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The European Union for Georgia



THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REFORM (PAR) ROADMAP MONITORING IN 8 MUNICIPALITIES OF WEST GEORGIA

REPORT No 1

KUTAISI
2020

MEETING OF PROJECT PARTNERS



FORUM OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS



TRAINING FOR CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS ON PAR MONITORING



**THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION
REFORM (PAR)
ROADMAP MONITORING
IN 8 MUNICIPALITIES
OF WEST GEORGIA**

REPORT No 1

VANI
TERJOLA
BAGDATI
KHONI
AMBROLAURI
TSAGERI
LANCHKHUTI
OZURGETI

**KUTAISI
2020**

Published under the project “A Common Forum of CSOs from Guria, Imereti and Racha-Lechkhumi for PAR Roadmap Monitoring”.

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The Director of the project:

ALLA GAMAKHARIA (The Cultural-Humanitarian Fund “Sukhumi”)

The project coordinators:

TEA TORINAVA (The Cultural-Humanitarian Fund “Sukhumi”)

MERI GELASHVILI (The Fund of Women Entrepreneurs)

KETEVAN TSKHAKAIA (Imereti Scientists’ Union “Spectri”)

Editor: LALI SHENGELIA

Layout: LIA KOSTAVA

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THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REFORM (PAR) ROADMAP MONITORING IN LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENTS

ANALYSIS OF THE MONITORING REPORTS CONDUCTED IN 8 MUNICIPALITIES OF WEST GEORGIA

**Prepared by LIZI SOPROMADZE
EXPERT ON LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT
NELE REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT CENTRE**

INTRODUCTION

Effective and efficient public administration promotes and strengthens democracy and good governance¹. The efficiency of a government is ensured by policy documents, strategies and development plans designed by the state. According to the principles of democracy and good governance the participation of civil society and various actors in the process of developing public policies and making public decisions is extremely important.

The involvement of civil society in the process of planning and implementing public policies is considered as one of the fundamental elements of democratic governance. The involvement of the public enhances trust in the political system and the legitimacy of the government².

Civil monitoring is a powerful tool for ensuring the participation of the civil sector in the process of implementing public policies. The main part of the activities of NGOs is either fully focused on monitoring one of these areas, or their activities necessarily include a monitoring component.

Successful implementation of the Public Administration Reform Roadmap (PAR)³ plays a central role in the process of integration of Georgia into the European Union. According to the “Association Agreement between the European Union and Georgia”⁴ the

¹ Administration of the Government of Georgia. (2015). *The Public Administration Reform Roadmap of Georgia*, 2020: <http://gov.ge/>

² T.Koberidze, N. Dolidze. (2018). *Center of Trainings and Consultations*.<https://www.ctc.org.ge/>

³ Administration of the Government of Georgia. (2015). *The Public Administration Reform Roadmap of Georgia*, 2020: <http://gov.ge/>

⁴ Office of the State Minister for Euro-Atlantic Integration of Georgia, (2014). *Georgia-EU Association Agreement*:<http://eunato.gov.ge/en/eu/association-agreement>

country is committed to carrying out fundamental reforms in public governance and public services.

The action plan for 2019-2020 for reforming public governance⁵ has identified two tasks in the field of self-government:

- **Empowerment of self-governments through increasing their authority;**
- **Stage-by stage development and improvement of e-services in municipalities for improving the accessibility to e-services in local self-governments.**

Stage-by-stage development and improvement of e-services in municipalities is a necessary component of strengthening local self-government. The current situation has further stressed the importance of this issue. Today, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, e-governance is becoming increasingly important and it should ensure **transparent, efficient and inclusive governance and communication** for the public. This issue is duly reflected in the reform action plan for 2019-2020⁶.

For the effective implementation of the Public Administration Reform Roadmap (PAR) at the local level, more active participation of civil society is essential in order to ensure transparent, accountable and inclusive local governance.

With the purpose of promoting the effective implementation of the public administration reform, Cultural-Humanitarian Fund “Sukhumi” in partnership with the Fund of Women Entrepreneurs and Imereti Scientists’ Union “Spectri” is implementing a project “A Common Forum for CSOs from Guria, Imereti and Racha-Lechkhumi for PAR Roadmap Monitoring”, which is funded by EU.

Under the project the CSO Forum for organizations from Western Georgia was set up⁷. The CSOs from Imereti, Racha-Lechkhumi and Guria cooperate and monitor the implementation of the Public Administration Reform in 8 project municipalities. In the process, a monitoring tool developed by the Fund “Sukhumi” was applied to assess the efficiency, transparency and inclusiveness of local self-governments in Khoni, Bagdati, Terjola, Vani, Ozurgeti, Lanchkhuti, Tsageri and Ambrolauri.

A series of trainings were organized within the framework of the project. During the training the participants acquired needed competencies and conducted required activities in respective municipalities. Also, under the project, a sub-grant scheme in support of local civil society organizations was prepared, which will facilitate the participation of member organizations of the Civic Forum in the civil dialogue in their respective municipalities and beyond.

Local needs assessment will be carried out during the first and second years of the project, relevant recommendations will be developed to be included in the local action plans of the

⁵ Administration of the Government of Georgia. (2019). *The Public Administration Reform action plan in Georgia for 2019-2020*: <http://gov.ge/>

⁶ Administration of the Government of Georgia. (2019). *The Public Administration Reform action plan in Georgia for 2019-2020*: <http://gov.ge/>

⁷ Information on the CSO Forum is available on <http://csosforum.ge/index.php/ka/about-forum-ka-1>

MONITORING

target municipalities. Regular reports on the Public Administration Reform (PAR) Roadmap monitoring and ongoing development in the regions will be published. A pilot system for online petitions will be introduced in Khoni Municipality.

The **CSO Forum for organizations** from Guria, Imereti and Racha-Lechkhumi set up in October 2019 aims at bringing CSOs from different backgrounds together to support civil society development in Western Georgia. At present, about 16 organizations of different profiles and working in various fields are the members of the Forum.

The Forum is a place for cooperation. CSOs are encouraged to learn from one another, transferring best practice approaches from one municipality to the other. Therefore, the CSO Forum is a possibility to bring together opinions and proposals for improvement from CSOs differing in size, geographical scope and thematic orientation.

THE AIM OF MONITORING

An active society and a high degree of participation is a guarantee of successful self-governance. It is only with the help of active civil society that open, efficient efficiency and inclusive self-government and development are achieved.

The main goal of the project “A Common Forum for CSOs from Guria, Imereti and Racha-Lechkhumi for PAR Roadmap Monitoring” is to promote the effective implementation of the Public Administration Reform Roadmap (PAR) in the regions of Georgia.

For this purpose, 16 civil society organizations of different profiles involved in the project monitored the Public Administration Reform (PAR) Action Plan in 8 municipalities.

The monitoring aimed to assess the level of **efficiency, transparency and inclusiveness** of the local self-government, to identify the strengths and weaknesses of e-governance practices and to develop and propose recommendations for the local self-government based on the evidence-based information and findings.

Within the framework of the monitoring the work of the local self-government was assessed from three perspectives: **transparency, efficiency and inclusiveness**.

Transparency was assessed using pre-developed 9 indicators, efficiency – with 11 indicators and inclusiveness with 12 indicators. In total, in the framework of the monitoring the data for 32 indicators were collected and processed.

LOCATION, TIMEFRAME AND IMPLEMENTERS OF THE MONITORING

The monitoring was carried out in January-February 2020 (from January 27 to February 28) in 8 municipalities of 3 regions of Georgia by local CSOs under the supervision of the project implementing organizations.

IMERETI REGION

Supervising organization – Cultural-Humanitarian Fund “Sukhumi”

- **Bagdati Municipality:** NELE “Equality now” and NELE Union of Persons with Disabilities “Faith and Hope”
- **Vani Municipality:** NELE “Tanadgoma” and NELE “Activism of Citizens for Good Governance and Justice”
- **Terjola Municipality:** NELE Union for Children’s Rights Protection and Civic Education “Children – the Future of the Country” and Terjola “Association of Persons with Disabilities”
- **Khoni Municipality:** NELE “Education and Development Center – Edelweiss” and “Initiative Group of IDPs in Khoni”

RACHA-LECHKHUMI REGION

Supervising organization: The Fund of Women Entrepreneurs

- **Ambrolauri Municipality:** Resource center of Racha-Lechkhumi and Lower Svaneti self-government and “Abkhazinterkont” regional hub in Racha-Lechkhumi and Lower Svaneti
- **Tsageri Municipality:** NELE Women’s Rights and Gender Equality Center “Active Citizen – Accountable Government”

GURIA REGION

Supervising organization: Imereti Scientists’ Union “Spectri”

- **Lanchkhuti Municipality:** NELE Georgian Rural Council and NELE Lanchkhuti Information Centre
- **Ozurgeti Municipality:** NELE Education and Equality Centre

MONITORING TOOLS

Prior to the monitoring process, the project implementation team and partner organizations developed the monitoring plan and monitoring tool – a monitoring questionnaire (see the appendix).

The monitoring questionnaire covered 3 areas: transparency, efficiency and inclusiveness. Each of the areas was assessed using pre-developed indicators; 32 indicators were studied and evaluated.

METHODS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MONITORING:

- Official internet resources of the Municipalities: websites and the Facebook pages were defined as the main objects of monitoring;
- The legislation governing monitoring issues, normative acts and regulations of municipalities were also studied and analyzed during the monitoring process;
- In order to verify and complete the information, the representatives of relevant services of the municipalities were contacted by telephone and, if necessary, meetings were organized.

At the initial stage of the monitoring, the implementing organizations planned and conducted information meetings with the officials of the municipalities, where they were introduced to the goals and objectives of the monitoring, as well as the methods and tools of the activity.

In the process of monitoring all the municipalities cooperated with the project implementing organizations and provided them with all needed materials and information without any resistance.

During the monitoring process, the relevant legislation was studied in accordance with the questionnaire, the primary information was analyzed, individual meetings were held with the responsible persons and the ways of verifying the reliability of the data were specified. Normative acts and reports (Mayor, Sakrebulo Chairperson, relevant services, etc.) were also studied, qualitative and quantitative indicators were processed and a monitoring report was prepared at the municipal level.

The draft of the monitoring report was presented to the municipalities and after final clarifications with them the final draft was developed.

Under the monitoring framework 3 main areas of municipality activities were evaluated:

- Transparency
- Efficiency
- Inclusiveness

Each of these areas was evaluated based on pre-selected indicators.

Transparency of the municipalities was assessed according to the following criteria:

- Accessibility of municipal vacancies;
- Adherence to the vacancy deadlines;
- Municipality structure and accessibility of contact information of municipality staff;

- Possibility of submission of comments and recommendations electronically;
- Accessibility of budgets, financial statements and procurement plans;
- Accessibility of biographies of municipality officials;
- Publicity of Sakrebulo daily agendas;
- Publicity of normative acts adopted by the municipality;
- Accessibility of reports prepared by the departments of the municipality;
- Setting the dates for open office hours;
- Practicing participatory, gender and social budgeting in the municipality;
- Availability of anti-corruption plans in the municipality;
- Accessibility of the municipality code of ethics.

