MID-TERM REVIEW OF THE ADVANCING SOCIAL COHESION PROJECT

A project implemented by Search for Common Ground, North Macedonia through funding
from the United States Agency for International Development
(Cooperative Agreement AID-165-A-17-00004)

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Acronyms

ASC   Advancing Social Cohesion

BDE   Bureau for Development of Education

FGD   Focus Group Discussion

KII   Key Informant Interview

M&E   Monitoring and Evaluation

MTR   Mid-Term Review

NGO   Non-Governmental Organization

Search   Search for Common Ground

SEI   State Educational Inspectorate

USAID   United States Agency for International Development

Executive Summary

Search for Common Ground (hereinafter Search) is currently undertaking a four-year project, Advancing Social Cohesion (ASC), funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), that is being implemented from June 2017 to June 2021. The project builds upon Search's previous work on intercultural education in North Macedonia to encourage social cohesion. The project is being implemented in ten municipalities in the country: Chair (Skopje area), Debar, Gazi Baba (Skopje area), Gostivar, Karposh (Skopje area), Kichevo, Kumanovo, Radovic, Struga, Tetovo.

The major focus of the project to date has been the training of educators, pedagogical students, parents of kindergarten-age children, education inspectors from the State Educational Inspectorate (SEI), and counsellors from the Bureau for Development of Education (BDE). In addition, the project will also launch a reality television show, called New Heroes, in Year Three and Year Four which is designed to increase public awareness of social cohesion in North Macedonia.

This report is the result of an internal mid-term review (MTR) that was conducted at the end of the second year of this four-year project, with the goal of reflecting on project results thus far and identifying potential areas for improvement. This MTR utilized both semi-structured focus group discussion (FGD) and key informant interview (KII) formats in order to collect relevant qualitative data on the project in 35 separate interviews from May 29 to June 8, 2019. In addition, as part of this MTR Search also collected quantitative data from the general population through a household public opinion poll measuring respondents' views on social cohesion and interethnic collaboration.

Interviews across all respondent groups revealed that participants felt the program was relevant to their work, found a high level of participant satisfaction with the training, and showed that respondents indicated that the training proceeded along the lines of expectations. Words such as 'organized' and 'well organized', "very positive", and even "wonderful" were frequently used to describe the training. There was also an overwhelming desire from project participants for more training of this nature in the future.

One of the strongest findings from this review was the widespread approval of the inclusion of practical exercises in the ASC Project training – and that support for this practical element was consistent across all respondent groups. With a lack of opportunity for practice experience in most cases, teachers and parents used the inclusion of practical content as an example of how the ASC training differed from other trainings they have attended previously, highlighting that it is an opportunity to show what is actually happening on the ground. Respondents also approved of the opportunity the training provided to exchange experience and best practices with teaching colleagues from other locations across North Macedonia.

In terms of the progress to date towards project results and ultimate impact, some of the notable benefits highlighted by respondents included that the training helped them upgrade their skills, learning how to create their own school agenda, how to face challenges and handle conflict in the classroom, and the parent-teacher cooperation triangle. Some teachers noted that the ASC training has helped change

their classroom for the better, as well as improved relationship building between colleagues and with parents.

The public opinion poll included completed interviews with 1432 respondents and found that support for the concept of social cohesion was generally in line with the baseline, though with a slight reduction. Fully 1 out of every 3 three respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that ethnic and cultural diversity is appreciated in the country, and levels of trust in other ethnic groups were found to be lowest amongst the Albanian community and highest amongst the Bosnian community. Overall, the opinion poll underlined the value that the upcoming New Heroes television program might add in influencing viewpoints, as well as the need for the education component that was included in the ASC Project.

While nearly all respondents were very positive about their experience in the training and felt that they had developed professionally, some lessons learned were also discovered during the data collection for this report. For example, a number of respondents felt that the impact of the project is limited by the lack of accompanying materials provided to project participants. Others felt that the project would have a wider reach, and more sustained impact, if participants were also provided with the requisite skills and resources to lead similar trainings with their own colleagues once back in their communities. Some respondents also highlighted possible improvements in beneficiary targeting in order to maximize impact among those who need the training the most, as well as suggested that the participant selection process could be made clearer to all.

Though seen as progressing very well thus far, the report also provided a number of recommendations for Search to consider as the ASC project progresses and for use in future projects. Some of these key recommendations include:

- Search should ensure future training projects include takehome materials

- Search should ensure training agenda includes content on how to disseminate what was learned

- Care should be taken to ensure trainings do not fall during exam period

- Search should consider adjusting beneficiary targeting to maximize impact

- Search should ensure parent inclusion continues for future projects of this nature, and consider extending this to primary school parents

- Search should maintain more direct oversight of its enumerators and ensure more robust training and guidelines for anyone interviewing a child

1. Background

Search for Common Ground (Search) is an international non-governmental and non-profit peacebuilding organization that works in over 30 countries to transform how conflict is dealt with, with the goal of moving away from adversarial approaches and towards more collaborative problem solving. With operations across Africa, Asia, Europe and the Middle East, Search started its programming in North Macedonia in 1994 where it seeks to support collaborative relationships and increased social cohesion among the various ethnic communities in the country.

As eloquently noted by a local government official interviewed during the course of this mid-term review, "Interethnic communication is complex in Macedonia, [as] the constitution says it is a unitary country, but society is divided in reality", adding that historically even when there is some respect between groups it can be too often only from a distance. This is part of the motivation behind the current project implemented by Search.

Search for Common Ground's Advancing Social Cohesion (ASC) project is a four-year project funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) that builds upon Search's previous work on intercultural education in North Macedonia to encourage social cohesion through training educators, pedagogical students, parents of kindergarten-age children, education inspectors from the State Educational Inspectorate (SEI), and counsellors from the Bureau for Development of Education (BDE).

Geographically, the project covers the following ten municipalities: Chair (Skopje area), Debar, Gazi Baba (Skopje area), Gostivar, Karposh (Skopje area), Kichevo, Kumanovo, Radovic, Struga, Tetovo.

In addition, the project also includes the creation of a reality television show designed to increase public awareness of social cohesion nationwide. This program, called "New Heroes", will seek to unify Macedonian, Albanian, Serbian, Turkish, and Roma youth and demonstrate the positive role that young people can play in bringing people together. This component of the project is currently in the filming and production process, with the launch of the reality shows scheduled for September or October of 2019.

Search for Common Ground North Macedonia started implementation of this project in June 2017 and it is scheduled to run until June 2021. The two specific stated objectives of the project are as follows:

1) Strengthen inter-ethnic interaction between children and advance intercultural education in the public kindergartens and primary schools by providing training on multicultural education to preschool and primary school teachers, inspectors from the SEI, representatives of the BDE, and pedagogical students who will become future preschool teachers.
2) Increase public awareness of positive ethnic integration and social cohesion through 24 episodes of an innovative reality TV show demonstrating the positive role which youth of different backgrounds can play when working together in addressing common youth issues in their communities.

This mid-term review is taking place at the two-year mark of this four-year project. The primary focus of the project to date has been surrounding the first objective related to the educational component in kindergartens[1] and primary schools as well as SEI, BDE and pedagogical student training, therefore activities related to this first objective will be the main focus of this mid-term review.

Note that for the purposes of this report, and for the sake of consistency with project documents, the term social cohesion is taken to refer to coexistence among people, trust among members from different ethnic, religious, and cultural groups, and cooperation among diverse ethnic, religious, cultural groups.

2. Purpose

As an internal mid-term review taking place at the end of the second year of a four-year project, the goal of this report is to reflect on project results thus far and to identify areas for improvement as well as recommendations going forward. As such, the intended audience of this report is primarily Search for Common Ground staff, project partners, and USAID in their capacity as the donor supporting implementation. An extract from the Statement of Work created at the onset of this mid-term is included in the below as Appendix A1.

In particular, the study aimed to gather relevant data in order to shed light on the following questions:

Relevance
- Do the key assumptions which guided our project design hold up to date? If not – how has the change in the assumptions impacted our realization of results?
- How relevant are the project strategies, approach and activities as perceived by the beneficiaries and other community stakeholders?

Implementation
- Has the project achieved its milestones set for the period in a timely manner? If not, what were the challenges and what can/should have been the mitigation measures?
- How should we adjust the implementation plan to ensure that it caters to the emerging needs of the context?
- To what extend the specific objectives of the project are met? If not, why?
- What is the monitoring mechanism and what are the mechanisms of the reflection and learning process that have been used?

Progress towards results and the impact
- Are there any signals of increased capacities and skills of project beneficiaries such as preschool teachers, primary school teachers or inspectors in particular? If yes, what are they? If no, what could be the reasons behind it? What could be done to increase capacities among the actors concerned?

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[1] In North Macedonia the terms 'pre-school' and 'kindergarten' can often be used interchangeably, with different institutions using one term or the other. For the purposes of consistency this report will use the term 'kindergarten'

- What is the early evidence that the project interventions are contributing to the strengthening of the democratic values and deepen social cohesion between different ethnic communities across Macedonia?
- What opportunities have emerged to cause more powerful changes from the project to date?
- Is the project adding value and contributing to the impact alongside the concerned stakeholders?

Challenges and lesson learned

- What did work and what did not work? Why? What are the major lessons learned?
- Are there any challenges for early preparations or steps being planned to ensure sustainability of the project?
- How have lessons learned been incorporated into the programming?

3. Methodology

This report will primarily use a qualitative approach, while also incorporating quantitative data collected by Search staff in North Macedonia as part of their public opinion survey. In addition, the quantitative and qualitative research elements built upon on a thorough desk review of relevant literature.

Desk Review

A detailed review of relevant documents was conducted and helped to inform the design of the qualitative assessment tools, as well as subsequent analysis and development of recommendations. Documents reviewed included the following:

- ASC Project proposal
- Project M&E Plans and logframe
- Baseline study report
- Existing monitoring tools and data
- Quarterly and annual project reports
- A database of project deliverables and statistics created by Search staff
- Background documents on North Macedonia
- Recent news articles and videos on North Macedonia
- Previous evaluations of other Search projects (via Institutional Learning Team section of Search's website)
- USAID Policy Framework: Ending the Need for Foreign Assistance

Qualitative Research

This mid-term review utilized both semi-structured focus group discussion (FGD) and key informant interview (KII) formats in order to collect relevant qualitative data on the project. Five separate data collection tools were created specifically for this project, each tailored to guide the discussion with that

specific respondent group. The tools consisted of two KII guides (for community leaders and for education officials) and three FGD guides (for parents, pedagogical trainees, and for teachers) and all were reviewed and approved by multiple Search staff members prior to the commencement of fieldwork. These guides can be found in the Appendices section of this report, from A2-A6.

The interview quota and sampling strategy for the data collection process was determined solely by Search independently of the interviewer, and respondents were also selected and recruited by Search project staff in North Macedonia.

Interviews were conducted between May 29 and June 8, 2019 and took place across all ten of the municipalities of North Macedonia targeted as part of the ASC Project. Discussions were conducted in Macedonian or Albanian languages and took place with the assistance of an experienced professional translator/interpreter.

A total of 35 interviews were completed. Respondents were all adults over the age of 18 and included both those with prior involvement in the project (for example, as recipients of training) and those who had no prior involvement (for example, those who have children attending a school where the ASC project is operating[2]).

Due to the nature of the ASC Project and the composition of the staff in the education sector in North Macedonia, most of the respondents interviewed were female, however males were also included.

