure a non-discriminatory and affirmative approach of the organization towards the interest of women. Additionally, the organizational strategy and internal operational guidelines should adopt an affirmative stance in order to accommodate gender mainstreaming initiatives within the organization's entire scope of work.

3. Inclusive implementation methods

Citizens' involvement in the execution of the projects carried out by the organization ought to follow naturally. The organization should strive into building local partnerships and recruiting local know-how for its interventions to assure tailored results, including mobilization of citizens in advocating aspired changes. To that objective NGO CASA should strive to:

3.1 Include CASA Council members in the project implementation through consultancy contracts When local technical consultancy is present, it should be given an advantage against external recruitments. This measure is not restricted to CASA Council members (although it's the preferred option to achieve prolific engagement) but could also include local experts non-formally aligned with the organization. The idea behind this operational measure is to achieve technical excellence in organization interventions in a given context and take into account local socio-political characteristics. One of the certain ways to assure this is to include local experts in the work of the organization.

3.2 Maintain active public communication on the work of the organization. As almost all civic intervention entails some sort of advocacy it is crucial to maintain efficient communication with the organization's constituency. This requires a strategic approach of the organization in developing and disseminating a simple message that resonates with a targeted audience. The best way to operationalize this measure is to develop and meticulously implement the organization's communication strategy. The executive management of the organization should initiate the

internal planning procedures in order to develop and put into effect this policy. The program/project of key importance for the organization mandate should include a CASA Council member(s) on the monitoring board or other body overseeing the intervention (steering committee, advisory board etc). As a result, the beneficiary community would continually be involved in the oversight of the organization's operations and mission.

The recommendation for operationalization of protocol

- This protocol is to be treated as an open document. As the affirmation of the organization progresses, the relevant bodies should strive to substantiate the participation of citizens in organization operations increasing the content of the protocol.
- The operationalization of the measures described in this protocol is a direct responsibility of the executive management of the organization. Necessary procedural steps that assure full implementation of this protocol are to be undertaken as a matter of priority.
- The monitoring of organization practices of implementation of measures described in this protocol is performed by the Board of Directors and Assembly of members as part of the regular reporting system of the organization.
- The adoption of the protocol should take place in the first coming regular session of the organization Assembly.

Prepared by: ???

Approved by: Miodrag Marinkovic, Executive Director of CASA

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