For assessing **efficiency** official websites were studied and interviews with municipality officials were conducted. In order to assess the efficiency, the following areas of the work of the municipalities were examined:

- Diversity of cooperation of municipal officials with the population;
- Responding to the letters and applications from the citizens;
- Possibility of providing various services electronically (submission of petitions, planning meetings, submission of letters and applications);
- Availability of municipality staff professional development plans;
- Possibility for professional development for municipality representatives (participation in trainings) and practice of sharing/applying acquired competencies;
- Forms and tools for evaluating municipality services;
- Practices of planning and monitoring municipality work;

For assessing **inclusiveness** official websites were studied, municipality facilities were inspected and public officials were interviewed. The following issues were examined:

- Gender distribution of the municipality staff;
- Adaptability of municipal buildings;
- Availability of information for ethnic minorities;
- Possibility to protect the interests of various vulnerable groups (women, people with disabilities, the socially vulnerable, ethnic minorities, IDPs, etc.) and access of these groups to public information;

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- Awareness of municipality representatives on the issues of inclusiveness;
- Ability of various stakeholders to participate in the decision-making process (it was examined whether there is an advisory board, gender council, etc.);

There were no obstacles in the process of planned monitoring. The communication with municipality representatives was effective and all questions and requests were addressed in a timely manner.

The project envisages conducting three similar monitorings, which will prepare the foundation for developing the action plan for successful implementation of Public Administration Reform in local self-government.

RESULTS OF MONITORING IN THE MUNICIPALITIES

■ TRANSPARENCY

IMERETI REGION

VANI MUNICIPALITY

The monitoring conducted in Vani municipality demonstrated that the majority of the public information is available electronically through the municipality official website. It contains municipality structure, municipal departments, information about officials and their contact details. The current budget, social budget and the information about the municipal procurement are also available.

However, a number of shortcomings were identified:

- There is no possibility in the municipality for submitting complaints or proposals online;
- Budget reports and reports from various municipal departments are not available;
- The municipality does not have an anti-corruption plan and code of conduct;
- Normative acts and decrees adopted by the Sakrebulo are not published;
- Public officials, Sakrebulo Chairperson, Sakrebulo Deputy Chairpersons and Sakrebulo members have not set official days for open office hours;
- Vani municipality does not have a participatory budget;

TERJOLA MUNICIPALITY

The monitoring conducted in Terjola municipality demonstrated that the majority of the public information is available electronically through the municipality official website and

the information is regularly updated. Vacancy terms and deadlines are always observed. You can browse municipality structure, information about the municipality structural units, information about the officials and their contact details on the website. Current annual budget, report on the previous year's budget are uploaded and the information about the municipal procurement is also available.

However, a number of shortcomings were identified:

- Contact details of all municipality officials are not uploaded to the website;
- Reports from various municipal departments are not published electronically;
- The municipality does not have an anti-corruption plan and code of conduct;
- The municipality does not have a participatory budget;
- The municipality does not have a gender budget;
- Financial regulations are not uploaded to the municipality website.

BAGDATI MUNICIPALITY

Based on the information received from the monitoring, it is clear that the basic standards in terms of transparency are observed in Bagdati Municipality, the website and the Facebook pages are operational. The citizens can follow the ongoing processes in the municipality online; get acquainted with the news, announcements about vacancies. The terms and deadlines of announced vacancies are always observed. Legislative acts and regulations are uploaded and could be easily searched on the website. Contact details for communicating with the representatives of any structure can be easily found. However, it is possible to contact them by email only, some of the profiles do not include telephone numbers.

Shortcomings identified in the process of monitoring in Bagdati district:

- The municipality does not have a participatory budget. The gender budget is not available either. However, some gender programs are being implemented in the municipality as the components of various subprograms;
- Budget reports are not uploaded to the municipality website;
- Reports from various municipality departments are not available;
- There is no information available about open office hours for citizens;
- The municipality does not have an anti-corruption plan and code of ethics. However, the municipality carries out anti-corruption activities based on the law on Conflicts of Interests and Corruption in Public Institutions and decree of the government of Georgia on General Rules of Ethics and Conduct in Public Institutions.

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KHONI MUNICIPALITY

The monitoring conducted in Khoni municipality revealed that the announcements about the vacancies in Sakrebulo and Mayor's office are available on the Facebook page of the Mayor's Office, as well as on the official website of the municipality and the deadlines for announcing vacancies are always observed. As for the availability of information about self-government officials, their biographies, work experience, qualifications and contact details, the municipality meets all the requirements and publicity in this regard is fully ensured. The approved budget and procurement plan are published on the official website of the municipality. Sakrebulo decrees and adopted normative acts are also available. Open office hours are also fixed by the Mayor's Office. The municipality has developed a social budget. It should be noted that Khoni municipality has developed the "Strategy for Improving Transparency and Good Faith for 2019-2022" (The decree of Khoni Sakrebulo # 40 74, 25.12.2019), which is a significant step forward and which aims at identifying existing shortcomings and step by step solution of the problems.

Shortcomings identified during the process of monitoring in Khoni municipality:

- Information about the municipal services is not available online. The official website of Khoni municipality does not allow a citizen or a stakeholder to submit a complaint or an application online;
- Information about Sakrebulo officials and Sakrebulo members uploaded to the electronic portal is not full;
- The 3-monthand 6-monthbudget reports, internal audit reports and implemented procurement reports cannot be found on the website;
- Information about reports of municipality departments is not available on the website;
- Sakrebulo members do not have fixed open office hours;
- Municipality does not have participatory and gender budgets;
- The municipality has not adopted anti-corruption plan and code of ethics yet. However, they are guided by the country's anti-corruption legislation and relevant regulations.

RACHA LECHKHUMI AND LOWER SVANETI REGION

AMBROLAURI MUNICIPALITY

The monitoring conducted in Ambrolauri municipality demonstrates that a major part of the public information is available from the website; the municipality structure, its departments

and contact details of municipality officials are easily accessible. The current budget and budget reports are also uploaded; information about the municipal procurements is available. Information about financial statements of the last year and budget for the current year is published on the website. The Sakrebulo meeting agendas, normative acts and decrees adopted by Sakrebulo are also uploaded to the website.

However, the monitoring spotlighted a number of shortcomings:

- The citizens cannot submit complaints and proposals electronically;
- The Municipality officials do not have fixed open office hours for receiving citizens, although according to the head of the administration, citizens have unrestricted access to Sakrebulo and Mayor's office;
- Participatory budgeting is not implemented in Ambrolauri municipality; gender and social budgets are not implemented either;
- The municipality does not have an anti-corruption plan and code of ethics.

TSAGERI MUNICIPALITY

The monitoring conducted in Tsageri municipality demonstrates that a major part of the public information is available from the municipality website. The deadlines for announcing vacancies are always observed. Also, the municipality structure, with the heads of its structural units and their contact information, is available to the population. The current year budget, budget reports and the procurement plan are also uploaded. The municipality has a social budget. As for gender budgeting, NELE "Center for Women's Rights and Gender Equality" has been established which actively cooperates with the municipality on the issues of gender budgeting; Also, the gender focal point is appointed in the municipality and the municipality promotes equal access for women and men to programs and projects.

Although Tsageri Municipality takes a very proactive approach in publishing information and the maximum availability of all necessary public information, there are still some shortcomings, in particular:

- Sakrebulo/Mayor's office agendas are not uploaded to the websites and this information is available only on the information board;
- The Municipality officials do not have fixed open office hours for receiving citizens, although according to the head of the administration, citizens have unrestricted access to Sakrebulo and Mayor's office;
- Participatory budgeting is not implemented in Ambrolauri municipality;
- The municipality does not have an anti-corruption plan and code of ethics.

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GURIA REGION

LANCHKHUTI MUNICIPALITY

The monitoring demonstrated that the organizational structure of the Mayor's Office and Sakrebulo, together with the information about the contact persons, their photographs, telephone numbers, emails and their responsibilities are fully available on the municipality website.

The administration of the Mayor's office and Sakrebulo office ensure the proactive publication of public information.

From a review of the website it is clear that there is a mechanism for submitting complaints or proposals online to the municipality. A register of incoming questions is maintained in the municipality – the time of entering the question, the content of the question, the name of the addressed public institution are recorded in Excel format. At the same time, in the case of each question, it is indicated when the answer was given. The monitoring found that the Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Sakrebulo Chairperson, Deputy Sakrebulo Chairperson, Sakrebulo members and Deputy Heads of the Departments have fixed open office hours. The following financial documents are also uploaded to the municipality website: adopted budget, budget reports, the annual report, procurement plan and procurement report. The municipality website also contains information about Sakrebulo officials, agendas and minutes of Sakrebulo meetings; the normative acts and decrees adopted by the Sakrebulo and reports from various departments can be also found on the website.

The shortcoming identified during the monitoring:

- Lanchkhuti municipality has not adopted anti-corruption plans and regulations;
- Financial regulations and the regulation on ethical conduct are not available.

OZURGETI MUNICIPALITY

The monitoring conducted in Ozurgeti municipality demonstrates that the public information is fully available on the municipality website. The Municipality organizational structure, information about officials and their contact details are uploaded to the website. If any vacancies are available, Ozurgeti municipality fully ensures free access to information and adherence to the deadlines in accordance with the norms set by the legislation.

A special application on the municipality website makes it possible to get the required information from Sakrebulo and the Mayor's Office. Information about the annual reports of the municipality, legal acts, minutes of the meetings, municipal procurement and property is available on the website. Submitting online petitions of the citizens is also accepted practice in the municipality. In the process of monitoring it was found that online financial reports – adopted budget, annual report, budget report for 3, 6, 9 months and procurement plan are published on the website. As for municipality transparency and inclusion of citi-

zens, participatory budgeting is successfully practiced in Ozurgeti. The municipality also has a social budget. The Gender Equality Council that has quite impressive experience operates in the municipality and works on the implementation of gender budgeting.

Although public information is available for all interested persons in Ozurgeti municipality, some shortcomings still remain, in particular:

- Window of “contacts” is not operational on the website and services section is empty and the relevant information cannot be found;
- The monitoring forms, timeframes and reports of Mayor’s office departments cannot be found on the municipality website.

■ EFFICIENCY

IMERETI

VANI MUNICIPALITY

The monitoring has demonstrated that the meetings can be scheduled with the municipality Mayor only. However, there is no data available about the meetings of other municipality officials with the population.

The citizens get answers to their letters and complaints within the time limit set by law (within 10 working days). However, sometimes due to the complexity of the issue, 10 days are not enough. Citizens of Vani municipality have access to the following e-services: submission of letters, petitions, and complaints to the municipality and also scheduling meetings with the municipality officials.

The municipality staff members have professional development plans, but they are not implemented. The trainings for the employees of the municipality are conducted within the framework of the events planned by various organizations. 35 business trip orders in the Mayor’s office and 9 business trip orders in the Sakrebulo have been recorded which were related to the trainings. However, it should be noted that this is done spontaneously. The public servants received training on the following topics: forms of evaluation of public servants defined by the legislation; Public Relations, Financial-Budgetary and Legal Issues. 14% of all the municipality staff attended the trainings during the last year.

For the purpose of sharing the information and competencies weekly coordination meetings are conducted with the participation of the heads of the departments and municipal services.

Vani municipality has not developed an official form for evaluating municipal services. However, reports on the results of provided services are presented during the coordination meeting.

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The monitoring demonstrates that there is a form of experience-sharing between the municipalities; this is the format of the Advisory Board under the Governor's Administration by which the regional municipality Mayors, Sakrebulo Chairpersons and their deputies share their experience. However, the management on the lower level lacks this possibility.

The municipality has a quarterly plan of conducting Sakrebulo meetings which is adopted by a legislative act.

For coordinating the activities of the Mayor's office each Monday the Mayor conducts a coordination meeting with the officials of the Mayor's office and Heads of the Departments where the activities conducted during the last week are summarized and existing problems are discussed. However, it should be noted, that there are no official forms of monitoring reports.