An overview of the respondents is as follows:

Category	Municipality	Respondents
Pedagogical Students	Various	10
Pedagogical Professors	Various	7
Trainers	Various	2
Inspectors	Various	2
	Debar	1
	Gostivar	1
Project Partner (OFFS)	Various	1
Counsellors	Various	4
Teachers (incl. school Directors)	Debar	4
	Karposh (Skopje)	3
	Gazi Baba (Skopje)	4
	Chair (Skopje)	1
	Kumanovo	13
	Tetovo	13
	Radovic	11

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[2] Though not specifically included in in the project indicators and M&E plan, qualitative interviews with parents were conducted as it was believed this could shed light on possible issues in the project, the larger context, and possibly provide some added value in considering recommendations

	Struga	7
	Kichevo	2
	Gostivar	3
Parents	Debar	5
	Kumanovo	5
	Struga	7
	Gostivar	5
Community Leadership	Karposh (Skopje)	1
	Tetovo	1
		Total = 113

All respondents were informed of the purpose of the data collection, given an overview of the nature of the research, informed that they did not have to answer any questions they did not wish to, and then provided informed consent prior to their involvement. In addition, Search staff were asked not to be present during the interviews and meetings were held in a private space where respondents would be comfortable speaking openly.

Respondent confidentiality was maintained via ensuring no names of respondents or their children were noted down nor included in this report, that comments are not attributed to specific individuals, and by ensuring as much as possible that any indirect identifying information was removed prior to any sharing of data with Search. All data was stored then on a password-protected computer with full disk encryption and any written hard copies have since been destroyed.

Respondents' responses were coded according to topic and respondent profile in order to capture key themes and gauge frequency of responses, and illustrative direct quotes were then extracted for use in the relevant sections of the report. Attempts were made to analyze the data with gender, location, religion, ethnicity, and school type disaggregation in mind, to the extent that the data collection format and confidentiality permitted.

Quantitative Public Opinion Poll

While this report is predominantly qualitative in nature and the primary method of data collection was via key informant interviews and focus group discussions, Search also collected quantitative data through a household public opinion poll measuring respondents' views on social cohesion and interethnic collaboration. Respondents for this survey were drawn from the general population and not from project beneficiaries, and thus this data is designed to illuminate the wider public perceptions in the country - not to attribute impact or to be used to measure against the ASC Project indicators (and thus restricting the scope of the quantitative findings applicable for this report).

This public opinion poll mirrored the survey completed during the baseline study for this project, with similar sampling methods and utilizing data collection instruments designed by Search. The same locally-recruited enumerators who conducted the data collection during the baseline phase also conducted this

household survey. A copy of the survey tool can be found in the Appendices section of this report under A7.

The sample size was calculated using following formula: $Z^2 * (p) * (1-p)$, ss = c^2 where:
Z = Z value (e.g. 1.96 for 95% confidence level)
p = percentage picking a choice, expressed as decimal (.5 used for sample size needed)
c = confidence interval, expressed as decimal (e.g., .03 = ±3%)

This sample size was calculated using a 3% confidence interval and 95% confidence level. The actual sample size required with additional 10% non-response error was 1172. However, due to the adjustment required for a smaller population and to make their sample size meaningful, the final sample size was increased to be 1549. A random quota sampling technique was used to select specific respondents from each ethnic group, with 613 Macedonians, 513 Albanians, 147 Turks, 126 Romani, 74 Serbs and 24 Bosnians targeted.

In the end, only 1432 responses were considered for analysis as 117 survey questions were incomplete due to various reasons, such as respondents stopping the survey midway through because of urgent issues or not finding target respondents from a small minority groups in the village, for example. However, the survey team was aware of such a possibility and an additional 10% was added to the sample size while making the calculation. Therefore, 117 for the total sample size is less than 10%, and for each municipality the reduced size is not significant.

Linkages of USAID's Journey to Self-Reliance

After the completion of data collection, the Search team met with representatives of the USAID North Macedonia team, who expressed interest in also having some references in the report refer to USAID's Journey to Self-Reliance. The Journey to Self-Reliance is "an effort to help country partners eventually handle their own development challenges without U.S. foreign assistance" and is meant to act a policy framework providing the overall guidance USAID initiatives as it undertakes agency-wide reforms.[3]

During the meeting, held on June 7, 2019 in Skopje, USAID staff highlighted four key areas that are of particular interest: private sector engagement, domestic resource mobilization, results orientation, and strategic partnerships.

Limitations

The timing of data collection coincided with the end of the school year, which is naturally a busy time for most project beneficiaries and mid-term review respondents, and thus somewhat limited their availability. In addition, at times a number of the interviews had to be either kept short or cut off slightly early due to the teachers schedule and need to return back to the children in the other room, at times meaning questions had to be prioritized as not all could be asked. This did not pose a major challenge to

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[3] USAID Policy Framework: Ending the Need for Foreign Assistance. April 2019, Washington, DC: USAID

the data collection process and in fact may also be a reflection of the high detail and lengthiness of the survey tools as well.

As noted above, as this was an internal review, the respondents were recruited and selected by Search, reducing the objectivity and introducing the possibility of self-selection bias as compared to an external independent evaluation. In this case, random selection of FGD and KII respondents was not possible, and number of respondents were purposively selected in order to include project participants who were available and willing to meet on short notice. However, Search has noted that it intends to commission an external evaluation at the end of the project in 2021 and this will be the time when project impact and outcomes are independently verified.

As noted above, attempts were made to disaggregate the qualitative responses where possible, however due to the fact that Search staff selected participants and there are a limited number of beneficiaries trained, at times it was not possible to provide specific details (such as gender, location, ethnicity) for responses as this would allow the respondent to be identified even without specific identifying information.

Figures on number of trainings completed and beneficiaries involved were self-reported by Search as part of this review and separately cross-checking these data was beyond the scope of this internal mid-term review or fieldwork.

Respondents were asked about their views on project sustainability during the course of the qualitative interviews whenever possible. However, given that the sustainability of these ASC Project initiatives can only really be verified after the conclusion of the project, the findings are somewhat projective in nature.

As the request to include discussion of USAID's Journey to Self-Reliance was made after the creation of the data collection tools, and at the end of the data collection process, only limited data was able to be obtained on this issue. However, the analysis phase attempted to draw any linkages found as they arose.

Lastly, in regard to the quantitative opinion poll, a number of process and methodological issues limited the ability to draw representative conclusions from the data collected. In particular, there was an uneven distribution of age groups sampled by municipality (and which do not correspond to existing demographic profiles), posing major issues for data analysis and for generating representative conclusions. Given the limited use of the opinion poll in terms of yielding accurate representative data, the quantitative findings in the relevant opinion poll section below focus more on some major themes and responses not requiring disaggregation.

4. Findings

Relevance

Interviews across all respondent groups revealed that participants felt the program was relevant to their work, with a high level of participant satisfaction with the training. Words such as 'organized' and 'well organized', "very positive", and even "wonderful" were used to describe the training. In addition, the vast majority of respondents stated that the sessions were clear, nothing was difficult to understand, and that there were not many surprises, indicating the training proceeded along the lines of expectations and that people knew what they were signing up for. Furthermore, Local officials that were interviewed also had positive feedback on the ASC Project, with one even stating, "I think this is crucial for us at the municipality and also for the whole community".

There was also an overwhelming desire from project participants for more training of this nature in the future. One project participant, who was a primary school teacher, illustrated this common theme when they stated, "Once you visited you wanted to have more of these trainings", and a school inspector added that "We just need to continue with the trainings and hard work, [as] there is a lot of need for trainings", for example.

During the course of the qualitative data collection a number of questions and/or follow-up questions were asked in order to interrogate the potential gender aspects of interethnic education. However, for the most part the vast majority of respondents did not see male and female children as having different attitudes at the ages they worked with and, thus, felt the training was relevant for use with students of both genders and thus did not merit the need for different approaches.

One teacher stated that from their experience there is not any visible gender differentiation noted and that both male and female children interact with differing ethnic, religious, and language groups in the same manner. Another noted that these differences likely appear in children at a later age, stating "There is no difference they get along together. Usually you feel the difference when they get into puberty, but not before." The views of teachers were consistent with those of BDE and SEI on this matter as well.

When pressed for any differences, some respondents would point out that if any exist they would be more visible during recess breaks and play time, which was less noticeable to them, but which may be something Search wishes to keep in mind when planning future sports-related social cohesion activities. One primary teacher also mentioned that boys are usually more reserved and don't want to get into group work immediately, whereas the girls engage more quickly and cooperate easier. This was not a common response however.

"Mozaik" is a multicultural and multilingual education program designed for kindergartens that was introduced in North Macedonia by Search in the late 1990s. Seeking to avoid the segregation that is common throughout all levels of the education system, Mozaik enrolls mixed ethnicity groups of young children and uses a curriculum that seeks to promote conflict resolution and acceptance of differences, while also involving parents as well. The program has since been mainstreamed into the public education system and is now in place in select kindergartens across the country.

Feedback from respondents familiar with the Mozaik program was almost exclusively positive, as was feedback among those interviewed on mixed education groups in particular. One teacher argued that parents of the children in mixed groups are extremely happy to have their children in these groups - often insisting on it - adding that many parents when the first child is finished and the next comes along seek to enroll them as well. Some of these families even come from some distance away specifically to enroll them in Mozaik groups. Parent respondents illustrated this when noting that "If you ask the parents from the other groups not in Mozaik you will notice the difference" or stating "I think we should have more mixed groups. It is not enough for them to know one language."

Indeed, despite resistance from some members of the community, with demand outstripping supply long Mozaik waiting lists were reported by respondents across multiple municipalities, with one parent describing how "There are so many people [enrolled] on [the] waitlist for the Mozaik groups but not enough spaces", with another respondent pointing out that there are education professionals ready to be employed to lead these groups but these need to be hired by the Ministry. Some even suggested that all classes should be mixed so that "from the young age they meet each other and don't get other ideas in their mind".

Search is in negotiations involving central and local government about assisting in the creation of an additional three or four Mozaik groups during Year Three of the ASC project, and utilizing savings that have been found thus far in the project to support the training of the new Mozaik teachers. While not specifically part of the project objectives, Search has stated that they view this partly as an indicator of success under Objective 1.

The Mozaik model was the central theme of the ASC training, including for primary school level attendees as well as for pedagogical students. While more of the training participants were familiar with the model than not, among those for whom Mozaik was new most said they found it quite interesting to learn about. For example, given its focus on kindergartens some primary school teachers revealed in the interviews that the Mozaik model was new to them and that they valued the opportunity to hear about it, even if not always directly applicable to all ages.

As was the case with other groups, some primary teachers stated in interviews that not much was new for them – with one adding that they already attend a lot of workshops on conflict resolution[4] - but that they did appreciate the refresher though. Some who found it repetitive suggested that younger/newer teachers be the focus of recruitment. Other teachers also spoke of what they perceive as the biased selection of training participants made by the school officials, given that Search is not involved very much in that recruitment element.

For those who found the content new, the idea that conflict does not necessarily have to be something bad was novel. At least three respondents noted that they saw how to handle issues – using practical examples – and that this was a major focus of the course, with colleagues explaining to them that it should not be seen as a problem. Another teacher added, "One thing I learned that was not in previous

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[4] Again raising this issue of targeting discussed elsewhere here, and in the recommendations below

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seminars I have attended is that parents should listen to children not just children listen to the parents, this was the novelty".

Implementation

Qualitative interviews also found participant satisfaction with transportation to the venue and the selection of the venue itself, with several respondents highlighting this - and no negative comments noted in this regard. This was not always the case in other previous trainings they had attended.

Perhaps the strongest finding that came across most clearly in analysis of the qualitative data gathered during this mid-term was the widespread approval of the inclusion of practical exercises in the ASC Project training. This support for the practical element was consistent across all respondent groups, from kindergarten teachers up to and including professors and government officials. Many teachers noted that while the training may have covered topics they were already familiar with, the practical elements were new and thus this was more appreciated. "We were provided with examples we were not familiar with and learned those and now are implementing them" noted one kindergarten teacher, and another noted that "they worked through examples and practical examples showing our approach in specific circumstances which was helpful".