The problems identified during the monitoring:

- In Vani municipality there is no plan of meetings with the citizens and the statistics about such meetings is not kept. It is notable that the statistics about the meetings with the Mayors is not available on the website;
- Although the municipality staff members have development plans, there were no trainings conducted on the request of the self-government;
- In Vani municipality there is no official form designed for evaluating the municipal services;
- There is no practice of experience-sharing between the municipality staff and with the staff of other municipalities;
- In Vani municipality there is no official form for monitoring the activities of the Mayor's office and the reports of Mayor's office departments are not available on the website;

TERJOLA MUNICIPALITY

Terjola municipality maintains the records of the officials' open office hours and the statistics about the services received by the citizens, although this information is not available on the municipality website. For 2019 the records show 1334 cases of citizens receiving various services.

Terjola municipality has the possibility to receive letters from citizens electronically, but only 20% of all citizen applications were electronic. The monitoring revealed that Sakrebulo public servants have designed their development plans, but the Mayor's office personnel do not have such plans. Although the budget has allocated the funds for staff trainings, in 2019 the funds from training budget line were not fully used. The officials mainly attend trainings conducted by various organizations, which has a spontaneous nature. In 2019 44

officials from Terjola municipality attended the trainings and 24 trainings were conducted in total. The topics of the trainings included: gender issues, participatory budgeting, financial accounting, etc.

For the purpose of coordination of activities and information sharing the municipality conducts coordination meetings where the municipality officials and lower-level managers share the information about their work, discuss the best practices and existing problems. These meetings are systematic. Also, the representatives of self-government monitor the situation in the field.

The practice of sharing experience with other municipalities in Terjola municipality is not in place yet. Although regional municipality Mayors, Sakrebulo Chairpersons and their deputies have monthly meetings in the format of the consultation council of the Governor's administration and they share experience, the management on the lower level lacks this possibility.

In accordance with the legislation, the Mayor's office and Sakrebulo have developed a plan and criteria for evaluating staff performance. The staff is evaluated on a scale of points four times a year.

The Sakrebulo does not have annual and monthly plans for conducting sessions, but the Sakrebulo rules of procedure fix the number following sessions.

The problems identified during the monitoring:

- Terjola municipality has not developed forms and terms of monitoring municipality departments, the timeframes are not set and the reports from the departments are not published on the website;
- The municipality has no practice of sharing information with other municipalities;
- The training plans are not adjusted to the municipality staff needs and the trainings are conducted spontaneously;

BAGDATI MUNICIPALITY

According to the information received from the monitoring, in Bagdati municipality the number of open office hours in the Mayor's office and Sakrebulo is fixed to two days a month. However, if necessary, communication with both bodies is possible without restriction. The deadline for responding to the letters and complaints of the citizens is set to 10 working days, which complies with the rules established by the legislation. The professional development plans of the municipality staff are adopted by a decree of the Mayor and according to this plan in 2019 4 trainings were conducted in total, 12 public servants were trained which comprises 12% of the total number of the staff. However, it should be noted that this information cannot be found on the website. The topics of the trainings included: public

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relations, legal issues, rules and criteria of evaluation of staff performance and implementing the practices of evaluation in the municipalities.

In Bagdati municipality, meetings are conducted where the staff share the information and knowledge received from the trainings with their colleagues from various departments. However, this information cannot be found on the website.

The Governor's administration organizes monthly meetings where heads of municipalities share their experience of handling various issues and challenges. Again, there are no documents or reports reflecting this information.

The Sakrebulo does not have a plan for conducting sessions, but the Sakrebulo rules of procedure fix the days for coming sessions.

The monitoring identified the following shortcomings:

- The information about trainings of public servants cannot be found on the municipality website;
- The municipality has not developed tools for evaluating municipal services;
- There is no information on the website regarding the public servants' training activities;
- A report on the letters, complaints and petitions submitted to the municipality cannot be found on the municipality website;
- Information about the coordination between the structures of municipality Mayor's Office and Sakrebulo cannot be found on the website;
- The minutes and reports of the meetings of the Regional Consultation Council are not posted on the website of the Municipality;
- Monitoring reports of the municipality departments are not available;

KHONI MUNICIPALITY

The monitoring revealed that in Khoni municipality the Mayor and the deputies have 8 days a month for open office hours to meet with citizens and listen to their problems. The time-frame for responding to citizens' letters and complaints is between 3 to 10 working days and the deadline is always observed. The citizens can also submit letters and complaints and receive the answers electronically.

The monitoring reveals that in 2019 40 trainings were conducted in Khoni municipality which were attended by 80 public servants which comprises 56% of the total number of the staff. The main topics of the trainings included: electronic recordkeeping system, communication, provision of social services, municipal budget, public procurement, accounting, public property management, cooperation, statistics and gender issues.

In Khoni Municipality Mayor's office and Sakrebulo weekly meetings are conducted for improved coordination between the staff and their awareness-raising. The meetings are attended by the heads of departments, representatives and officials of the Mayor's office. At the meetings, reports on the implemented activities are shared and the existing problems are discussed.

In Khoni Municipality the monitoring is conducted by the internal audit service, although some departments do not prepare reports of monitoring their work. The Mayor of Khoni municipality, the Sakrebulo Chairperson and the Deputy attend monthly consultation council meeting in Governor's administration where the municipality authorities share the experience on different issues and ways of solving the problems. However, no documents or reports about this information are available.

The shortcomings identified during the monitoring:

- Khoni Sakrebulo members do not have fixed open office hours;
- Khoni population cannot submit petitions electronically;
- The citizens cannot schedule meetings with the municipality representatives electronically;
- There are no monitoring reports of Khoni municipality departments available;
- The municipality has not developed forms for evaluating municipal services.

RACHA-LECHKHUMI AND LOWER SVANETI REGION**AMBROLAURI MUNICIPALITY**

According to the monitoring carried out in Ambrolauri municipality, the municipality officials do not have fixed days for open office hours. However, according to the representative of the municipality, citizens can meet officials on any working day without restrictions.

In Ambrolauri municipality the deadline of 10 working days for responding to letters and complaints set by the legislation is observed. The municipality staff members have professional development plans, but this information is not posted on the website. As for the training of the staff, the Mayor's office has an agreement with the association of financiers of local self-governments which provides the trainings and consultations to municipality staff. In 2019 they conducted about 150 trainings which were attended by 70% of the public servants. The trainings were conducted on the following topics: pre-school education, rebranding, preparing and effective presentation of reports, project writing, etc.

For the purpose of coordinating the work of the Mayor's office staff and exchanging ongoing information, meetings are conducted where the staff members present the reports on

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implemented activities, share experience and competencies. According to the information obtained, about 50 coordination meetings have been conducted. It has to be noted that in accordance with the regulations, the Sakrebulo posts quarterly plans on the website, which keeps the population updated about the activities of the Sakrebulo.

The Problems identified by the monitoring:

- Citizens in Ambrolauri municipality cannot submit petitions, letters and complaints electronically;
- The open office hours of municipality officials are not fixed;
- The municipality staff members have professional development plans, but this information is not posted on the website;
- Although municipality staff performance evaluation is conducted here, the municipality departments do not prepare reports;
- The municipality has not developed the forms for evaluation of the municipal services;

TSAGERI MUNICIPALITY

According to the monitoring in Tsageri municipality, although there are no fixed days for open office hours in the Mayor's office and Sakrebulo, the representatives of the Mayor's Office and Sakrebulo members have certain days in a week when they meet with the population. The deadlines for responding to citizens' letters and complaints are observed and they comprise 5-10 days on average. Four types of services for the citizens are available electronically.

In order to raise the qualification of public servants of the municipality, trainings are conducted, in particular, 5 trainings were held in the Sakrebulo on the following topics: human resource management, economic development, municipal finances, solid waste management and public governance. 27 public servants received trainings in 2019. In total, 35% of the Mayor's office staff and 40% of the Sakrebulo staff attended various trainings.

For coordinating the work of public servants and information sharing, each Monday meetings are conducted in the Mayor's office. At these meetings, the participants summarize the results of the past week and share the competencies and skills gained in the trainings. Monthly coordination meetings are also held at the Governor's Office where the heads of the four municipalities of the region share their experience of resolving various issues and problems. In 2019, the Mayor and Deputy Mayors of Tsageri Municipality were on a study visit in Carnikava Municipality in Latvia. This information is posted on the municipality's website. Sakrebulo quarterly plans are also available.

The problems identified during the monitoring:

- The citizens cannot schedule meetings in the Mayor's office electronically;
- Tsageri municipality staff do not have professional development plans;
- The practice of evaluating municipal services is not in place in the municipality;
- The departments of the Mayor's office do not have the timeframes for conducting monitoring and have not developed report forms.

GURIA REGION

LANCHKHUTI MUNICIPALITY

According to the monitoring conducted in Lanchkhuti district, the number of open office hours is determined by all the officials and the days for this are also fixed. In the municipality the deadline for responding to citizens' letters and complaints is in correspondence with the legislation and comprises 10 days. Various services can be received electronically through the municipality website and they include: submitting letters and petitions, sharing personal visions and ideas, identifying problems, subscribing for news, etc. On the website there is a window for surveying citizens' opinions.

The monitoring revealed that in 2019 trainings (on participatory budgeting, etc.) were conducted for Sakrebulo members and the Mayor's office staff. All Sakrebulo members, 70 % of Sakrebulo office staff and 45% of the Mayor's office staff have done the trainings.

During the past year the representatives of the municipality held only a few meetings with other local self-governments to share the best practices/experience with self-governments and these were initiated by NGOs. According to the monitoring, the municipality has annual and quarterly plans for conducting the sessions. The sessions are conducted in accordance with the rule of procedure. Announcements about the scheduled sessions and their minutes are posted on the website.

As a result of the monitoring, it was revealed that the terms and form of monitoring the activities of the Mayor's office departments have been established in Lanchkhuti Municipality. These include assessing/monitoring the compliance of the activities of the Mayor's office with the legislation of Georgia, as well as ensuring the publicity and transparency of the activities of the Mayor's office, promoting and supporting the establishment of public control tools and other mechanisms.

The shortcomings identified by the monitoring:

- The citizens of Lanchkhuti municipality cannot schedule meetings with officials via the website.

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- The practice of sharing knowledge and experience between employees, such as workshops, trainings, other internal information exchange mechanisms, have not been introduced in Lanchkhuti municipality.
- The forms of evaluating municipal services have not been developed in Lanchkhuti municipality.

OZURGETI MUNICIPALITY

According to the monitoring conducted in Ozurgeti municipality, the days for open office hours of the officials are fixed. More than 4000 citizens received such services in 2019.

Sakrebulo members in Ozurgeti municipality developed schedules for receiving citizens, which are posted on the municipality website and information boards in administrative units. The deadline for responding to citizens' letters and complaints is in accordance with the timeframes set by the legislation and is between 3 and 10 working days. The citizens can receive the required information online as well as directly.

The system of evaluating local public servants is introduced in Ozurgeti municipality. The municipality public servants systematically receive trainings. In 2019 the trainings were conducted in six areas: communication and event management, financial management, project management, ethics in public services, human resource management, strategic planning. Trainings are available for all staff members without restrictions. 85% of the staff, or 170 persons have passed the trainings.

According to the monitoring, Ozurgeti Municipality works in partnership with neighboring Lanchkhuti and Chokhatauri municipalities in order to share the best practice/experience. Memorandum of Understanding was signed between Ozurgeti and Zugdidi municipalities which envisages multilateral cooperation.

Ozurgeti has annual plan for conducting Sakrebulo sessions which is posted on the website.

According to the monitoring, the timeframe for monitoring the activities of the Mayor's office services is set. The activities of the departments are monitored through monthly and quarterly as well as annual reports for which a special form was developed and timeframes were set.

The problems identified in the process of the monitoring:

- Ozurgeti municipality does not have a plan for the professional development of the staff.

INCLUSIVENESS

IMERETI

VANI MUNICIPALITY

According to the monitoring of inclusiveness in Vani municipality, a number of issues have already been resolved by the municipality. However, there are still topics and areas that the municipality needs to work on to ensure equal access to municipal services for all vulnerable groups.

Inspection of the municipality facilities revealed that the issue of ramps is only partially resolved, the ramp is only located at the main entrance of the building, and it is practically impossible for people with disabilities to move inside the building.

According to the monitoring, the vacancies announced on the municipality website do not contain any kind of discriminatory restrictions. According to the obtained information, 31% of the self-government personnel are women. As for the officials, there are no women among them.

The monitoring has shown that the municipality does not have translation services. The municipality has a focal point for communicating with the civil society and various stakeholders. He/ she provides access to public information for a variety of stakeholders. An advisory council and a gender council are set up in Vani Municipality as well as several working groups to effectively implement the Rural Support Program.

The shortcomings identified during the process of monitoring:

- Internal structure of the municipal building complicates the movement of people with disabilities inside the building;
- The level of awareness of the Municipality staff on the legislative regulations promoting inclusive governance is low; The municipality representatives are not familiar with the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities;
- The municipality has not adopted any normative acts/ regulations promoting inclusion of vulnerable groups in the decision-making process at the local level;
- The municipality has not implemented any measures to support the provision of various services to vulnerable groups;
- The municipality does not have a gender budget;

TERJOLA MUNICIPALITY

The monitoring conducted in Terjola municipality revealed that the municipality Sakrebulo and Mayor's office buildings are equipped with ramps. The vacancies announced on the municipality website do not contain any kind of discriminatory restrictions. The percentage

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of women employed in Terjola self-government is 29%, while women hold 12% of senior positions. Although Terjola Municipality has a variety of social programs (14 programs), there is no focal point for dealing with vulnerable groups.

In the municipality Mayor's Office there is a gender focal point and in Sakrebulo there is a gender council that has developed an action plan and appropriate measures are taken step-by-step. Also, several employees of the Mayor's office and Sakrebulo have had training on the following topics: gender equality, gender, social, program and civil budgeting.

The representatives of Terjola municipality are aware of legislative regulations promoting inclusive governance. However, the municipality has still not adopted any normative acts/regulations that would contribute to the inclusion of vulnerable groups in the decision-making process at the local level; Also, the public servants do not have full information about gender budgeting.

Advisory and gender councils are operational in Terjola municipality.

The shortcomings identified in the process of the monitoring:

- In the municipality there is no focal point for relations with vulnerable groups;
- The municipality has not adopted any normative acts/regulations that would contribute to the inclusion of vulnerable groups in the decision-making process at local level (a council of persons with disabilities, for example);
- The public servants do not have full information about gender budgeting;
- In the municipality there is no focal point for relations with CSOs;

BAGDATI MUNICIPALITY

According to the results of the monitoring in Bagdati municipality, certain measures have been taken in terms of inclusiveness in the municipality. However, some challenges still remain. External observation confirms that the municipal building has ramps, but it is difficult for people with disabilities to move inside the building. Analyzing the municipal vacancy announcements reveals no cases of discriminatory restrictions. The percentage of women employed in the self-government is 37%, while women hold 2.9% of senior positions. According to the monitoring, the municipality representatives are aware of the legislation promoting inclusive governance and their work is based on these regulations.

Civil Council, Advisory Council, the Council of Persons with Disabilities and Gender Equality council are operational in the municipality. The municipality has developed gender

equality regulations. The monitoring has shown that the municipality has a gender budget, but there is lack of competent knowledge about its functioning. Also, the municipality does not have a focal point for public relations.

Council of Persons with Disabilities has been established in the municipality and it promotes the inclusion of vulnerable groups in the process of decision making.

The shortcomings identified in the process of the monitoring:

- No translation services available in the municipality;
- According to the monitoring there is no focal point for relations with persons with disabilities in the municipality.

KHONI MUNICIPALITY _____

According to the results of the monitoring in Khoni municipality, the vacancy announcements of the Mayor's office and Sakrebulo contain no cases of discriminatory attitudes. The percentage of women employed in Khoni Municipality public sector is 63%, while women hold 51% of senior positions.

In Khoni Municipality Mayor's office premises there is a space for the reception of citizens where a person with special training provides consultation and assistance to the persons from vulnerable groups. According to the monitoring, the municipality representatives are aware of the legislation promoting inclusive governance and their work is based on these regulations. It should also be noted that the Mayor's office is guided by the Local Self-Government Code and encourages the involvement of representatives of all stakeholders and especially the representatives of vulnerable groups in the decision-making process. The municipality has developed a document promoting transparency and its action plan for 2020-2021 outlines specific activities in this direction.

The monitoring revealed that the municipality employees are knowledgeable about gender budgeting. Also, there is a focal point in the municipality responsible for relations with the civil society. Council of Persons with Disabilities, Mayor's Advisory Council, Gender Council and the Advisory Council with social services department are operational in the municipality.

The shortcomings spotlighted during the monitoring:

- Khoni municipality administrative building is not equipped with a ramp;
- No translation services are available in the Mayor's office and Sakrebulo;
- Beneficiary needs assessment and creating an appropriate database remains a challenge in Khoni Municipality;

RACHA-LECHKHUMI AND LOWER SVANETI REGION

AMBROLAURI MUNICIPALITY

According to the results of the monitoring in Ambrolauri municipality, the percentage of women employed in the public sector is 50%, while women hold 20% of senior positions. The municipality building has a ramp. Also, a council of persons with disabilities has been established for protecting rights of the persons with disabilities and for facilitating their access to the municipal services. The municipality representatives are aware of the legislation promoting inclusive governance and their work is based on these regulations. The municipality has a focal point for public relations. Gender Equality Council, Advisory Council, Working Group for Granting and Revoking the Highland Status, Council for Monitoring Public Property Disposal Issues and Commission for Monitoring Social Issues are operational in the municipality.

The shortcomings spotlighted during the monitoring:

- There is no interpreter in the municipality;
- In the municipality there is no focal point for relations with the persons with disabilities, although there is a focal point for public relations;
- The municipality representatives do not have knowledge and experience of gender budgeting.

TSAGERI MUNICIPALITY

According to the results of the monitoring in Tsageri municipality, certain measures have been taken in terms of inclusiveness in the municipality, but some challenges still remain. External observation confirms that the municipal building does not have ramps. Analyzing the municipal vacancy announcements reveals no cases of discriminatory restrictions. The percentage of women employed in the self-government is 40%, while women hold 8 % of senior positions in the Sakrebulo and 17% in the Mayor's Office. According to the monitoring, the municipality representatives are aware of the legislation promoting inclusive governance and their work is based on these regulations.

The Civil Council has been established in the municipality; besides, the Advisory Board and Gender Equality Council are operational. By the order of the mayor, a public council has been set up which includes representatives of vulnerable groups. This council ensures the protection of rights of persons with disabilities and takes their needs into account in the process of implementing municipal programs. The Mayor's Office, as well as Sakrebulo has focal points for relations with persons with disabilities. The commission working with persons with disabilities has been set up in the Sakrebulo which is fully aware of the relevant legislation. The Sakrebulo has de-

veloped a regulation that ensures the inclusion of vulnerable groups in the decision-making process on the local level. The Mayor's Office has a focal point for relations with civil society organizations.

The shortcomings identified as a result of the monitoring:

- The municipality building does not have a ramp;
- The representatives of the Finance Department do not have thorough knowledge about gender budgeting.

GURIA REGION**LANCHKHUTI MUNICIPALITY** _____

According to the results of the monitoring in Lanchkhuti municipality, the municipality tries to implement the methods of inclusive government, but some challenges in this regard still remain.

The percentage of women employed in the municipality is 54% for the Mayor's Office and 78% in the Sakrebulo, while women hold 45% of senior positions in the Mayor's Office and 20% in the Sakrebulo. It should be noted that this information is not available on the website; the "statistics" section on the website is empty. Periodically there is a need for translation services for non-Georgian speakers in the municipality and it is provided by the municipality. According to the monitoring, the municipality has a focal point for relations with vulnerable groups. A council working on the issues of persons with disabilities has been set up in Lanchkhuti Municipality. The agenda of the meetings of this council is posted on the Municipality website. However, the information about the members of the council and the regulations of the council are not available on the website. The social programs adopted by the Sakrebulo envisage assistance for persons with disabilities, IDPs, single parents, elderly persons, women victims of violence and other vulnerable groups. Advisory Board, Gender Council, the Council of Persons with Disabilities, the council of the elect are operational in the municipality. Lanchkhuti Sakrebulo of the Youth carries out interesting activities, but little is posted about its activities on the website.

The shortcomings identified as a result of the monitoring:

- There is no information about the youth council on the website;
- In the Mayor's Office there is no focal point for relations with civil society organizations;
- Municipality gender equality plan is not posted on the municipality website;

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- The municipality has not adopted normative acts/regulations on the inclusion of vulnerable groups in the decision-making process at the local level or about the provision of public services to them;
- Information about the members of the council of persons with disabilities and the regulations of the council are not available on the website;
- The public servants of Lanchkhuti municipality and the municipality representatives are not knowledgeable about the legislation promoting inclusive governance;

OZURGETI MUNICIPALITY

According to the results of the monitoring in Ozurgeti municipality, the municipality building has a ramp only outside and the persons in wheelchairs can move only on the ground floor. 38% of the Mayor's office and 45% of the Sakrebulo employees are women. It is notable that the data on the Mayor's office website is segregated by gender for all employees, as well as for senior officials: among 13 senior officials of the Mayor's office there is one woman. Similarly, there is only one woman among 13 senior officials of the Sakrebulo. There are various councils in the Mayor's office and the Sakrebulo, including: Advisory Board, Gender Council, Council of Persons with Disabilities, Sakrebulo of Youth and Youth Gender Council. The information about the majority of them is not available on the website. According to the monitoring, translation services are available for non-Georgian speakers. Although the municipality cannot offer this service, they cooperate with the administration of the regional government which can provide this service. The municipality has a focal point for relations with vulnerable groups. In the Mayor's office and the Sakrebulo there are focal points for relations with civil society organizations.

On the website there is a link "important municipal services" which lists "infrastructural services for persons with disabilities", as well as services for other vulnerable groups, such as "Special Infrastructural Services for Children and the Elderly", "Homeless Shelter Support Services", but there are no records for these search terms.

Special trainings for increasing knowledge and for sharing the best practices are planned for 2020.

The shortcomings identified as a result of monitoring:

- There is no information under the link “accessible infrastructural services for persons with disabilities”;
- At this stage there are no normative acts/regulations operational in the municipality on the inclusion of vulnerable groups in the decision-making process at the local level or about the provision of public services to them.

SUMMARY

■ TRANSPARENCY

According to the result of the monitoring, the following common problems in terms of transparency of the municipalities were identified

- Not all necessary documentation is available on the official websites of the municipalities;
- None of the municipalities have an anti-corruption plan;
- None of the municipalities have a code of ethics
- In the majority of the municipalities participatory and gender budgeting is not practiced.

■ EFFICIENCY

According to the results of the monitoring, the following common problems were identified in terms of the efficiency of the municipalities:

- The municipality websites do not provide for receiving municipal services electronically;
- The majority of the municipality employees do not have professional development plans and their **professional trainings are spontaneous**; there is no consistent **policy for the professional development of public servants**;
- The municipality departments' monitoring reports are not published on municipality website;
- In the municipalities there is no practice of evaluating municipal services by the population;

■ INCLUSIVENESS

According to the results of the monitoring, the following common problems were identified in terms of inclusiveness in the municipalities:

- The interiors of the municipality buildings are not friendly to the needs of persons with disabilities;
- In most of the municipalities, there are no mechanisms of inclusion of vulnerable groups in the process of decision making at the local level and provision of public services to them is not duly promoted;
- There is a low level of knowledge and practice of gender budgeting in the municipalities;

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- Often the sections on the website are empty and it is difficult to search for the municipality statistics or other needed information;

RECOMMENDATIONS

In response to the problems revealed by the monitoring implemented in 8 municipalities under the project “A Common Forum for Civil Society Organizations from Guria, Imereti and Racha-Lechkhumi for PAR Roadmap Monitoring” it is advisable that NGOs make relevant proposals to both local and central authorities.