Teachers used the inclusion of practical content as an example of how the ASC training differed from other trainings they may have attended previously, highlighting that it is an opportunity to show what is actually happening on the ground. As a kindergarten teacher noted, "Training is interesting when it is important to have the practical examples, not just theory. We don't need more PowerPoints but practical work." Another teacher concurred, stating that "This training was good compared to the others where you just listen and then engage only [from] time to time. This had games and everyone was included, we never took part in training like this one".

Parents also agreed that the practical component was extremely valuable, with one parent pointing out that in their view it contained a lot of examples from real life, adding "It is one thing listening to theory but when they give you a concrete example the message comes across". Even some teachers took the opportunity to state in the interviews that they felt this was where the parents likely learned the most as well.

Likewise, pedagogy students felt that the practical element of the ASC training added a lot of value, in particular due to the fact that the existing practical component of their training is quite limited. One student demonstrated this point, noting "We had lessons and learned how to behave with children before, but in the trainings we got to see in the practical way in various situations how we should adjust our behaviour towards children."

This lack of opportunities for practical experience outside of the training was also underlined separately by an inspector, who raised, unprompted, the point that in their view the practical elements are crucial for teachers, noting: "There should be more training for new teachers as they are poorly prepared for practical work and we are constantly reminding the Ministry of Education and Science about this", citing examples such as how to organize lectures and practice, use of various techniques, etc. Similarly, BDE

counsellors also felt that "it was especially good to have presentation from trainers on a practical level for those in mosaic groups".

The games were an example of the good practical element, noted both teachers and pedagogy students. Aside from maintaining the interest of pupils, it was felt that these practical games were very applicable and would be particularly useful for beginner teachers and in the first few months of the school year in September and October. A teacher at a primary school exemplified this sentiment noting that, while they had previously taught at the kindergarten level, they felt that some of their colleagues teaching in primary schools were not familiar with these and, thus, could understand why they would be excited to find out about these games.

Other respondents felt that one of the best parts of the practical content was when the training demonstrated how *not* to manage conflicts, leading to the realization that some had been doing it incorrectly before.

Aside from demonstrating the value and applicability of training content, the positive feedback received in relation to the practical element of the training is also a notable example of the ASC project being flexible and responsive to beneficiary feedback. An interview with the trainers revealed that at first there was less focus on the practical exercises but, after reviewing the post-training feedback forms, the trainers and project staff adjusted to increase the practical component according to their needs.

Another one of the most valuable aspects of the ASC Project trainings noted by respondents was the opportunity this project provided to exchange experience and best practices with teaching colleagues from other locations across North Macedonia. This was also an element that provided added value even among those who felt that the training did not contain content that was new to them. "We had done similar trainings, it wasn't something new... We already knew positive ways of communicating, but what was most useful was exchanging with colleagues", noted one teacher in Kumanovo. A parent noted she felt the same way about the value of interacting with other parents, stating that it was good to exchange experience for both the kids and the group itself.

The trainers selected for the ASC project were temporary contractors who were experienced kindergarten teachers and had a longstanding relationship with Search dating back to late 1990s. According to most respondents the trainers had a very positive attitude, were open to answer questions and answered whatever was asked, and were very professional. Some respondents also noted that they were able to keep the focus of the room, despite long days. A primary school teacher illustrated this when they said that while they had attended many trainings before "I can say this is one of the best ones so far as usually we attend single-topic seminars and they talk and talk and you get bored, but this one was really good."

This positive feedback on the trainers was also echoed by professionals in the BDE, with counsellors noting that they not only knew how to express what they were trying to teach, but also demonstrated their "strong passion for their work and the people they work with, as well as the results they receive." The trainers themselves felt that the project was an overwhelmingly positive experience for them to

date[5] and even had a chance to learn themselves, adding that "whenever we do the training the trainees share their own experience and you get good ideas" and "sometimes you get different examples and you pick up something new."

Kindergarten Teachers

As of June 2019, 559 kindergarten teachers have been trained thus far during the course of the ASC Project. These teachers were trained in 24 separate sessions that were conducted.

Municipality (No. of	Macedonian	Albanian	Turkish	Roma	Other
Chair (66)	7	51	4	1	3
Debar (42)	84	41	-	-	
Gazi Baba (80)	74	2	-	1	3
Gostivar (48)	25	21	2	-	-
Karposh (38)	37	-	1	-	-
Kichevo (24)	20	2	1	1	-
Kumanovo (103)	84	8	-	1	10
Radovic (42)	41	-	-	-	1
Struga (43)	24	16	3	-	-
Tetovo (45)	24	18	1	2	-
General Mozaik Training (28)	16	12	-	-	-
	=352	=171	=12	=7	=17

Search has stated that they offered training to all kindergarten teachers in the ten ASC project municipalities who were interested and available, even making arrangements for a re-run of trainings in Year Three in order to accommodate those who were unable to attend previously. Participants were also provided with certificates to help them certify the fulfillment of training hours required to maintain their teaching status, which was appreciated.

Parents of Kindergarten Students

To date Search for Common Ground North Macedonia has held 18 workshops with a total of 304 parents across nine target municipalities. A summary of the participants is as follows:

Municipality (No. of participants)	Macedonian	Albanian	Turkish	Serb
Chair (8)	-	8	-	-
Debar (24)	9	14	1	-
Gazi Baba (17)	10	6	-	1
Gostivar (23)	4	2	17	-
Karposh (46)	44	1	-	1
Kichevo (24)	21	2	1	-
Kumanovo (71)	61	4	-	6
Radovic (47)	42	-	3	4

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[5] For one note about an area for improvement cited by the trainers please see the Summary of Recommendations section below

Struga (22)	8	12	-	2
Tetovo (22)	11	11	-	-
	=210	=52	=22	=12

While initially the project had targeted the workshops at parents of children in Mozaik groups, during project implantation staff at the kindergartens expressed the need to broaden the availability to those in the classical kindergarten groups. Therefore, in response to this, some municipalities involved parents of Mozaik children while others included both in the training and Search staff have stated that they hope to continue with additional parent training in Year Three, despite the educational targets of the project already having been met. This can be seen as a positive example of engaging with partners and also being results rather than simply output oriented, which aside from being best practice in the NGO sector is also in line with USAID's strategy.

Teachers, school officials, and even pedagogy students were all clear on the crucial role the family environment plays in social cohesion, and trainers themselves also underlined the importance of parental involvement, noting that "It is necessary that our work with children be balanced with our behaviour at home."

The Importance of engaging parents was also demonstrated when at times the responses that kindergarten teachers expressed did not match those gathered of the parents in that area. For example, in one municipality parents noted that "Where I live they see it very negatively" and "they ask if I am crazy and why I enroll my kids in mixed groups, I answer that is because I want to", and "I can hear from other parents [not in mixed groups] that when kids draw a flag of [the] other ethnic group you can see reaction" - indicating some communal resistance. This differed from the responses provided by the kindergarten teachers in the same area, who claimed there was only acceptance in the area.

Respondents were also mostly positive about their inclusion in training. In fact, some even said "[parents] should become more important in this project". Among those kindergarten parents who participated in the ASC project training, most stated that they found it useful in their lives as parents. Key topics recalled included positive communications skills, how to treat children without being negative, handling problems,

Future topics of interest to parents that were discovered during the qualitative data collection include: how to keep children away from too much focus on technology without failing to learn how to use it, how to deal with temper tantrums.

Primary School Teachers

As of June 2019, four groups of primary schools have been involved in ASC Project training sessions, with a total of 97 teachers trained (85% female) to date. Selection of participants was linked to the schools where the social outreach sports activities were taking place.

Primary school teachers recalled some of the key topics covered in the training as: inter-ethnic cooperation, hate speech, conflict resolution models, working with parents, listening to children and understanding individual needs and wants, and inclusion of children with differing levels of social skills.

Another element of the training that was recalled by respondents included the use of gestures/mimics instead of raising one's voice at the children when they are being unruly or loud. One teacher pointed out that now they are implementing these skills as she now has a stop sign she raises to get the class to quiet down, a picture of an ear that she lifts up when she wants them to listen carefully, etc.

As noted earlier, primary school teachers also enjoyed that time was provided to meet and share ideas with other teachers and to build relationships with colleagues. This common response was illustrated by a Macedonian primary school teacher who stated she "had [a] wonderful time especially sharing with some of our Albanian colleagues" and even in another example teachers took the initiative to go to a disco with teacher from differing ethnic groups in the evening, with one respondent noting they may never have interacted with each other otherwise.

When discussing the value of learning from the experiences of other primary teachers, two respondents also mentioned their desire for the inclusion of some experiences from abroad, such as how they approach situations, that could be added to the sharing with colleagues in Macedonia and the experience of the Macedonian trainers.

Pedagogical Students

As of June 2019, a total of 221 pedagogical students (96% female) have participated in training sessions conducted by Search as part of the ASC Project to date, according to statistics provided by project staff. There were 9 sessions held to date. The pedagogical trainees came from the pedagogical faculties of the universities in Bitola, Shtip, Skopje (x2), and Tetovo. Of these trainees, 140 were of Macedonian ethnicity, 73 of Albanian origin, 5 Turks, and 3 others.

Both the students and their professors were overwhelmingly positive about the ASC training, with any critical comments limited to areas for improvement aimed at helping them make the most of the opportunity, rather than the training or content itself. To start, both groups were very positive on location of training at Radica conference centre and hotel, and this came across clearly. Students also expressed appreciation that all the pedagogy faculties in North Macedonia were included in the project, enabling them to learn from colleagues with varied backgrounds and experience.

No respondents registered any major complaints or confusion over the content itself, feeling that it was clear and well explained – if anything, perhaps too much so, with some noting that time was lost a bit explaining some topics as we are already in 3 or 4th year of school. Pedagogical professors also agreed on the appropriateness of the content when interviewed.

Some examples of specific comments from pedagogical students include:

- "From the first training we had at university and the second in Bitola to even here they are wonderful trainings as they show us how to work with kids in the future."
- "I need to praise this project because I really like it. I think it is a great idea as there should be no division, we are all people and the Mozaik principle of work is a great idea"
- "I have been in other projects, so I can clearly say that this is one of the best ones, but I would add that we should cover more topics not repeat the same ones constantly like conflict

resolution"

- "This is the first time I have taken part in this type of project and I like the way it was organized and [the] cooperation between two different diverse groups. I hope this kind of project doesn't end here, but continues in the future as well"
- "We have achieved new knowledge. Before I did not have possibilities to learn about Mozaik group and when I found out about it in the training it was very interesting... [I gained] new knowledge and new experience especially working with children from different backgrounds"

There were however several comments and suggestions regarding the organization and logistics of the pedagogical student portion of the ASC Project. Firstly, the timing of one of the sessions was during the intense exam period for students, who noted they were told it was to be held at the end of April/start of May – rather than in June, as was the case – and unfortunately this meant some had to give up as they had exams. For example, there were supposed to be 25 trainees from a group in Skopje but only about half were able to make it, while likewise another student added there were supposed to be 20 from their group yet only 10 came due to exams[6]. Meanwhile, others who were present had to scramble to cancel/re-arrange their exams, adding stress to the process. They also stated they were not told why there was a delay, and when informed were informed quite late, such as only one week before.[7]

In some cases it was noted that the preparation was also slightly lacking. For example, while there was a lack of materials and the students felt they lost a lot of time preparing (or in some cases sharing between groups) scissors, papers, and other materials. At times students even had to move from one room where exercise was taking place to another room just to get the scissors or a piece of thread, resulting in less time to devote to the actual activity.