Analysis of the monitoring reports suggests the need for planning and implementing changes at the local as well as at the national level.

At the municipal level, it is especially important to put the following issues on the agenda with the active participation of local NGOs and various stakeholders:

- **Empowering e-governance in the municipalities** - Today, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, e-governance is becoming increasingly important. Therefore, is it advisable that the local community provide the municipalities with a list of important issues and services that should be available on the municipality website.
- **Developing an anti-corruption plan and activities in the municipalities** - It is important to introduce effective mechanisms for anti-corruption measures in municipalities with the active participation of civil society and various stakeholders.
- **The strategies for the professional development of public servants should be developed in the municipalities** – effective and efficient governance can be achieved only by professional public servants. Therefore, the municipalities should strive to support professional development of their employees, which will ensure the provision of effective and efficient services;
- **The municipalities should introduce the mechanisms for evaluating municipal services** - efficiency of the public authorities, assessment and evaluation of the results of its services are especially important today. This can be achieved only by developing and introducing appropriate indicators. Providing feedback to the population and informing them about the results of the services are necessary conditions of good governance.

In order for municipalities to meet current challenges, it is important that the central government pursues a consistent policy of promoting and strengthening decentralization.

Today the government acknowledges the importance of strong local self-government in the process of developing the country and appropriate steps are prescribed in the decen-

tralization strategy. However, it is crucial to ensure close cooperation between civil society and government in order to realize the declared priorities. In order to effectively implement the desired changes at the municipal level, the central government should take the following steps:

- **Harmonizing municipal legislation** - municipal regulatory legislation should be brought in line with sectoral legislation;
- **Strengthening the autonomy of municipalities** - granting more authority and transferring appropriate resources so that municipalities can solve existing problems independently
- **Strengthening coordination with municipalities** – coordinated governance is increasingly important in the process of implementing decentralization strategy and public governance reform. In responding to today's challenges, it is important to strengthen coordination between the central government and municipalities, as well as between local civil society and public authorities. It is important to establish regional forums where all branches of the government, central, regional and municipal, together with the civil society will discuss local problems and will find the ways of effectively solving them together.

MONITORING REPORT THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REFORM (PAR) IMPLEMENTATION IN LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENTS AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

VANI MUNICIPALITY

Prepared by KHATUNA GOGUA

Consultant on the Issues of Local Self-Government
The Fund “Sukhumi”

INTRODUCTION

Successful implementation of the Public Administration Reform plays a central role in the process Georgia's integration into the European Union. According to the "Association Agreement between European Union and Georgia"⁸ the country is committed to carrying out fundamental reforms in public governance which should be reflected in the creation of accountable, effective, inclusive, transparent and professional public services and its implementation entered into an active phase in 2015 after the signing of the Association Agreement.

For successful implementation of the reform, the **Public Administration Reform Roadmap 2020** has been developed and with the purpose of its successful implementation the Georgian Government has adopted three national action plans since 2015⁹. **Local self-government reform** is one of the most important components of the reform which aims at promoting the process of decentralization and achieving good governance at the local level. It is noteworthy that the Government of Georgia has unequivocally acknowledged the need to increase the awareness and involvement of civil society in all stages of the implementation of the reform as well as in the process of monitoring and supervision.

The recent PAR action plan for 2019-2020 sets two main goals **in the field of self-gov-**

⁸ Association Agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States, of the one part, and Georgia, of the other part "Georgia-EU Association Agreement", article 4.

⁹ Public governance reform action plan for 2019-2020, p. 4, available at:http://gov.ge/files/72422_72422_512614_სამოქმედოგებას2019-2020_აღწერილობა.pdf

ernment: a) expansion of the powers of local governments for strengthening self-government; b) step-by-step development and improvement of electronic services in municipalities in order to improve the availability of electronic services in local self-governments.

Step-by-step development and improvement of electronic services is an important component for the empowerment of local self-government which would greatly support citizens in communicating their problems and needs to the local government without additional bureaucratic procedures and would ensure their active involvement at various stages of local policymaking and decision-making.

Nevertheless, the introduction of electronic services is advancing at a very low pace at the local level and the level of inclusion of the population and accountability is very low. According to the unified national assessment of municipalities in Georgia in 2019¹⁰, the overall e-governance rate of municipalities was 32%, and only 20% of municipal websites had allowed to request public information online.

Introduction of e-governance systems in the regions, especially in remote areas, is significantly hampered by the low-quality internet connection, high costs of internet services, limited access to technical equipment (computers, smartphones, etc.) for a large part of the population, and poor technical skills. Low awareness and involvement of civil society and the population in general in the process of reforms create additional barriers to the process of successful implementation of the public administration reform. Therefore, empowerment of civil society in the regions, initiating political dialogue with their active involvement and their participation in the process of monitoring and controlling the reform process is becoming increasingly important.

THE AIM OF THE MONITORING

With the purpose of promoting the effective implementation of the public administration reform at the local level, the Cultural-Humanitarian Fund “Sukhumi” in partnership with the Fund of Women Entrepreneurs and Imereti Scientists’ Union “Spectri” is implementing a project “A common forum for civil society organizations (CSO) from Guria, Imereti and Racha-Lechkhumi for PAR Roadmap monitoring”, which is funded by EU. The aim of the project is to ensure the involvement of the society and control of the process of monitoring of public administration reform in 8 municipalities of Imereti, Racha-Lechkhumi and Guria by creating and empowerment of West Georgia Civil Society Forum.

The aim of the project is to evaluate the degree of **efficiency, transparency and inclusiveness** of the local government; to identify strengths and weaknesses of e-governance at the local level based on the evidence-based information and findings, to develop and propose relevant recommendations to the local government.

¹⁰ The Local Self-Government Index "National Assessment of Georgian Municipalities" 2019, available at https://idfi.ge/public/upload/IDFI_2019/General/LSGINDEX_Report_GEO.pdf

THE MONITORING METHODOLOGY

The monitoring was carried out in 8 municipalities of Georgia, in particular, in Khoni, Bagdati, Terjola, Vani, Ozurgeti, Lanchkhuti, Tsageri and Ambrolauri from 27 January to 28 February 2020. The “Civil Society Forum”, established in October 2019 under the project, was actively involved in the process of monitoring and in the target regions it brought together 16 CSOs of various profiles and working on different thematic areas¹¹.

The level of the efficiency, transparency and inclusiveness of the local self-government was evaluated by the project partners based on a pre-developed monitoring tool and a questionnaire which combined 32 different evaluation criteria and indicators (see the appendix “Questionnaire”). The process of the reform was assessed through monitoring the municipality official websites as well as by analyzing the public information requested from the representatives of the local self-government and observing the practices of involvement of citizens. Telephone communication with the representatives of the municipal bodies, personal meetings with them and all official online sources containing the information needed for evaluation of specific issues served as additional sources of researching and verifying the information.

THE ANALYSIS OF THE MONITORING RESULTS

This report presents the results of monitoring conducted in Vani municipality.

The project envisages conducting three similar monitorings that will form the basis for developing a local action plan for the successful implementation of public administration reform in the local self-government.

Monitoring of the implementation of the roadmap for public administration reform in the **municipality of Vani** was carried out from February 1 to February 25, 2020 by two organizations: **NELE ” Tanadgoma“ and NELE “Citizens’ Activism for Good Governance and Justice”**. The monitors used special pre-developed questionnaires.

In order to collect the necessary information, the websites and the Facebook pages of Vani municipality Mayor’s Office and Sakrebulo were reviewed. Face-to-face meetings were conducted with various officials in the executive as well as in legislative bodies.

The monitoring team would like to express their gratitude to Vani municipality Sakrebulo and Mayor’s Office, the Head of the Organizational Department, the staff of the Centre of Citizens’ Services, Finance Department, the Head of Human Resources Department, the Head of Public Relations Department, the Head of the Sakrebulo Secretariat, Sakrebulo members for their support.

11 The information on the Civil Society Forum is available at
<http://csoforum.ge/index.php/ka/about-forum-ka-1>

The monitoring indicators were considered according to three main components:

- 1. Transparency***
- 2. Efficiency***
- 3. Inclusiveness***

■ TRANSPARENCY

Are the processes in the municipality transparent in terms of job postings, application submission and citizen engagement? Is the organizational structure with the contact details of public servants posted on the website? Is the mechanism for online submission of complaints and proposals active? Are the municipality reports, adopted budget and financial statements uploaded to the website and how frequently? The answers to these questions reveal the degree of the transparency in the municipality. Elimination of minor drawbacks identified during the monitoring process and reflected in the final recommendations, will help to increase transparency in the self-government.

-Are online vacancy announcements accessible? Are the vacancy deadlines observed? - To obtain the information about these questions the municipality website (www.hr.gov.ge) was reviewed where Order #20 114 of 22 January, 2020 on announcing an open competition was posted.

According to the information from the site, the **vacancy deadlines are observed** and correspond to a 10-day period. This timeframe is indicated in Ordinance # 204 of the Government of Georgia of 21 April 2017 on the “Procedure for Conducting Competitions in Public Service”.

Does the municipality website provide information about organizational structure including the contact persons, their telephone numbers, emails and their tasks and responsibilities? The information was obtained from the municipality website www.vani.gov.ge/. It confirms that the information about the organizational structure of the municipality, contact persons with their emails and job responsibilities is posted on the website

The municipality Mayor's Office structure, the responsibilities of the officials, structural units and the representatives of the Mayor are determined by the Organic Law of Georgia “Local Self-government Code”.

-Is there a mechanism/form for online submission of complaints or proposals? On the municipality website (www.vani.gov.ge) we can find the telephone numbers of the contacts persons who can receive the complaint or a proposal if needed – 595 308071 for the Sakrebulo and 599 409291 for the Mayor’s Office. This practice promotes cooperation between citizens and government bodies.

Online availability of **the financial statements, adopted budget, budget reports for 3,**

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6 and 9 months and annual report, procurement plan and report is a significant component in terms of transparency. The websites of the municipality www.vani.gov.ge and Legislative Herald of Georgia www.macne.gov.ge were reviewed to get the information about these issues. According to the monitoring, the budget for 2020 has been uploaded to the municipality website, as well as on the website of Legislative Herald. The procurement plan and report are also posted on the same websites.

Unlike the budget, the budget reports for 3, 6 and 9 months and the annual budget report have not been uploaded. No information can be found about them.

However, the information about the work of the Mayor's Office and Sakrebulo, projects, various programs and activities are published on the Facebook pages of the Mayor's Office and Sakrebulo daily. Photo and video materials are attached to the news, which completely fills the gap created in terms of transparency.

Does the municipality website include public information, for example, the biographies of officials, the agendas of the Sakrebulo / Mayor's Office meetings, normative acts adopted by the Sakrebulo, decrees, reports from various departments? In accordance with the law of Georgia "General Administrative Code of Georgia", the biographies of the officials are posted on the website www.vani.gov.ge; in the section "government", "Mayor's Office" or "Sakrebulo" information can be found about the officials according to their positions in the relevant structures.

The normative acts, resolutions, **the reports from various units, departments and divisions are not published**, therefore, such public information cannot be found in electronic format on the web.