Translation issues were also documented, as noted elsewhere here and in the recommendations section below.

Some also noted that they could not hear very well when sitting at the tables in the far corners, suggesting that the tables be arranged in a circle and/or a microphone be prepared in advance for use on the training days.

Both student and professor respondent groups suggested the project could be improved by making more use of online tools, such as online websites or social media pages that they can then use to share with each other (and, it was suggested, even to foster linkages with pedagogical students abroad). It was noted that this might even lead to self-organizing meetings and create lasting connections beyond the few days of training. Online platforms also allow for the sharing of resources and the ability to more easily train colleagues who did not attend the meeting, perhaps helping to advance the projects

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[6] Search responded that they proposed to the professors two possible dates for the training, 6-12 May and 03-09 June 2019. All 5 faculties professors selected the second option. While this makes clear that Search was not in error, this does not negate the findings illustrating the students' perspectives on this choice however.
[7] In response to this point the trainers stated that they are not aware of the reasoning behind the changes in timing and that it is perhaps hard to coordinate with differing exam schedules. They also claimed that they are pretty certain that the lack of communication has been the on the side of the universities

sustainability and in line with the Journey to Self-Reliance[8] - in addition to making it easier to reach trainees and track outcomes/case studies. Search claimed that some Facebook page was operating but this was not a point that the students were in agreement with.

Pedagogical professors also agreed with the need for more use of online platforms, adding that this could even facilitate the sharing of information, as well as promote interaction and social cohesion between different of groups of those pedagogical students in the future.

These professors in attendance also felt that they help with ensuring the suitability of the ASC project's impact by helping to transfer whatever is learned at the training to the other students who were not able to attend, as "whatever is received here it is a pity if it is not used".

Professors also identified a potential barrier that the students will face, highlighting that perhaps the hardest challenge will be when the new teachers are employed and face a different reality than what was in the ASC training, with their mentor at the school acting in a different manner than the students may want to based on this training. However, while this was conceptualized as a barrier, it could also serve to be a side benefit of the project as those students who are able to persist can act as agents of change in their own schools.

SEI Inspectors and BDE Counsellors

Aside from engaging with teachers, pedagogical students, and kindergarten parents, the ASC project also involved a training element for inspectors and counsellors. In total, 20 SEI inspectors (45% female) and 17 BDE counsellors (82% female) have been trained thus far in the project.

The main focus of the SEI is in implementing and ensuring compliance with legislation covering the education sector, covering approximately 13-15,000 overviews per year, as well as internal evaluations of the quality of every school on a rotating basis every third year. They also reach legally enforceable conclusions and can open proceedings against schools if necessary. In contrast, preparation and implementation of education content, professional overview, organization and planning of materials and other such tasks fall under the responsibility of the BDE. Counsellors at the BDE also check instruments and follow up with teachers on what is working well and what requires more support in order to improve the education – more from a pedagogical point of view as compared to the more judicial point of view of SEI.

Search's involvement of inspectors in the ASC project was a result of proper consultation with SEI, according to officials there who were interviewed. They noted that "they came and we consulted in the development of the project and we had a good understanding of it and good relationship, we talked to them and everything they have done here is mutual agreement." Inspectors and SEI officials felt the program was well prepared and they were well informed about the planning and agenda. BDE

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[8] According to page 9 of the Journey to Self-Reliance: USAID defines self-reliance as "the capacity to plan, finance, and implement solutions to local development challenges, as well as the commitment to see these through effectively, inclusively, and with accountability"

respondents concurred, saying the organization and logistics were very good and the location well prepared. Neither respondent group raised any concerns around confusion regarding the content.

For their part, inspectors also appreciated to see what is done with kindergartens, as this is not an area where they focus a lot of their work. In fact, discussion with inspectors reveal they are quite stretched and this may underline their ability to properly inspect schools – kindergartens in particular. One inspector noted that "I follow elementary and secondary, plus just a small bit of kindergarten" as they are the only inspector in that region, handling all schools in multiple areas and having a workload double the normal caseload – before any kindergartens are event included. With this in mind he/she noted that "visiting kindergartens is very rare". One inspector even opened up, admitting that "as for the schools they aren't well evaluated to be honest", noting that was due to a number of reasons such as lack of resources or staff, the constant shifting of authorities, as well as the local politics and lack of cooperation between central and local authorities.

The FGD held with SEI confirmed this point, with officials noting that "for kindergarten they really didn't given much emphasis in our system. In fact another inspector admitted that they learned a lot of good things in the training "especially work in kindergartens as we didn't know how we should be inspecting those" and had a chance to visit a kindergarten "which was new in training… but now at least I know."

Community Outreach Sports Events

For this element of the ASC Project Search partnered with Open Fun Football Schools, a North Macedonian-registered NGO, which worked with Search in the past on previous projects funded by the European Union and others. For this collaboration, this partner is responsible for leading practical sports sessions in the field as part of the sports events held in different regions of the country, providing an opportunity for children from various schools and backgrounds to intermingle.

As of the end of Year Two of the project 13 community outreach sports events have been conducted as part of the ASC Project, involving 1141 students. A few additional sports days are planned when schools resume in September or October of 2019. In addition, the provision of sports equipment to participating schools was also an element of the project, with the view towards sustainability as it can provide the school with an opportunity to continue the events in future on their own.

Feedback from participating schools was positive, with one school director saying that it was a "really good project and affected the school very positively", noting that for the time all the teachers gathered and stayed after hours to see the games and even the students that finished the classes stayed to watch the games. Another school official added that teachers informed them that they heard from parents that they were pleased with the activity. This was corroborated during an interview with one such parent, who remarked that the children enjoyed the event and that it was an opportunity for children to meet and socialize resulting in them making new friends. "It was really good, children enjoyed the organization of the sports event… it was organized in a nice field and the requisite items were there and children enjoyed the social cohesion event", they added.

The sports event also provided an opportunity for the parents as well, and for some it was the first time to visit the other part of the country where it was held - "it was a beautiful time" and "people were pleasantly surprised". No logistical or organizational issues were found.

Further validating the inclusion of sports-based social cohesion events is the fact that a number of other respondents – without being told about this aspect of the ASC Project – suggested sports events be organized for children of varying backgrounds. Other parents noted that mutual sports events already take place in their community, outside of the auspices of the ASC Project. This may be of particular importance in North Macedonia given the link that some sports clubs have with nationalist slogans, with the Varda handball team's sectarianism being noted by multiple respondents.

A school director noted the importance of these events to build social cohesion by stating, "I see this program as a good opportunity for my students to meet students from other schools" and underlining the importance of having the schools mix with those in other cities. Another official at a primary school agreed, stating that "The feedback shows that the results are there. The children involved in those activities created friendships and they are still communicating via social networks. Rarely someone from [location redacted] goes to [location redacted] but they now get along."

Schools and local officials were satisfied with the work of Search staff related to implementation of the project and sports event, even praising them by name at times, as well as noting the sports event was even well covered in the media. A school staff member added that "Considering how the teachers and students felt after the activity then you can see we need to organize more activities of this sort as it is a change from the usual classroom activities."

The sports-based social cohesion events also provide another example of the links to USAID's Journey to Self-Reliance framework, as Search has initiated partnership meetings with mayors and in September of 2019 is expected to be signing an MOU with all 10 mayors to continue the outreach events by themselves. In addition, as part of this through the youth councils they can help integrate this in to the regular school activities in the future.

The project partner also underlined their support for increased engagement with the private sector, as in their view the country doesn't have a lot of awareness of corporate social responsibility, though this may be changing. Possible areas for collaboration include connecting with private companies for the provision of football equipment, food for the events (they noted they have other projects where a healthy drink company provides drinks), and for all children to receive t-shirts, in their view.

The partner indicated their satisfaction with the communication with Search to date, and noted that the program had been accepted very well, adding that the involvement of parents and teachers has gone well and is vital for sustainability.

Progress Towards Results and the Impact

Kindergarten teachers, like most other respondent groups, were found to hold nearly universally positive views of the training[9]. Some of the notable benefits highlighted by respondents included that the training helped them upgrade their skills, learning how to create their own school agenda, how to face challenges and handle conflict in the classroom, and the parent-teacher cooperation triangle.

For example, one teacher noted one of the useful things she learned "is the approach when a child is doing something wrong, we are not to shout at her" and instead she is now aware of more Positive Discipline-oriented techniques. Another respondent shared how a fellow training attendee, who is a Mozaik teacher, also explained how they use drawings in the school to model improved behaviour, something that was seen as a useful tool to learn and thus was appreciated by the respondent.

Another reason the training was appreciated by some respondents was cited as the fact that the children of North Macedonia are changing and are not as they were in the past, being now more "open, vivid, and lively" and therefore new methods and training is required.

Some evidence of increased impact and sustainability was found, seen for example in a kindergarten teacher in Debar who attended ASC training and later held a session with their colleagues in order to pass on topics that they were interested in, such as conflict resolution and on parent-teachers-cooperation triangle. One kindergarten director also stated that "we need to continue this work, we should try to spread it to the villages as well," adding that seeing kids in the same school can help break down prejudices, "so we need to spread the word."

A government official interviewed recommended that it would be advisable to have a model kindergarten that can be visited in order to extend the impact even further by demonstrating positive mixed education experiences, highlighting that once one is in that atmosphere this is the easiest way of learning. From the findings above it is also reasonable to assume that this would be appreciated by not just current teachers and school officials but also by pedagogy students and faculty who are seeking additional practical learning and could also visit.

Kindergarten teachers were not the only respondent group to highlight increased capacities and/or skills as a result of the ASC project to date. The qualitative interviews also yielded examples of parents of children in kindergarten directly utilizing some of the skills and approaches learned during the ASC training. Some examples cited by the parents included:

- "It was great and very valuable. They talked to us how to approach the children and once I started using what I told us the results were there immediately"
- "Whenever I am going to react in a negative way I suddenly remember what I learned and feel bad"
- "There were no problems with the techniques we did not know of them before but after we did use them to positive results, for example before if he would just throw the toys when the guests would come and we got things cleaned and it was not in order and now we do games as we play

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[9] One respondent did state that they did not see the benefit of the training as she works with very young children who do not communicate much, but this was an exception.

games throwing toys in the basket."

- "It was good they presented how to raise the child… The examples were very good because we used to be about 90% opposite to what we should have done according to this"
- "Sometimes I used to blackmail them when they don't listen, I used to do that, but now I don't do that. During the training they said we shouldn't do that"
- I used drawings to show them how to keep their things tidy, as they told me to. It worked but only for a short time.

Likewise, primary school teachers also noted specific outcomes resulting from the training. One teacher stated that the skills learned in the ASC training have helped change their classroom, noting that now they listen and the children are calmer, while the gestures also work, adding "It is a better class now". Another teacher claimed that After the training, the teacher started involving the parents more about the issues in her classroom than she did before. A third teacher pointed out that in the first days back in class they had a situation where a parent was "annoyed by their own issues at home" and came directly to the classroom, taking it out on someone else, but "what I learned from training is how to calm it down and handle it in a simple manner - this is something I learned in the training".

However, some primary school teachers identified the parents' views as a barrier to their work and to implementing the best practices gleaned from the training, expressing an interest in including parents in future trainings as was done for kindergarten parents in this project.

Project participants from BDE and SEI also noted the positive effects of the ASC Project, including in the important element of relationship building. It was noted that the relationship between the bureau and inspectorate "has never been that good and that is because authority has changed from one group to the other over various years", creating somewhat of a clash of authorities. This friction manifested itself even at the training in Struga during the ASC Project, where certain inspectors were saying "we don't need to listen to this" and the counsellors claiming they did not need the inspector part. However, most felt that having the training together was beneficial as any issues that need to be worked on together could be hashed out. Indeed, in the end BDE participants in the FGDs also noted that the joint training with inspectors was important and was a positive element of the ASC Project, stating "rarely do we have the chance to be together with inspectors in the training" as it was organized to have mixed workshops in this case. This provides another example of a small step towards the development of locally-grown partnerships in North Macedonia and one that is along the Journey to Self-Reliance.