The opportunity for citizens to meet and communicate with local self-government officials is an important component of transparency. The next question to be answered was: **Do the Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Sakrebulo Chairperson, Deputy Sakrebulo Chairperson, Sakrebulo members, heads of departments have fixed open office hours for receiving and consulting citizens? If yes, is this information published on the municipality website?** To find the answer to this question, the municipality website was reviewed. The information about the Mayor's open office hours is available on the website. However, **the information about the number of received citizens and applications** cannot be found in any section.

The municipality Mayor has set one day a week for open office hours. Information about the days and hours is available on the information board in the reception hall of the Mayor's Office.

As for other officials, the Sakrebulo Chairperson, the Deputy Sakrebulo Chairperson and Sakrebulo members do not have set days for open office hours. This information was received from face-to-face meetings with them.

Does the municipality have a participatory budget, social budget, gender budget? The websites of the municipality www.vani.gov.ge and Legislative Herald of Georgia www.macne.gov.ge were reviewed to get the information about this question; also a

representative of the Mayor's Office finance unit was interviewed.

According to the obtained information Vani municipality does not have a participatory budget and it has never been practiced here. There is no gender budget either. The municipality budget is a program budget and it complies with the requirements of the normative documents.

The social budget has been uploaded to the website, the last amendment to 2020 budget was made on 12 February 2020 and it was uploaded on 14 February. The social budget of Vani municipality comprises 9.6% of the total budget.

Have anti-corruption measures been taken in the municipality? Is the information about them available on the website?

According to the monitoring the answer to these questions is negative. There are no documents in the Mayor's Office regarding anti-corruption plans, regulations, financial regulations, ethical conduct and, therefore, no relevant information is available online.

■ EFFICIENCY

Determining the efficiency of the municipality's work is one of the main components of the monitoring. Collected information clarifies how accessible the standards of self-government and online forms of connecting with citizens are; how many letters, petitions and complaints are registered; if the information about these issues is published on the municipality website.

The information obtained by the monitoring group specifies **what the number of days for open office hours is in the Mayor's office and Sakrebulo**. The information was obtained during the interview with the Head of the Records Management and Public Relations Department. Based on this information, in accordance with the planned obligations, the mayor of the municipality holds open office hours four days per month. However, depending on the needs, in some months the Mayor schedules meetings with citizens on 15-20 days, which significantly exceeds the planned figure.

Citizens' requests for meetings are recorded in the citizens' admission register, although this does not include requests submitted online.

- **What is the average number of days for responding to citizens' complaints, is it possible to submit letters online and to receive answers to them?** The information was obtained from the interview with the Head of the Records Management and Public Relations Department. Based on this information, in accordance with the instructions, the average number of working days to respond to a complaint is 10. However, in some cases, 10 days are not enough due to the complexity of the issue.

The information obtained from the interview with the Head of the Records Management and Public Relations Department provides the **number of services available electroni-**

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cally including letters, petitions, complaints, and scheduling meetings. These figures are the following: number of letters submitted to the municipality – 7011; number of outgoing letters – 4631; memos – 1752; total document circulation – 13394.

Does the municipality have professional development plans for the employees? – According to the monitoring, the professional development plan of the Vani municipality staff has been developed and sent to the Civil Service Bureau. The information is based on an interview with a specialist in Human Resources Management.

The municipality shows interest in training civil servants, although training is carried out mainly on the initiative of various organizations. **No training has been conducted by the order of the self-government.** This information was confirmed by the interview with a specialist in the Human Resources Department.

The topics of the off-site trainings attended by the employees of the Mayor's Office and Sakrebulo mainly included the evaluation of the self-government officials' performance in accordance with the Law of Georgia "On Public Service", public relations, financial-budgetary and legal issues.

35 orders for business trips related to the trainings have been registered in the Mayor's Office and 9 in Sakrebulo.

The share of local government representatives who participated in the trainings over the past year is 14% of the total number of the local government employees.

Does the local self-government use any tools and techniques, such as trainings, workshops, exchange of information between various departments for ensuring the quality of its activities (for example, for managing competencies)?”

According to the monitoring information, the Mayor of Vani municipality attends monthly consultation council meetings where all the Mayors from the whole region meet for sharing opinions. Meetings with the participation of department and unit heads are also held once a week at the Mayor's Office to present reports and exchange information. However, no information on the reports of the meetings can be found.

How is the efficiency evaluated, has the municipality developed *forms for evaluating municipal services?* The information on this issue was obtained from the interview with the Head of Records Management and Public Relations Department which confirmed that no forms for evaluating municipal services have been developed, but it is common practice to report on and evaluate the results of provided services which is aimed at assessing municipal services. Minutes of all such meetings are made.

How many meetings were held with other local governments over the past year to share best practices/experience?

According to the monitoring information, the Mayor attends monthly consultation council meetings where all the Mayors from the region meet to exchange opinions. This format is actively used for information sharing, although there is no relevant information available online and the reports and minutes of the meetings are not available on the web.

The question, “**Is there an annual/monthly plan for conducting Sakrebulo sessions?**” revealed that quarterly plans are developed in accordance with the legislative act #2740, the order #201 487 of 26.12.2019. The relevant information is posted on the website <http://vani.gov.ge/normatiuli-baza/>.

Does the municipality use a monitoring system to evaluate the efficiency of its performance? **Are the timeframes and forms for monitoring the activities of the departments of the Mayor’s Office determined?** To obtain the information on these issues the minutes of the meetings were reviewed and the Mayor’s Assistant was interviewed. According to this information, each Monday the Mayor meets with the heads of departments and curators of various fields with the purpose of monitoring the work done during the week and the implemented activities and problems are discussed.

This practice improves the quality of the municipality performance considerably. **However, it is advisable to upload the monitoring information to the website to make it accessible to the public.**

■ INCLUSIVENESS

This part of the monitoring covers the following topics: how well inclusiveness is observed in the municipality? Are the Mayor’s Office/Sakrebulo buildings equipped with ramps? What is the proportion of women staff and women officials in the local self-government? The recommendations are developed for the drawbacks which were identified in the above issues.

The issue of ramps in Vani municipality **is solved only partially**; only the entrance of the Mayor’s Office/Sakrebulo is equipped with a ramp. Given the internal construction of the building, movement inside the building is connected with many difficulties.

In the process of the monitoring, it was examined whether the Municipality vacancy announcements are non-discriminatory? – The vacancy announcements are posted on the website <http://vani.gov.ge/>. No discriminatory restrictions were found when evaluating the announcements.

How prioritized is the issue of observing the gender balance in the Municipality? What is the percentage of female staff in the local self-government? – To receive the answer to these questions representatives of the Finance and Budget Unit and Legal and Human Resource Management Department were interviewed and the obtained information shows that the proportion of women employed in the local self-government is 31%.

The share of female officials in the local self-government (The Mayor, the Deputy Mayor, Sakrebulo Chairperson, the Deputy Sakrebulo Chairperson, Heads of Commissions) is 0%.

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It is essential that the municipality demonstrate more effort to change the gender balance, especially as the municipality has had a precedent when the Chairperson of the Sakrebulo was a woman.

Is translation service available for non-Georgian speakers? – According to the interview with a representative of the Records Management Department, there is no such service in the municipality. However, this is obviously not necessary, since no other ethnic groups live in the municipality.

From the perspective of inclusiveness, **it is important that the municipality ensure equal access to the information and various services for the vulnerable groups. Does the municipality have a focal point for relations with vulnerable groups? It turned out that there is no such a focal point in the municipality, and women, socially vulnerable persons, IDPs, and people with disabilities use the same services as other citizens.**

It is advisable to train a person from the municipality staff and to assign the responsibilities for relations of various vulnerable groups to him/her.

From interviews with the representative of Sakrebulo and the Head of the Department of Health and Social Welfare it becomes clear that in the municipality there is little awareness of the legislation adopted by the state in relation to inclusiveness, in particular, the Law of Georgian on Social Protection of Persons with Disabilities; little is known about the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

These shortcomings can be eliminated by training local self-government representatives which can be organized by the municipality.

The municipality does not have a normative act/regulation on the involvement of vulnerable groups in the decision-making process at the local level or the provision of public services to them. It is advisable that the municipality initiate the development of such acts.

Is gender budgeting practiced at the local level? Are they aware of its functioning? - It turned out that the municipal budget is a program budget, there is no separate gender budget, and the relevant officials do not have knowledge about it. Training the municipality representatives on this issue would promote the introduction of a gender budget.

The monitoring revealed that the municipality **has a focal point for relations with civil society organizations/working groups.** This information was confirmed by the representative of the Department of Records Management and Personnel Management and the relevant legal act - Order No. 20612. Ms. Ekaterine Namicheishvili, the chief specialist of Vani municipality Department of Administration Services and Public Relations is appointed as a focal point for relations with civil society organizations.

The monitoring answered the question: Do an advisory board, a gender council, and other councils and working groups operate in the Mayor's Office and Sakrebulo? According to the information obtained, the Advisory Board, Gender Council, working

groups created under the Village Support Program are operational in Vani municipality.

This information is confirmed by the following legal acts: "On Adopting the Pattern of Regulations for Civil Advisory Board of the Vani Municipality Mayor's Office", "On Establishing the Civil Advisory Board of the Vani Municipality Mayor's Office", "On Creation of Working Groups Under the Village Support Programs for 2020" – Resolution of Vani Municipality Sakrebulo #25 of 3 August 2017 Vani Municipality Order #20551 of 02/05/2019, Order of the Municipality Mayor # 20556 of 02/05/2019, orders of the Mayor of the Municipality on establishing working groups N2030115/04/2015 N2010 04/01/2019 N 20 10621.012020.

This information was confirmed in the interview with a representative of the Records Management Department and the Deputy Sakrebulo Chairperson.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR VANI MUNICIPALITY DEVELOPED AS A RESULT OF MONITORING

To ensure more transparency and increased awareness of citizens, the reports of various units, departments and divisions should be periodically uploaded to the website which will promote the citizen's engagement and awareness of the municipality activities;

1. In order to have smooth-running and effective websites, the administrators of the website and the Facebook page should conduct online surveys to assess the efficiency of the use of the online resources. The relevant changes should be made based on the survey results;
2. Introducing the practice of participatory budgeting in the municipality is important in terms of citizens' engagement and their needs assessment. This practice will open the opportunities in terms of identifying the citizens' needs and solving the identified problems. Participatory budgeting will also promote the activities of the civil sector and will create a favorable ground for implementing their ideas and initiatives consequently increasing the efficiency of the municipality;
3. Based on the country's international commitments, it is important to strengthen gender policy at the local level and expand the activities of the municipality, which can be reflected in introducing gender budgeting or increasing the share of gender programs in the budget;
4. The municipality has not adopted an anti-corruption plan, anti-corruption regulations, and financial regulations; the regulation on ethical conduct has not been developed yet. Developing and adopting this document will contribute to improving the transparency and increasing the trust between the civil sector and self-government;
5. Funds allocated in the budget for training local government representatives should be used purposefully. The practice of conducting the trainings on issues identified on the basis of needs analysis should be introduced. Increased qualification of the public servants will promote the development and implementation of modern,

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innovative methods.

6. It is important that the municipality has a focal point for relations with vulnerable groups. If the municipality cannot afford to hire a new employee, one of the employees can be retrained in this direction, since working with these specific groups requires the introduction of such services.
7. Since the evaluation of services is carried out in the municipality, it will be advisable to improve this practice, develop and adopt a relevant plan that will strengthen the municipality's activity in this direction and increase its efficiency.
8. In terms of inclusiveness, an important trend is observed in the municipality: a regulation has been developed on the participation of vulnerable groups in decision-making at the local level. It is advisable to approve/adopt this document and put it into effect.
9. Monitoring reveals the need to raise the awareness of the municipality employees concerning the law on inclusiveness and other legal mechanisms adopted by the state. It is recommended that the municipality staff be informed about these issues through trainings, which will increase their professionalism and develop their competencies.