Furthermore, an additional example of this was provided by an SEI official who pointed out the following example of an outcome directly resulting from the project – as well as an example of the sustainability:

> "We had prepared [a] rule book for inspections within kindergarten, and out of those meetings we prepared a draft version that was presented to inspectors. Once we got the feedback at the workshop we could pilot the rule book during the inspectorial visit. The idea of having all the inspectors included in the handbook was to have a sustainable document which could later be used by all inspectors… This is where the idea came from was the sessions we had with Search … [and] we are [currently] waiting on Search for Common Ground to have that workshop."

Counsellors appreciated the additional opportunity to familiarize themselves with Mozaik principles that

the ASC training provided, with one noting that "We got to see the instrument for M&E which was previously prepared in order to follow the educational work within the groups, and we all created this and made some revisions" directly as a result from the ASC project, as this was not in progress previously.

One final outcome of note related to the initiative that resulted from the conversations that arose from the discussions during the project, where inspectors will seek to involve the Ministry more in kindergartens and are considering creating working groups to push for future legislative changes. While clearly this is still within the realm of possibilities and will likely be a length process, the respondent who noted this stated that these faults in the sub provisions around kindergarten were highlighted through the training.

As noted previously, the sports-based social cohesion activities generated positive feedback, however given the nature of the activity it is too early to assess the impact at this stage. In terms of implementation, one suggestion from the partner to improve the project would be to include them more in the educational part of the project, especially the part of the teachers, pointing out that they would want Search's education training to also have their program included in the training content. In their view this also helps with sustainability as Search can explain how they can keep this going – "It is important to have the teachers together with us at the sports events, not only to bring the teachers but have them working with us."

Challenges and Lessons Learned

While nearly all respondents were very positive about their experience in the training and felt that they had developed professionally, one of the major lessons learned from the last 2 years of project implementation is that the impact of the project is limited by the lack of accompanying materials provided to project participants. While participants were provided with a blank branded notebook in which they could take notes, no summaries of key topics or lessons were provided to them. As a result, a number of respondents stated they could not remember details of what was covered or specific instructions of how to replicate the games and other practical exercises at a later date.

Furthermore, these participants were therefore not in a position to share the knowledge gained from their participation in the ASC project with their colleagues, limiting the sustainability of the project beyond the current project life cycle. This was repeated by multiple people interviewed across respondent categories – from teachers to parents to the pedagogy professors.

The sustainability of the project would be enhanced by providing training attendees with the skills to enable them to easily share the training with their colleagues. In addition to some project handouts as mentioned above, this can also include lesson plans and instructions (or even ready-made presentations), as well as including a session in the training on training facilitation and ideas for how to disseminate the knowledge gained during the course of the project. Other projects have included the development of action plans or assigned dissemination tasks into the content, which can also be considered.

Going forward, Search project staff, rather than temporary contractors, should be in charge of sending out materials in centralized manner in future projects and/or have detailed checklists for trainers to fill out to ensure compliance.

In terms of other possible general areas for improvement that apply across all target groups, some respondents did identify that the scheduling of certain trainings could be adjusted. For example, a kindergarten teacher noted that her training included a Saturday, which is not a working day for her, and was not pleased that it took a day of her weekend and time with her family. This was echoed by a few other respondents as well. In addition, there was some minimal concern that one of the trainings is scheduled during a national holiday, however other respondents noted that they were consulted on when the training would take place and so the timing was fine.

With regards to pedagogy students, there were more frequent specific concerns regarding the timing raised. Since the goal of the ASC training component was to have the same pedagogical students attend all three sessions in order to obtain the certificate, and as Search has the contacts of trainees as well as is the budget holder for any communications costs, Search should be the party to take charge of contacting the trainees to inform them of upcoming training or changes that have taken place. This would avoid communications gaps at the university level, even resulting in some students having to drop out. Furthermore, training schedules and dates/locations can be posted on the Search Facebook page and website, with training attendees told on the first day that they can reference these locations should they wish to find updated information. Similarly, improved communication going forward can help to inform training attendees of the duration of the training, so that those with commitments at home/elsewhere can be aware of the long days in advance.

Overall there were not very many complaints found in relation to the duration of the training sessions, however one respondent did note that the day was quite long and that many attendees have children to take care of at home, suggesting the hours be limited to 8am to 3pm or thereabouts.

Interviews with project participants yielded mixed responses regarding the translation that took place at the training. While some said that the translation process was good and went smoothly, others in various respondent groups noted that in their view a significant amount of time was lost during interpretation, an issue which could have been avoided in their view. With a single translator per training session and a very large number of people in each session, during group work the translator at times had to run from one group to another, leaving many participants to rely on Google or to lose a lot of time waiting in between which some noted "it was almost impossible to communicate in the group."

In future Search should consider having multiple translators available or find other alternatives such as arranging for volunteers to assist the translator during the group work portion for example. Without prejudice as to the decision for or against, Search also may want to explore whether simultaneous translation with headsets should be used instead of consecutive translation – which would significantly reduce the training time or allow for more content in the same amount of time. Respondents noted that this has been used for other trainings and events in the country.

In terms of beneficiary targeting, some kindergarten parents felt that the teacher training should aimed at new teachers, not at those who have a lot of experience with mixed education. More on targeting can be found in the sections below, including some actionable recommendations on this issue.

It was noted however that despite efforts put towards teacher training, one of the major constraints teachers face in implementing any skills acquired concerns the overcrowding in classrooms and the high workload teachers face. At times with upwards of 35-40 students of varying ages, it is hard to focus on the development of each individual child and some feel the need for more discipline to keep things in order, and/or the inability to put the skills gained to use in reality.

Another respondent provided an idea for maintaining momentum created by the ASC Project, suggesting if the project is shared with municipalities then similar workshops can be included in the next budget program created by the municipality and perhaps Search might provide some advice on how to create the project, as well as outlines for what would be needed. They also suggested the creation of working groups between the kindergartens and the municipality to work on the project after it ends. These efforts can be seen to be in line with USAID's Journey to Self-Reliance, as in addition to this creating strategic partnerships schools are aiming to use domestic resources to build upon the training provided by ASC Project, and more on how efforts to extend the impact of the project to others can be found below in the Summary of Recommendations section of this report.

While generally favorable, some kindergarten parents noted that better promotion is needed. One parent included in an FGD stated that they felt they were not invited and that the training was not made aware to them, adding that it "doesn't feel good to not be told about it last year or this year". Suggestions as to how to improve the promotion of the training opportunity included prominent posters on the school premises, distributing brochures, and other visibility measures.

Discussion with a kindergarten teacher also provided a suggestion for how to improve the parent training recruitment process, with the suggestion that before the annual school signup period there could be a workshop held. In this workshop parents could be informed about intercultural education in order to peak their interest, maybe even involving an open school day where all the parents see how things go in the Mozaik group, how children can cooperate, and where mentors can explain to the parents the process – noting something similar takes place for secondary school in relation to their showcasing during open days.

This issue is also related to the issue of beneficiary targeting for the ASC project more generally, with some parents stating that the people chosen to attend were representatives of the 'Parents Board' and not regular parents or chosen in an open manner. Others asked why ASC Project would work with their child's school since it has always had mixed classes. These targeting question also applies beyond just the parents.

Mozaik group teachers are already under tough surveillance from the inspectors, which occurs monthly, and it was noted by some teachers that "all the Mozaik teachers are well trained" and "we were already very well prepared even before Search". In addition, one official at BDE noted that those working in Mozaik groups already have more chances to attend training than others, despite teaching in the same schools as those who do not get the opportunity. Furthermore, some primary school teachers not exposed to the Mozaik program who participated in ASC training stating that not much was new for them as they already attend multiple related trainings.

Search should consider whether future projects should exclusively focus on those who have the least exposure to interethnic education and/or are the most in need of social cohesion trainings (with the same applying for training of parents and other groups as well). A similar consideration should be made regarding the selection of the schools themselves, with some respondents of the opinion that the 'better schools' were chosen for selection rather than the neediest or those with the most interethnic divisions. In any event, Search should seek to better communicate the selection process to potential participants so that this is clear to all.

Some parents who were aware of the ASC training opportunity also pointed out the lack of space for everyone to attend, suggesting that the vast majority of those aware would have attended if they could and noting that "when the UNICEF one happened there were way more parents there". If space is an issue, some respondents suggested the training could be organized at the individual kindergarten level instead of grouping them together at a central location.
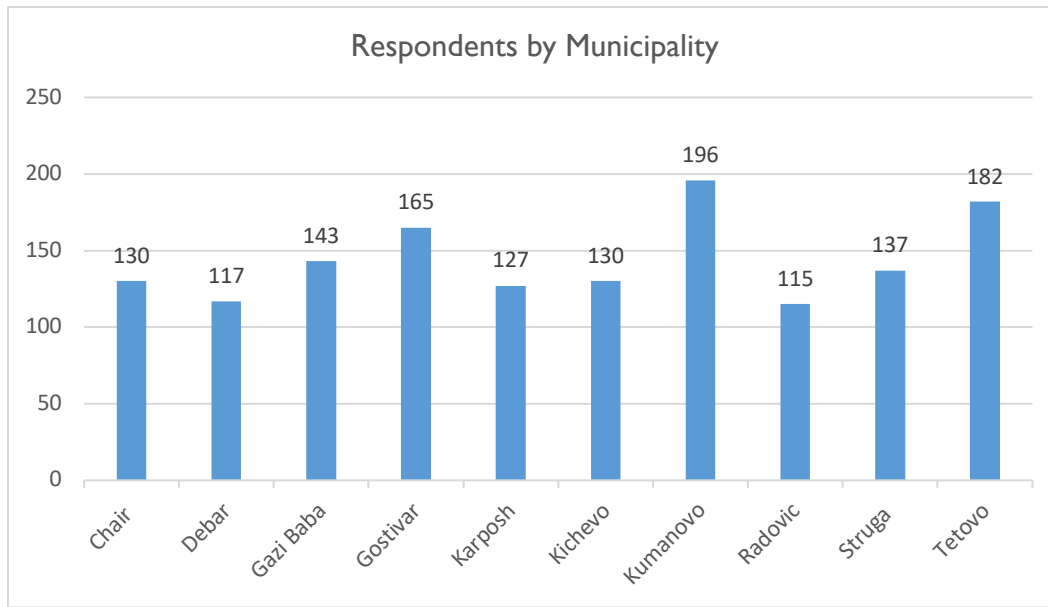
While the ASC trainers contracted for the project were overwhelmingly positive about their work in the project and also felt that communication with Search has been smooth, they did however want to pass on a message to Search related to their schedule and contract. They noted that travel time/days to the training site and also preparation time for their work was not counted towards their billable hours. For example, they stated that if they would leave Skopje at 10am and then work in afternoon the pay would not fully include this time contributed. In future Search should ensure travel and preparation time is included in billable hours for the trainers, as they are a key element of the project and also as this is an equity issue given that travel and preparation time is counted for some other project staff and contractors.

Opinion Poll

The public opinion poll included completed interviews with 1432 respondents, of which 54% were female.

In terms of ethnic breakdown, 45.9% of respondents were Macedonian (n=657), 36.1% Albanian (n=517), 8.2% Turk (n=117), 7.1% Roma (n=101), 1.8% Bosnian (n=26), and 1.3% Serb (n=18), in addition to a single Vlach respondent.
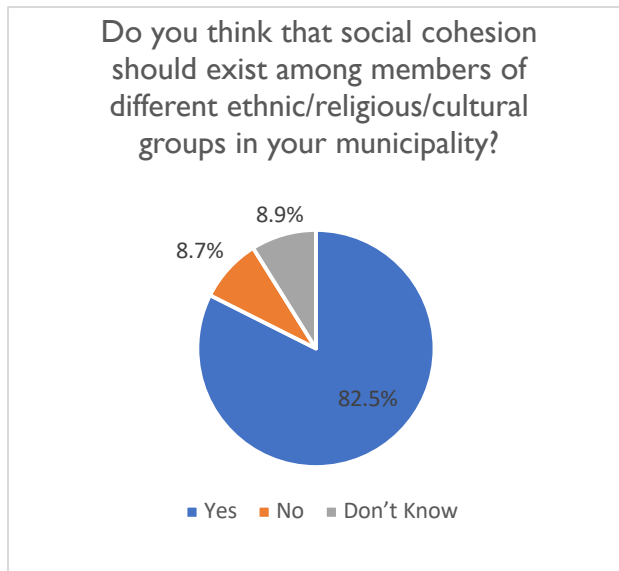
The following chart shows the geographic distribution of respondents according to the ten target municipalities of the ASC Project:

Respondents by Municipality

Chair: 130, Debar: 117, Gazi Baba: 143, Gostivar: 165, Karposh: 127, Kichevo: 130, Kumanovo: 196, Radovic: 115, Struga: 137, Tetovo: 182

The vast majority of respondents were under the age of 35 (61.2%, n=864). An additional 26.7% were in the 35-49 age bracket (n=377), 11.3% in the 50-69 age bracket (n=159), and 0.9% over the age of 70 (n=12). However, there was an extraordinarily uneven distribution of age groups sampled by municipality, which posed major issues for data analysis and generating representative conclusions.

Respondents were provided with a definition of social cohesion and asked if they think that this *should* exist among members of different ethnic, religious and cultural groups.

While support for the concept of social cohesion actually reduced slightly as compared to the baseline, from 87% Yes and 6.7% No at the baseline to 82.5% Yes and 8.7% No now, these responses were generally in line with the baseline findings, and this could be attributed to the different individual respondents surveyed during baseline and midline surveys. This could, further, be because of the TV reality show aimed at shifting public attitude toward interethnic reconciliation is yet to be produced and broadcast. The activities implemented until the MTR were more targeted to limited stakeholder groups, rather than general public.

Do you think that social cohesion should exist among members of different ethnic/religious/cultural groups in your municipality?

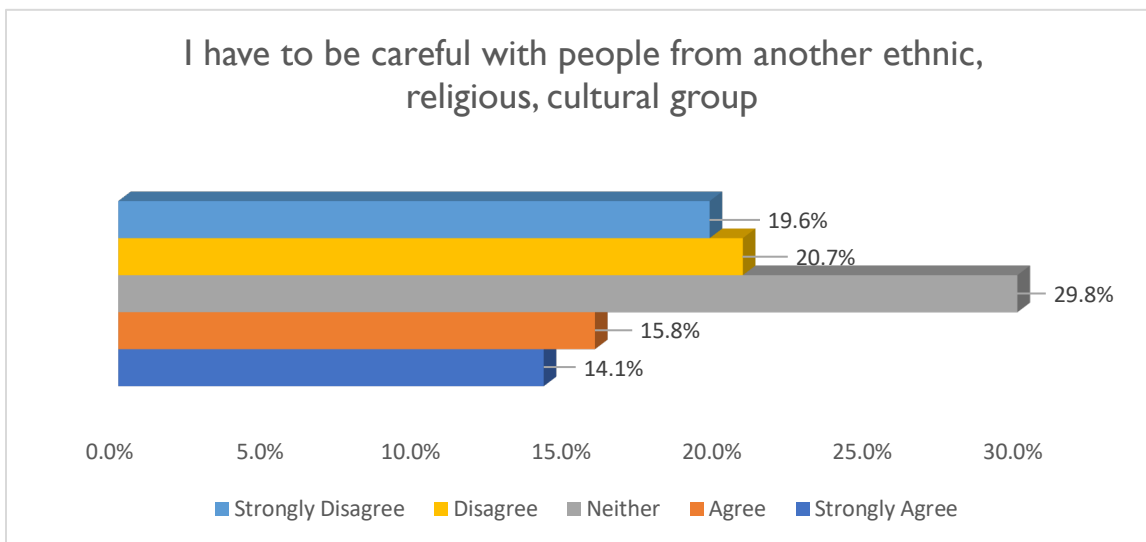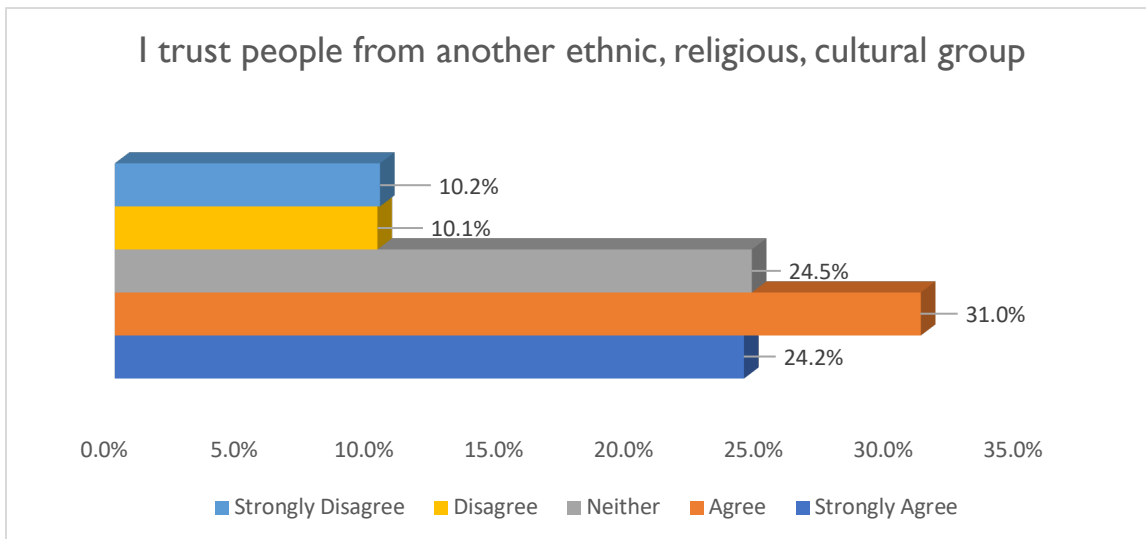Yes: 82.5%, No: 8.7%, Don't Know: 8.9%

Similarly, the percentage of respondents who stated they had friends from a different ethnic background than their own slightly reduced from the 86.6% noted during the baseline survey to 82% currently.

In order to further probe respondents' personal openness to interaction with other ethnic, religious, and cultural groups, the survey also asked how many people from another group they felt comfortable

discussing personal matters with[10]. Respondents indicating that they were not comfortable discussing this with someone outside of their own social group whatsoever stood at 30.6%, roughly in line with the baseline figure of 32.4% given the margin of error. This demonstrates the continued need for promoting social cohesion and integration in North Macedonia.

Respondents were also asked their level of trust in people from a different group than their own, as well as whether they need to be careful when dealing with someone from another group:

I trust people from another ethnic, religious, cultural group

Strongly Disagree	10.2%
Disagree	10.1%
Neither	24.5%
Agree	31.0%
Strongly Agree	24.2%

Legend: ■ Strongly Disagree ■ Disagree ■ Neither ■ Agree ■ Strongly Agree

I have to be careful with people from another ethnic, religious, cultural group

Strongly Disagree	19.6%
Disagree	20.7%
Neither	29.8%
Agree	15.8%
Strongly Agree	14.1%

Legend: ■ Strongly Disagree ■ Disagree ■ Neither ■ Agree ■ Strongly Agree

Trust levels were lowest amongst the Albanian respondents, with only 40.6% agreeing or strongly agreeing, whereas it was highest amongst the Bosnian community (76% agree or strongly agree).

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[10] It appears as though the response options did not include the possibility of selecting one person due to the fact that there was no option between 'None' and '2-4'. This limited the validity of the responses. Given that so many were in both categories it is quite possible that respondents would have selected '1' if offered.

Regionally, trust levels also varied, however due to the vastly different demographics in each municipality is it not advisable to draw regional conclusions based on these variations.[11]

In addition, when looking beyond their own personal situation and commenting on the wider issues in North Macedonia, 1 out of 3 three respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that ethnic and cultural diversity is appreciated in the country. While this was slightly lower than the baseline study found (33.5% versus 39%), figures this high further underline the value that the upcoming New Heroes television program might add in influencing viewpoints, as well as the need for the education component that was included in the ASC Project, given that the survey was given to the general public and not with project participants.

Views on interethnic marriage also demonstrated the degree of segregation in the country, with roughly 45% of respondents indicating that people would not accept if a man married into another ethnic group and a majority (51.5%) stated their community would not accept if a female married into another religious community. These findings suggest that Search should seek to include discussion of interethnic relationships into the content of its upcoming television series.

When it comes to the role of youth in the community, 57.2% either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that "Youth in our society have confidence to make positive changes in their communities", with only 18.3% in disagreement.

USAID Data

USAID conducted its own household survey on public perceptions, known as the "Democracy and Governance Survey Macedonia", in early 2019 and shared an extract of relevant results with Search for Common Ground North Macedonia. While this survey utilized a different methodology and sampling strategy - and therefore direct scientific comparisons cannot be made with the opinion poll Search conducted for this report – some relevant insights can still be gleaned from the USAID data itself.

USAID's data indicated that Gostivar reported by far the lowest sense of belonging to the country, with only 59.5% of respondents stating they have either complete or at least some sense of belonging. No other municipality had less than a 70% total for those two response options - indeed 5 of the 10 municipalities had more than 70% of respondents claim complete belonging, even without including the 'some belonging' responses. Furthermore, Gostivar also had the highest number of respondents indicating they do not have any friends from a different ethnic community (44.3%).

However, in contrast to the USAID findings, data collected in the region for this report provided a different picture. During qualitative interviews teachers in Gostivar stated that they felt that there is a lot of support in the municipality for mixed classes, and an official from the Ministry added that "as for this region the interethnic relations are very relaxed" and there have not been many issues when

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[11] For example, anecdotal evidence suggests youth in North Macedonia are more open to interethnic cooperation than elders and some municipalities have a disproportionately youthful sample compared to others. For a more detailed discussion of this point see the related point in the Summary of Recommendations section of this report below

compared to other areas of the country. Furthermore, an official at SEI pointed out – unprompted with reference to any specific region – that "in Gostivar even during the conflict there were mixed schools functioning." One parent provided a possible explanation for this discrepancy between USAID findings and those gathered during this study and reflected by respondents, noting that in general there is not resistance in Gostivar expect for the older generations, such as the grandparents. Separately, during the qualitative interviews a primary school teacher also independently raised the idea of involving the elderly, identifying them as a source of resistance.

Interestingly, despite the relatively low sense of belonging to the country and lower level of interethnic friendships noted in USAID's Democracy and Governance Survey, Gostivar had the second highest number of respondents indicating that they do not believe there is exclusion or discrimination in the country based on ethnic, cultural, gender, religion, sexual orientation, political affiliation, disability, economic status, or other grounds. This indicates that direct discrimination or exclusion may not be the cause of this lower sense of belonging – perhaps explaining why USAID could obtain these results despite the qualitative interviews that took place during this mid-term review noting a lack of resistance to interethnic relations and very positive views towards integration in Gostivar overall.