MONITORING REPORT THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REFORM (PAR) IMPLEMENTATION IN LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENTS AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

TERJOLA MUNICIPALITY

Prepared by RUSUDAN KOVZIRIDZE,
The Chairperson of NELE Union for Children's Rights Protection
and Civic Education "Children – the Future of the Country"

INTRODUCTION

Successful implementation of the Public Administration Reform plays a central role in the process Georgia's integration into the European Union. According to the "Association Agreement between European Union and Georgia"¹² the country is committed to carrying out fundamental reforms in public governance which should be reflected in the creation of accountable, effective, inclusive, transparent and professional public services and its implementation entered into an active phase in 2015 after the signing of the Association Agreement.

For successful implementation of the reform, the **Public Administration Reform Roadmap 2020** has been developed and with the purpose of its successful implementation the Georgian Government has adopted three national action plans since 2015¹³. **Local self-government reform** is one of the most important components of the reform which aims at promoting the process of decentralization and achieving good governance at the local level. It is noteworthy that the Government of Georgia has unequivocally acknowledged the need to increase the awareness and involvement of civil society in all stages of the implementation of the reform as well as in the process of monitoring and supervision.

The recent PAR action plan for 2019-2020 sets two main goals in the field of self-gov-

¹² Association Agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States, of the one part, and Georgia, of the other part "Georgia-EU Association Agreement", article 4.

¹³ Publicgovernancereformactionplanfor2019-2020,p.4,availableat:http://gov.ge/files/72422_72422_512614_სამოქმედოგეგმა2019-2020_აღწერილობა.pdf

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ernment: a) expansion of the powers of local governments for strengthening self-government; b) step-by-step development and improvement of electronic services in municipalities in order to improve the availability of electronic services in local self-governments.

Step-by-step development and improvement of electronic services is an important component for the empowerment of local self-government which would greatly support citizens in communicating their problems and needs to the local government without additional bureaucratic procedures and would ensure their active involvement at various stages of local policymaking and decision-making.

Nevertheless, the introduction of electronic services is advancing at a very low pace at the local level and the level of inclusion of the population and accountability is very low. According to the unified national assessment of municipalities in Georgia in 2019¹⁴, the overall e-governance rate of municipalities was 32%, and only 20% of municipal websites had allowed to request public information online.

Introduction of e-governance systems in the regions, especially in remote areas, is significantly hampered by the low-quality internet connection, high costs of internet services, limited access to technical equipment (computers, smartphones, etc.) for a large part of the population, and poor technical skills. Low awareness and involvement of civil society and the population in general in the process of reforms create additional barriers to the process of successful implementation of the public administration reform. Therefore, empowerment of civil society in the regions, initiating political dialogue with their active involvement and their participation in the process of monitoring and controlling the reform process is becoming increasingly important.

THE AIM OF THE MONITORING

With the purpose of promoting the effective implementation of the public administration reform at the local level, the Cultural-Humanitarian Fund “Sukhumi” in partnership with the Fund of Women Entrepreneurs and Imereti Scientists’ Union “Spectri” is implementing a project “A common forum for civil society organizations (CSO) from Guria, Imereti and Racha-Lechkhumi for PAR Roadmap monitoring”, which is funded by EU. The aim of the project is to ensure the involvement of the society and control of the process of monitoring of public administration reform in 8 municipalities of Imereti, Racha-Lechkhumi and Guria by creating and empowerment of West Georgia Civil Society Forum.

The aim of the project is to evaluate the degree of **efficiency, transparency and inclusiveness** of the local government; to identify strengths and weaknesses of e-governance at the local level based on the evidence-based information and findings, to develop and propose relevant recommendations to the local government.

¹⁴ The Local Self-Government Index "National Assessment of Georgian Municipalities" 2019, available at https://idfi.ge/public/upload/IDFI_2019/General/LSGINDEX_Report_GEO.pdf

THE MONITORING METHODOLOGY

The monitoring was carried out in 8 municipalities of Georgia, in particular, in Khoni, Bagdati, Terjola, Vani, Ozurgeti, Lanchkhuti, Tsageri and Ambrolauri from 27 January to 28 February 2020. The “Civil Society Forum”, established in October 2019 under the project, was actively involved in the process of monitoring and in the target regions it brought together 16 CSOs of various profiles and working on different thematic areas¹⁵.

The level of the efficiency, transparency and inclusiveness of the local self-government was evaluated by the project partners based on a pre-developed monitoring tool and a questionnaire which combined 32 different evaluation criteria and indicators (see the appendix “Questionnaire”). The process of the reform was assessed through monitoring the municipality official websites as well as by analyzing the public information requested from the representatives of the local self-government and observing the practices of involvement of citizens. Telephone communication with the representatives of the municipal bodies, personal meetings with them and all official online sources containing the information needed for evaluation of specific issues served as additional sources of researching and verifying the information.

THE RESULTS OF THE MONITORING

This report presents the results of monitoring conducted in Terjola municipality carried out by the representatives of NELE Children’s Rights Protection and Civic Education Union “Children – the Future of the country” and Terjola “Association of Persons with Disabilities”. (27.01.2020-28.02.2020)

The project envisages conducting three similar monitorings that will form the basis for developing a local action plan for the successful implementation of public administration reform in the local self-government.

The monitoring team would like to express their gratitude to Terjola municipality Sakrebulo and Mayor’s Office for their support (*The Municipality Deputy Mayor, the Head of the Organizational Department, the staff of the Centre of Citizens’ Services, Finance Department, the Head of Human Resource Department, the Head of Public Relations Department, the Head of the Sakrebulo Secretariat, Sakrebulo members*).

The present analysis which is based on the Monitoring Report of Public Administration Reform in Terjola Municipality does not claim to be an academic analysis. It does not verify the assumptions and theories and is limited to analyzing the documents and information received in response to the questionnaire under the project. During the planned monitoring period no obstacles were encountered, communication was efficient. All legal requirements were observed when accessing public information and dealing with confidential

15 The information on the Civil Society Forum is available at
<http://csoforum.ge/index.php/ka/about-forum-ka-1>

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issues. The Sakrebulo Chairperson and the Mayor got acquainted with the report prepared on the basis of the received materials. The photo and video materials have been archived. The monitoring team has fully completed the activities planned under the project and the results are in full correspondence with completion indicators.

No similar monitoring has been conducted in Terjola municipality before; therefore this is a baseline study which was carried out based on three elements of monitoring indicators: transparency, efficiency and inclusiveness.

■ TRANSPARENCY

In accordance with the legislation of Georgia, normative acts and recommendations and based on local reality, the self-government of Terjola Municipality makes decisions, forms a vision of problem solution, tries to introduce changes in their work and makes maximum use of available resources.

Municipality has started to actively use the internet recourses to disseminate the information: <http://terjola.gov.ge/>, <https://www.hr.gov.ge/>, <http://terjola.gov.ge/ge/contact>, <https://www.facebook.com/terjolismeria>, Mail:terjolismeria@yahoo.com, https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=919431204766356&ref=br_rs. All the news and information about ongoing work in the municipality are published in the local newspaper "Terjola" and on social networks. The newspaper is mainly intended for citizens who do not have access to the Internet or cannot use the Internet. The municipality has introduced program "E" (<https://srv5.edokument.ge/IMERETI/app/#/chancellery/outgoing>) in which all communities and village representatives are involved. All interested parties can submit a letter, application, or question to the administration of the municipality. In addition to this, once a month, the Mayor's Office holds extended business meetings and the Sakrebulo conducts internal meetings with commissions, secretariat and factions to discuss the needs of the communities and villages, as well as issues raised by individual citizens requiring mobilization of various units or raising the issue with a relevant institution. Direct meetings with the population are also common; other activities and events of various formats are used to provide information to the population. The involvement of citizens in the Public Administration Reform is a serious challenge and requires significant and substantial efforts on the part of the self-government. The monitoring has revealed that some work has been done in this direction in order to respond to tough challenges in terms of public involvement. Actions planned to accomplish certain tasks are, in some cases, important steps towards achieving the final goal. Despite certain progress, many fundamental rights and systemic problems are overlooked. Monitoring has shown that without adequate tools (without clearly defined indicators and in the conditions of low public unawareness), it will be impossible to assess the exact impact of the measures taken on the scope and intensity of citizens' involvement.

Out of three main monitoring indicators we would like to focus on transparency first. The work performed in this direction was evaluated positively (based on the printed and electronic materials presented in the report), which was due to the compliance of the work

performed by the self-government (the Mayor's Office, Sakrebulo) with the law.

In order to verify the accessibility of vacancies, the monitoring team analyzed the statistics, compliance of the normative acts adopted locally with the legislation, decrees, orders issued according to commission and meeting decisions. Relevant institutions were involved in the monitoring. It was revealed that during 2019 13 vacancies were announced on the website and 218 applications were received. 58 applicants failed to pass the first stage of the competition, 30 applicants did not appear for the interview, 3 vacancy announcements were canceled and one was re-announced. 11 persons were recruited based on the decision of the commission. It should be noted that two invited experts were included in the commission. The deadlines of the vacancy announcements are observed.

The regulations and organizational structure of the Mayor's Office and Sakrebulo are drawn up in accordance with the "Organic Law of Georgia – Local Self-Government Code". In order to ensure communication and information sharing with citizens, the municipality created a website <http://terjola.gov.ge/ge/news/all/4> which has a section "government" containing the organizational structure of the Sakrebulo and Mayor's Office. 148 persons are employed in the Mayor's Office and 65 in Sakrebulo. The organizational structure of the Mayor's Office contains information on contact persons with their telephone numbers and emails. However, it should be mentioned that in some cases the information is incomplete: the information on open office hours of the officials, except the Mayor, Sakrebulo Chairperson, the Deputy Chairperson and Sakrebulo members from the villages Akhalterjola and Gvankiti, has not been posted. During the interview it was mentioned that citizens can request appointments at anytime and the officials are ready to receive them. This readiness is commendable, but since no records are maintained, it is impossible to obtain accurate statistics of meetings with individual citizens and the analysis of the outcomes of these meetings is superficial at best.

The means of online communication were scrutinized during the monitoring. It was revealed that forms for all documents (proposal, application, petition) are uploaded to the website <http://terjola.gov.ge/ge/news/all/4>, the hotline telephone number, emails and other documents are also posted. However, the citizens do not use the website and no communication in any direction has been recorded. We were not able to study the reasons in detail. However, according to the persons responsible for this issue at the Mayor's Office and Sakrebulo, this is due to the complexity of the package used for creating the website which makes it difficult for citizens to access it. Also, as one of the responsible persons in this regard, Ms. Nino Gabriadze, the Chief Specialist of the Records Management and Human Resource Management Department, noted, it would help to assign this duty to someone else; she cannot cope with administration of the Mayor's Office's website due to the volume of her other workload. There were cases when the limit in gigabytes was reached and the website became inaccessible. Later on this shortcoming was fixed, although it has affected the system and hampered its smooth operation. The website <http://terjola.gov.ge/ge/news/all/4> was created as part of the "Open Society – Georgia" and IDFI grant. It is planned to simplify the website and make some changes to it.

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As the website failed to fulfill its function as an online resource, the Mayor's Office and Sakrebulo created the Facebook page and emails: <https://www.facebook.com/terjolismaeria>, Mail: terjolismaeria@yahoo.com. The information about open office hours during 2019 was posted on the information boards in the Mayor's Office, as well as in all administrative units.