Despite some portrayals of North Macedonia in the media as one of the more progressive countries vis-à-vis its stance towards its Roma minority, in reality USAID's survey data also showed that there is a very high level of distrust and suspicion in the country towards the Roma community. Qualitative data collected for this report confirms instances of this, with one teacher providing an illuminating example of discrimination against Roma where a parent complained and asked why their child was sat next to a Roma child (but went quiet when was told that the Roma child was in fact smarter than their child). This all serves to underscore the importance of the inclusion of Roma characters in the upcoming New Heroes programs.

The Democracy and Governance Survey also highlighted that there is still a high degree of political polarization and even discrimination based on political affiliation in North Macedonia. In fact, respondents noted political affiliation is a major cause of social exclusion in the country, second only to ethnicity. This suggests that while Search's New Heroes episodes will wish to avoid becoming politicized in and of themselves, it may still be important to ensure political affiliation is considered alongside gender, ethnicity, language and other identity differences and for some content to be introduced related to the political situation and the benefits of interacting with those of differing political viewpoints (both within and outside of one's ethnic or language group).

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

Overall, the ASC project can be seen as a success to date, with participants indicating the project was highly relevant to their work, as well as showing high levels of satisfaction with the content and implementation of the various training sessions. Furthermore, there was also an overwhelming desire from project participants for more training of this nature in the future.

In particular, the mid-term review found that there is widespread approval of the inclusion of practical exercises in the ASC Project training, with this element frequently cited as the most valuable aspect of the training and a major point of differentiation from other similar projects. Participants have already claimed to have seen positive results, with examples such as being more comfortable handling conflict, awareness of new practical games, and improved relationships with parents listed as examples of this.

While the findings were overwhelmingly positive, respondents were also able to provide some useful suggestions for improvements that could be made to the project. The following is a brief summary of the key recommendations outlined in the Findings section above, followed by detailed recommendations related specifically to monitoring and evaluation that can be considered for Year Three, Year Four, and the final evaluation of this project:

- **Search should ensure future training projects include takehome materials**

- **Search should ensure training agenda includes content on how to disseminate what was learned**

- **Search should maintain more oversight of the trainers to ensure commitments are followed through**

- **Search should take charge of contacting training attendees to avoid communication gaps**

- **Care should be taken to ensure trainings do not fall during exam period**

- **Search should consider adjusting beneficiary targeting to maximize impact**

- **A 'model kindergarten' can be selected to be used as a demonstration project**

- **Search should adjust how it utilizes translators in the training**

- **Search should ensure parent inclusion continues for future projects of this nature, and consider extending this to primary school parents**

- **Trainers recommended future contracts account for travel and preparation contributions**

- **Budgets for future projects should include line items for partner costs**

Recommendations for future M&E and data collection

- For this current public opinion poll Search contractors interviewed a number of children, including: 2 children only 13 years of age, 7 children who were 14 years of age, 51 children 15 years of age, and 80 children 16 years of age. It is not clear what, if any, training, ethical considerations, and child safeguarding procedures were in place in order to interview these children. Should Search still wish to interview children going forward due to the youth-oriented nature of some of its work, it must specifically plan for this and ensure more strict oversight of the independent project enumerators.

- Furthermore, additional supervision is recommended for the third-party individual contractors Search tasked with conducting the data collection in general, no matter the age of those surveyed. Indeed, ESOMAR social science research guidelines, for example, recommend one field supervisor per every six enumerators, and it is not clear any supervision took place in the field at all for these enumerators.

- The demographic data in the opinion poll also highlights major potential data quality issues which could undermine the survey. Take the uneven age distribution for example, with more than 85% of respondents in Debar under the age of 18 (versus 0.9% in Radovic and 0% in Kumanovo), and with 25.6% of respondents in Karposh in the 50-69 age bracket while only 0.8% were in Cair - despite both being in the Skopje metropolitan area. This massive variation is well beyond any variation that is possible to occur naturally in the regional demographics, therefore it is highly likely that any differences in opinions between municipalities/ethnicities/etc. can be attributed as much to the survey sampling than to any actual differences between these groups and their opinions in real life. Alongside increased supervision and oversight of enumerators, the use of more structured best practices for respondent selection, such as a Kish Grid for example, are recommended for future quantitative surveys in order to reduce this problem.

- The pre- and post-tests should be complemented by follow up monitoring after 3+ months

- Search should consider the use of case studies during the final evaluation phase, ideally beginning the identification and tracking of select participants during Year Three.

- Given that teachers have professional development time in August where they are at work but where their students are not yet in school, this might be a preferable time period to conduct the interviews during the final evaluation. Timing these meetings at that time would allow for detailed discussions and remove the time pressure that this data collection was under – allowing for richer information and avoiding any questions being skipped. Furthermore, those conversations could also serve as a small reminder of the ASC training content right before the school year begins, rather than at the end.

Appendices

A1 Statement of Work

STATEMENT OF WORK

Project Title: USAID Project on Advancing Social Cohesion in North Macedonia

Description of Services: The Contractor will conduct the Midterm Evaluation as part of the activities and in the scope of the ASC Project. The overall aim of the Midterm Evaluation is to identify measures, reflect on the results of the project so far and adjust the next steps of the implementation in the direction of improvements in the methodology, approach and context.

 Therefore, the specific objectives of the Midterm Evaluation are:

1. Take stock of the results so far and unpack contextual changes that influenced the implementation of the project;

2. Gather data on the project indicators on annual basis through implementation of the public opinion poll and compare the results with the baseline values;

3. Identify any changes in the context of social cohesion and media space which will direct the work of the reality TV show.

The Contractor will be responsible for the execution of the first objective, and also will incorporate in the Final Midterm Review Report all gathered data on the project indicators through implementation of the public opinion poll (under objective #2) which will be conducted by Search North Macedonia and will compare the results with the baseline study results.

Deliverables and Schedule of Performance: The Contractor will be responsible to provide the work deliverables as set in the ToR for the Midterm Evaluation Assignment.

Deliverable	Deadline
Inception Report with the instruments	27 May 2019
Field trip	27 May 2019
Field trip visit	28 May-10 June, 2019
Draft Midterm Evaluation Report	24 June 2019 *(adjusted to 26 June)*

Final Midterm Evaluation Report	30 June 2019 *(adjusted to 7 July)*

Reporting and Communication: The contractor will lead the Midterm Evaluation and will work under technical supervision and collaboration of Search ILT's Senior DM&E Specialist and close coordination and collaboration with the Search North Macedonia's DM&E Assistant and Country Director. The contractor will hold weekly meetings (via Skype) with Search ILT's Senior DM&E Specialist and M&E Assistant in order to discuss progress, challenges, and support needs.

FGD Guide – Parents

INTERVIEW DETAILS

Focus Group Date:	
Start Time	
End Time:	
Location:	
Type of School/Group:	

Respondent	Gender	Ethnicity	Religion
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			

INFORMED CONSENT

Thank you for participating in this discussion today. My name is _____ and I am collecting data for Search for Common Ground by talking to people about their thoughts and feelings about social relations in the community.

Your participation is voluntary, and you do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to answer. It is also fine if you disagree with someone else in the group, please just share your honest opinions and be respectful of others.

There are no right or wrong answers, anything you say or feel is ok and will be noted down. No training or benefits will be affected by your answers, this is just a chance to learn about your opinions and to share ideas with so that we can ensure the project is as effective as possible. We would greatly appreciate your help in participating in this discussion.

I will be recording the discussion so that I can make notes of your comments afterwards, but this recording will not be shared with anyone and will be kept under password on my computer. Your answers will also be kept confidential and they will not be linked to the name of the person who said it, so that you can feel free to speak openly with whatever your view is.

Any questions before we begin?

DO YOU CONSENT TO BE PART OF THE INTERVIEW: YES/NO

I'd like to start by asking you to tell me about the pre-school/school your child attends in terms of ethnic, religious, or cultural diversity. How would you describe the children in this area?

2. How familiar are you with the Advancing Social Cohesion project that SFCG is implementing in this area? What can you tell me about it?

3. Please tell me about your participation in this project/training. What do you think about this project?

4. Was anything difficult for you to understand or complete during the training/project? What was not clear or difficult to understand and why?

5. Did you learn anything new as part of this project/training that you did not know before?
   What do you think were the most important things you learned?

6. Was anything difficult for you to understand or complete during the training/project?

7. Was there anything that surprised you, or was unexpected, about the content of the training?

8. Based on your involvement with this project/training, what do you think of how the project/training was implemented?
   What about the trainers/staff involved?

9. Did you find the training useful in your life as a parent?
   Can you provide an example of how you used this training?

10. Do parents in this community encourage their children to interact with others from different ethnic or religious backgrounds? Why or what not?

11. **Have these interactions between groups changed in the past year? Please describe. This can be for better or for worse – any change.**

12. **Are some types of people more likely or less likely to interact with those from another group than others?**
    Which groups? Why do you think this is the case?

13. **Are males and females – either parents or children - different when it comes to their views on interacting with people of another group? If so, how?**

14. **Have any wider changes that took place in this community, or in the country, affected social relations here?**

15. **What is the view of your child's teachers and school officials regarding relations between children from different backgrounds?**

16. **Does your child's school provide opportunities for extra-curricular activities between children of diverse backgrounds? Please describe.**

17. **Have you faced, or know of others who have faced, any resistance to improved intercultural relations from school officials / government officials / community leaders?**

18. **Have you shared any ideas/suggestions on how to improve social relations between groups with any others who were not part of this project/training?**

19. **How can we ensure that the positive elements of this project/training continue after the training is complete?**

20. **Do you have any ideas on how cooperation between different ethnic groups can be improved other than what was covered in this training/project?**

21. **Do you have any other comments or advice you can give to the people working on this project to improve it?**

FGD Guide – Teachers

INTERVIEW DETAILS

Focus Group Date:	
Start Time	
End Time:	
Location:	
Type of School/Group:	

Respondent	Gender	Ethnicity	Religion
1			
2			
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10			

INFORMED CONSENT

Thank you for participating in this discussion today. My name is _____ and I am collecting data for Search for Common Ground by talking to people about their thoughts and feelings about social relations in the community.

Your participation is voluntary, and you do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to answer. It is also fine if you disagree with someone else in the group, please just share your honest opinions and be respectful of others.

There are no right or wrong answers, anything you say or feel is ok and will be noted down. No training or benefits will be affected by your answers, this is just a chance to learn about your opinions and to share ideas with so that we can ensure the project is as effective as possible. We would greatly appreciate your help in participating in this discussion.

I will be recording the discussion so that I can make notes of your comments afterwards, but this recording will not be shared with anyone and will be kept under password on my computer. Your answers will also be kept confidential and they will not be linked to the name of the person who said it, so that you can feel free to speak openly with whatever your view is.

Any questions before we begin?

DO YOU CONSENT TO BE PART OF THE INTERVIEW: YES/NO

1. **I'd like to start by asking you to tell me about your school in terms of ethnic, religious, or cultural diversity. How would you describe your students?**

2. **How familiar are you with the Advancing Social Cohesion project that SFCG is implementing in this area? What can you tell me about it?**

3. **Please tell me about your participation in this project/training. What do you think about this project?**

4. **Was anything difficult for you to understand or complete during the training/project? What was not clear or difficult to understand and why?**

5. **Based on your involvement with this project/training, what do you think of how the project/training was implemented?**
What about the trainers/staff involved?

6. **Did you learn anything new as part of this project/training that you did not know before?**
What do you think were the most important things you learned?

7. **Was there anything that surprised you, or was unexpected, about the content of the training?**

8. **Do students interact with others from different ethnic backgrounds in your school? Please tell me about these relations.**

9. **Has this interaction between students changed in the past year? Please describe. This can be for better or for worse – any change.**

10. **Were any relationships between students negatively affected?**

11. **Are boys and girls different when it comes to interaction with students of another group? If so, how?**

12. **Are some types of students more likely or less likely to interact with those from another group than others?**
   Which groups? Why do you think this is the case?

13. **What are some of the typical views of parents on inter-ethnic relations among students?**

14. **Have any wider changes that took place in this community, or in the country, affected social relations here?**

15. **Does your pre-school/school have an established group that implements this model?**

16. **Can you provide an example of a time when you used some of the skills or suggestions you learned from this training in the classroom?**
   If not, why was the training not relevant to you?

17. **What is the biggest challenge you face in using the skills/content provided in the training in your work?**

18. **Have you faced, or know of others who have faced, any resistance to improved intercultural relations from school officials / government officials / community leaders?**

19. **Have you shared any ideas/suggestions on how to improve social relations between groups with any others who were not part of this project/training?**

20. **How can we ensure that the positive elements of this project/training continue after the training is complete?**

21. **Do you have any ideas on how cooperation between different ethnic groups can be improved other than what was covered in this training/project?**

22. **Do you have any other comments or advice you can give to the people working on this project to improve it?**

FGD Guide – Pedagogical Trainees

INTERVIEW DETAILS

Focus Group Date:	
Start Time	
End Time:	
Location:	
Institution:	

Respondent	Gender	Ethnicity	Religion
1			
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3			
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5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			

INFORMED CONSENT

Thank you for participating in this discussion today. My name is _____ and I am collecting data for Search for Common Ground by talking to people about their thoughts and feelings about social relations in the community. Your participation is voluntary, and you do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to answer. It is also fine if you disagree with someone else in the group, please just share your honest opinions and be respectful of others. There are no right or wrong answers, anything you say or feel is ok and will be noted down. No training or benefits will be affected by your answers, this is just a chance to learn about your opinions and to share ideas with so that we can ensure the project is as effective as possible. We would greatly appreciate your help in participating in this discussion. I will be recording the discussion so that I can make notes of your comments afterwards, but this recording will not be shared with anyone and will be kept under password on my computer. Your answers will also be kept confidential and they will not be linked to the name of the person who said it, so that you can feel free to speak openly with whatever your view is.

Any questions before we begin?

DO YOU CONSENT TO BE PART OF THE INTERVIEW: YES/NO

1. **How familiar are you with the Advancing Social Cohesion project that SFCG is implementing in this area? What can you tell me about it?**

2. **Please tell me about your participation in this project/training. What do you think about this project?**

3. **Was anything difficult for you to understand or complete during the training/project? What was not clear or difficult to understand and why?**

4. **Based on your involvement with this project/training, what do you think of how the project/training was implemented?**
    What about the trainers/staff involved?

5. **Did you learn anything new as part of this project/training that you did not know before?**
    What do you think were the most important things you learned?

6. **Was there anything that surprised you, or was unexpected, about the content of the training?**

7. **Did you receive any materials or handouts to take home for your use later? If so, have you read/used these after the training ended?**
    How useful were these?
    How could they be improved?

8. **How do you think teaching children from one ethnic or religious groups is different than teaching a group that includes those from different backgrounds?**

9. **Do you think some types of students will be more likely or less likely to interact with those from another group than others?**
    Which groups? Why do you think this is the case?

10. **Do you think that boys and girls different when it comes to interaction with students of another group? If so, how?**
    Should teachers approach encouraging intercultural relations differently with boys and girls? How?

11. **Do you have any worries or concerns about teaching children from different ethnic or religious backgrounds in the same class?**

12. **What is the biggest challenge you think you will face in using the skills/content provided in the training when you teach?**

13. **Have any changes that took place in this community, or in the country, affected social relations here recently? This can be for better or for worse – any change.**

14. **Do you think you will face any resistance to improved intercultural relations from school officials / government officials / community leaders?**

15. **Have you shared any ideas/suggestions on how to improve social relations between groups with any others who were not part of this project/training?**

16. **How can we ensure that the positive elements of this project/training continue after the training is complete?**

17. **Do you have any ideas on how cooperation between different ethnic groups can be improved other than what was covered in this training/project?**

18. **Do you have any other comments or advice you can give to the people working on this project to improve it?**

KII Guide – Community Leaders

INTERVIEW DETAILS

Date:	
Start Time	
End Time:	
Location:	
Role/Title:	
Gender:	
Primary Language:	

INFORMED CONSENT

My name is _____ and I am collecting data for Search for Common Ground by talking to people about their thoughts and feelings about social relations in the community and about the project that SFCG is implementing here.

Your participation is voluntary, you do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to answer, and you can end the interview at any time. There are no right or wrong answers, this is just a chance to learn about your opinions and to share ideas with so that we can ensure the project is as effective as possible.

Your answers will also be kept confidential and they will not be linked to the name of the person who said it, so that you can feel free to speak openly with whatever your view is. We would greatly appreciate your help in participating in this discussion.

Any questions before we begin?

DO YOU CONSENT TO BE PART OF THE INTERVIEW: YES/NO

1. I'd like to start by asking you to tell me about your role in this community. What are your main responsibilities as a leader here?

2. **How would you describe the ethnic, religious, or cultural background of the people here?**

3. **Is there conflict or tension in your community among people from different ethnic or religious backgrounds?**
    Is this different for youth than it is for adults?

4. **Do people interact with others from different ethnic backgrounds in school or are they separate? Please tell me about these relations.**
    How common is this?

5. **How does this area differ from the other locations in the country in terms of community relations?**

6. **Has this interaction between groups changed in the past year? Please describe. This can be for better or for worse – any change.**

7. **Are males and females different when it comes to interaction with those of another group or in their desire to do so? If so, how?**

8. **Are some types of people more likely or less likely to interact with those from another group than others?**
    Which groups? Why do you think this is the case?

9. **Have any wider changes that took place in this community, or in the country, affected social relations here?**

10. **Have you faced, or know of others who have faced, any resistance to improved intercultural relations?**

11. **What are some of the major skills/approaches that teachers or parents need to improve on to teach the youth to improve their relations with other groups?**
    Why do you think this is currently a challenge?

12. **What are some other ideas or suggestions you have for how different ethnic or religious groups can get along better?**

13. **How familiar are you with the Advancing Social Cohesion project that SFCG is implementing in this area? What can you tell me about it?**

14. **How can we ensure that the positive elements of this project/training continue after the training is complete?**

15. **Do you have any other comments or advice you can give to the people working on this project to improve it?**

KII Guide – MoES Officials

INTERVIEW DETAILS

Date:	
Start Time	
End Time:	
Location:	
Role/Title:	
Gender:	
Primary Language:	

INFORMED CONSENT

My name is _____ and I am collecting data for Search for Common Ground by talking to people about their thoughts and feelings about social relations in the community and about the project that SFCG is implementing here.

Your participation is voluntary, you do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to answer, and you can end the interview at any time. There are no right or wrong answers, this is just a chance to learn about your opinions and to share ideas with so that we can ensure the project is as effective as possible.

Your answers will also be kept confidential and they will not be linked to the name of the person who said it, so that you can feel free to speak openly with whatever your view is. We would greatly appreciate your help in participating in this discussion.

Any questions before we begin?

DO YOU CONSENT TO BE PART OF THE INTERVIEW: YES/NO

1. I'd like to start by asking you to tell me about your role is in terms of education in this community.
    [prompt respondent to describe major deliverables or detail the nature of their work]

2. **How would you describe the ethnic, religious, or cultural background of the students here?**

3. **How does this education system or community here differ from the other locations in the country that some of your colleagues work?**

4. **How familiar are you with the Advancing Social Cohesion project that SFCG is implementing in this area? What can you tell me about it?**

5. **Please tell me about your participation in this project/training. What do you think about this project?**

6. **Was anything difficult for you to understand or complete during the training/project? What was not clear or difficult to understand and why?**

7. **Based on your involvement with this project/training, what do you think of how the project/training was implemented?**
   What about the trainers/staff involved?

8. **Did you learn anything new as part of this project/training that you did not know before?**
   What do you think were the most important things you learned?

9. **Was there anything that surprised you, or was unexpected, about the content of the training?**

10. **Do students interact with others from different ethnic backgrounds in school? Please tell me about these relations.**
    How common is this?

11. **Has this interaction between students changed in the past year? Please describe. This can be for better or for worse – any change.**

12. **Are boys and girls different when it comes to interaction with students of another group? If so, how?**

13. **Are some types of students more likely or less likely to interact with those from another group than others?**
    Which groups? Why do you think this is the case?

14. **Have any wider changes that took place in this community, or in the country, affected social relations here?**

15. **What is the biggest challenge you face in using the skills/content provided in the training in your work?**

16. **Have you faced, or know of others who have faced, any resistance to improved intercultural relations from parents / school officials / community leaders?**

17. **What are some of the major skills/approaches that teachers need to improve on when teaching children from different backgrounds? Why do you think this is currently a challenge?**

18. **Have you shared any ideas/suggestions from this project/training with any others who were not part of this project/training?**

19. **How can we ensure that the positive elements of this project/training continue after the training is complete?**

20. **Do you have any ideas on how teaching of classes with children of different ethnic or religious groups can be improved, other than what was covered in this training/project?**

21. **Do you have any other comments or advice you can give to the people working on this project to improve it?**

PUBLIC OPINION POLL

INTRODUCTION

Dear responder,

Thank you for taking time to be part of this important survey that aims to identify attitudes and perception of the general public in target municipalities regarding social cohesion. The compilation of the survey takes only 5-8 minutes and it requires only short answers by your side. There are no right or wrong answers, please only select one of the proposed options. Be assured that all data will be kept in the strictest confidentiality. Only aggregated data will be reported.

1) DEMOGRAPHIC INFO

Gender affiliation:

Age:

Municipality:

Ethnicity [tick the relevant one]

Macedonian		Roma	
Albanian		Serbian	
Turk		Vlach	
Other [please specify]			

Level of Education:

- Completed primary school
- Completed high school
- Completed Bachelor's Degree
- Master/PhD studies

QUESTIONS ABOUT SOCIAL COHESION

1) Usually when the term social cohesion is mention, it means coexistence among people, trust among members from different ethnic groups and cooperation between diverse ethnic/religious/cultural groups. Do you think that social cohesion should exist among members of your municipality?

   - Yes
   - No
   - I don't know [do not read this option, only if it is mention directly by the responder]

2) Do you have friends from a different ethnic background than yours?
   - Yes
   - No [go to Q4]

3) If yes, how often do you socially meet with friends from another ethnic background?
   - once or twice per year
   - several types in a year
   - once per month
   - Once a week
   - Every day

4) With how many people from another ethnic/religious/cultural group you are free to discuss personal matters?
   - None
   - 2-4
   - 5-9
   - 10-15
   - 16-20
   - More than 20

5) On a scale from 1 to 5, please indicate the level of agreement with the following statements [read the statement to the responder]

   1= strongly disagree

   2= disagree

   3= neither agree nor disagree

   4= agree

   5= strongly agree

STATAMENTS	1	2	3	4	5
I trust people from another ethnic/religious/cultural group					
I have to be careful with people from another ethnic/religious/cultural group					

6) On a scale of 0 to 5 please indicate the level of agreement with the following statements:

STATEMENTS	1	2	3	4	5
Ethnic and cultural diversity is appreciated in our country					
Different ethnic/religious/cultural groups in Macedonia have different style of living					
Minority ethnic groups should adopt the majority culture					
People accept if a man from one ethnic group marries a girl from another ethnic group					
It is okay in my religious community if a girl marries a boy from another religious community					

7) On a scale of 0 to 5 please indicate the level of agreement with the following statement: Youth in our society have confidence to make positive changes in their communities

❖ Ask for final comments, questions or feedback about the survey!

THANK YOU FOR THANKING THE SURVEY!