Citizens' engagement and awareness can be passive, when they receive information upon request, and active, when the government gives information in advance (posts proactively on social networks). Monitoring of social networks allows us to conclude that the number of visitors to pages with information about Sakrebulo sessions and the implementation of infrastructure projects by the Mayor's Office is growing every day. Based on this we can conclude that the citizens prefer the Facebook page as a means of contacting the self-government, expressing their opinions and requesting answers.

The budget is adopted according to the timeframe and is uploaded to the website <http://terjola.gov.ge> in accordance with the legislation; the preliminary stages of budget planning are observed. Some amendments were made to the budget and they were also uploaded to the websites of the municipality and the Legislative Herald of Georgia. The online financial reports are posted periodically. Annual budget reports for 2018 and 2019 and the first quarter report of 2019 were posted in 2019. During the monitoring process, the Mayor's annual report was being prepared for publication. Reports for 6 and 9 months are not published on the website, and this information is mainly made public through the Terjola newspaper and the Facebook page. According to Mr. Avtandil Uriadmkopeli, Head of the Finance and Budget Unit, although the 2020 budget is not ideal, it accurately reflects the needs and capabilities of Terjola municipality, and clearly identifies the requirements for using the reserves.

The procurement plan for 2019 was adopted by the Sakrebulo Decree #46 260 of 21.03.2019. The legislation was amended, in particular regarding the procurement plan and in accordance with amendments to the Tax Code, the Mayor's Office was given the right to develop a procurement plan and prepare reports independently <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/1043717?publication=160>. Based on the above, the procurement plan was adopted by the Mayor's Order # 45/151.

The 2020 budget was developed based on updated requirements for program and civil budgeting. This is a program budget and is oriented to the improvement of citizens' social conditions. The budget is consistent with the normative document and local requirements, the social programs are clearly identified.

In 2019 there were 13 social programs (896,000 Laris) in the budget of Terjola municipality. 2020 budget includes 14 programs (970,000 Laris) and it also finances other social aspects (ritual services, the Association of Persons with Disabilities) which totals 100,000 Laris.

The program budget is result-oriented and requires accurate indicators that have not yet been developed in a normative document by the government. The awareness of gender

budgeting is very low; therefore the gender needs are not fully reflected in the budget. However, some progress can be observed with this issue which is reflected in specific sub-programs and gender councils. The awareness of gender and participatory budgeting is limited to the knowledge of several employees of the Mayor's Office and Sakrebulo gained from one-off trainings. There is no thorough knowledge of the issue. The municipality Mayor's office does not have an anti-corruption plan, regulations, financial regulations and a document on ethical conduct.

■ EFFICIENCY

During the monitoring, special focus was on the forms and methods of work in the Sakrebulo and Mayor's Office, how effective and efficient the relations with citizens are, what they are aimed at: the short-term impression (effect) or the long-term outcomes (efficiency).

In Terjola municipality the information about the days of open office hours in the Mayor's Office and Sakrebulo (48 days for each) for 2019 was published on the information boards of the Mayor's Office, Sakrebulo and all administrative units. In 2019 1334 cases of receiving citizens were registered. One complaint was submitted to the Mayor's Office from an administrative unit, which was reviewed; it was concluded that the municipality was not the addressee of the complaint and it was annulled. Accordingly, the citizen was advised to address the court. 20% of applications from citizens are submitted in electronic form, but email submission occurs more often than submission on the site. The website <http://terjola.gov.ge/ge/news/all/4> design is complete; the website sections are in correspondence with the requirements. All-in-all the site is impressive, but not very effective, because the population does not use it. The reason for this is unknown, it can only be assumed that this is due to its complexity.

The monitoring included inspection of the work directed at conducting trainings for the employees of the Mayor's Office and Sakrebulo and their professional development. Staff professional development plans are the best indicator of the efficiency of their work. At the time of the monitoring the Sakrebulo had such a plan, while the Mayor's Office did not. However, the funds were allocated for the trainings in the 2020 budget. Training funds allocated in the 2019 budget were not used in full. The employees participated mainly in the trainings by invitation (24 trainings for 44 persons). There is a willingness to make changes in this direction for 2020.

The practice of effective regular meetings is introduced in the Mayor's Office, as well as in the Sakrebulo. At the Mayor's Office, meetings are held twice a month - an internal meeting on the first Monday of the month and an expanded meeting on the fourth Wednesday of the month. The expanded meetings are attended by the officials of administration and departments, representatives of administrative units (communities), heads of NELEs. In addition to these meetings, ad-hoc meetings are conducted when necessary and all the participants report on the ongoing work, raise problematic issues including citizens' requests, proposals and comments from their administrative units. The issue is considered

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at the meeting, and a decision is made together with the representative of the relevant administrative unit or department. If the solution to the problem takes time or raising the issue in higher bodies is needed, the relevant unit is instructed accordingly. All issues that need to be resolved are recorded by Assistant Mayor Giorgi Amiranashvili, an appropriate protocol is compiled, approved officially and reaches the addressee through the chancellery. Its implementation is monitored and quarterly reports are submitted to the mayor and meeting participants. In effect, not only is the information about current activities shared, but also, based on the information received, many important issues are solved and, to some extent, monitored. All the issues raised at the meetings which could be resolved on the spot based on the provided and exchanged information were resolved positively. According to the analyzed protocols for 2019 (16 protocols), 62 out of 92 problems were resolved, 18 are in the process of being resolved and 12 require a long-term response.

Ms. Nino Janelidze, Chairperson of Sakrebulo, successfully uses internal meetings and sessions to analyzes the work done. Each Monday she conducts business meetings with the secretariat and each Tuesday with commissions. In some cases she requires the reports on performed and ongoing work from the chairpersons of the commissions. She often meets the citizens in the field and talks with them in order to solve the issues related to the improvement of their social conditions. A number of problems in the villages are solved following the visits of the Head of the Sakrebulo and monitoring the meetings with the population.

Regular meetings of Mr. Bondo Sopromadze, the Mayor and Ms. Nino Janelidze, the Sakrebulo Chairperson with the population are very effective. These meetings help to solve the problems of the population. During such a meeting with the Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia, Ms. Natia Turnava in the village of Gogni on August 16, 2019, the villagers raised the issue of gasification of the village, which was duly reflected in the minutes. This request received adequate feedback and from January 2020 the gasification work started.

The Chairperson of the Sakrebulo meets citizens regularly to learn about their attitudes to various issues that are consequently reflected in Sakrebulo decisions. During the monitoring, we examined a survey of residents of the village of Kvachchiri regarding the water supply system - 50 citizens who were not provided with water supply were surveyed. Based on the opinions of the citizens, the Sakrebulo suspended the decision about transferring the water supply system to the utility services unit the issue is resolved; consequently the municipality will get the fully functional water supply system and will avoid extra costs.

In October 2019 before the launch of the damaged houses' program, the Sakrebulo Chairperson visited all the villages. As a result, she obtained the rough statistics of the citizens whose houses were in disrepair and relevant photo documents. She discussed the issue with the citizens and in coordination with the Mayor's Office it was planned to finance construction of four houses instead of one.

Experience sharing with other municipalities is not common, although monthly meetings with municipality leaders are held in the Governor's Office where opinions are shared.

The Mayor's Office and Sakrebulo have developed a plan and criteria for evaluating the staff performance. The employees are evaluated on a scale of points four times a year.

By the end of 2019, based on the results, the salaries of the 11 most successful employees were increased by 1% at the mayor's office and in Sakrebulo, 8 people showed top performance.

It should be noted that it is effective when the population is informed in advance about the times of conducting the Sakrebulo sessions and their agendas. The agenda cannot be published through information networks well in advance, but the relevant information is uploaded to the website and published on the information boards as soon as the agenda is agreed on.

The Sakrebulo has neither annual nor monthly plans of sessions. It was explained to the monitoring team that these plans should be adopted at the Sakrebulo session and introducing any current changes requires conducting additional sessions, which is ineffective and creates obstacles.

There is no specific monitoring team or a structural unit responsible for monitoring in Terjola municipality created in accordance with the Resolution of the Government of Georgia #628 of 30 December 2016 "On Approval of the System for *Monitoring, Reporting and Evaluation*". However, as monitoring observations, interviews and documents suggest, some work is being done in this direction and it needs to be systematized, which will make the work more efficient; more competencies required in this area.

The self-government bodies partially monitor their own activities by listening to the reports of the relevant officials, agencies and evaluating them with points. Citizens' interest in sessions can be observed only on social networks. Planned sessions of the Sakrebulo are held once a month (on the first Wednesday of the month). Citizen participation in sessions, which could facilitate the implementation of a monitoring system, has not been identified.

INCLUSIVENESS

Protecting the rights of persons with disabilities, in general, is one of the fundamental challenges for our country. Clearly, the municipality fails to meet the current challenges in the light of established standards, as the state does not have the legal framework harmonized with the standards of international conventions. However, the physical and information space, to the extent possible, was adapted to the needs of this group, which includes improving infrastructure, health care mechanisms and social protection. In Terjola municipality the work in this direction is underway (ramps on the Mayor's Office and Sakrebulo buildings), although access to community services is insufficient to participate in public or political life. It should be noted that Terjola municipality implements social programs in response to the action plan of the country in this direction. An example of this is financing the local civil organization "Terjola Association of People with Disabilities" from the state budget, which is a significant step towards achieving the set goals.

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The proportion of women working in local government is 29%, and the proportion of female officials is 12%. In general, the participation of women in political activities is on the rise, although much remains to be done in this direction.

There is no focal point for relations with the vulnerable groups, although this role is undertaken by the social services unit which ensures involvement of the municipality in the state social programs in accordance with the normative acts of Georgian legislation and implements 14 social programs, including inclusive programs, financed by the municipality budget. There are also some changes in the work on women's issues. As for the responsibilities of the gender focal point, they imply working on women's problems.

The legislation of Georgia in terms of inclusiveness gradually becomes harmonized with the Association Agreement and the Convention on Human Rights. There is some knowledge in this area in the municipality of Terjola, although no active steps have been taken to involve the vulnerable groups in local decision-making and no relevant normative act or regulation has been adopted. It should be noted that knowledge about gender budgeting is scarce, although this problem is being promoted and some activities and programs that partially reflect gender issues can be identified.

The municipality Mayor's Office has a gender focal point, also a gender council operates in the Sakrebulo. It has developed the action plan and is making efforts to implement it gradually. Some of the employees of the Mayor's Office and Sakrebulo have participated in trainings on gender equality issues and on the issues of "gender, social, program and civil budgeting".

In Terjola municipality there is no focal point for relations with civil society organizations which is partially explained by a small number of CSOs – there are only two such organizations in the municipality.

An Advisory Board and the Gender Council function in Terjola municipality. The Advisory Board is in its initial stage. It has heard reports of local authorities on local needs, which confirms their high interest in the work of local authorities. However, no issues have been resolved so far at the local level on the initiative and active work of the Board. The Gender Equality Council has developed and adopted the working plan that entered into force in November, 2019.

According to the monitoring of Public Administration Reform in self-government units of the municipality of Terjola, the work done by the municipality of Terjola is satisfactory considering the existing knowledge, resources and abilities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is advisable that gender councils make full use of the powers provided by law, become more effective; request work plans of self-government bodies (Mayor's Office, Sakrebulo), agendas for sessions and bureaus, normative acts in advance; express their opinions, make suggestions, etc. They should also introduce the practice of printing budgets in sim-

ple and clear terms that are understandable for the public and hold public meetings focusing on various themes and priorities.

It is advisable to create a monitoring group involving citizens and civil society organizations, which will contribute to raising awareness of vulnerable groups and citizens and their participation in decision-making at the local level.

Since self-government is responsible for managing day-to-day activities and future planning, it is recommended to conduct analysis of staff development needs and develop a training plan that includes training on participation and gender budgeting, communication and human resource management. In addition, several people, at least three, must undergo a brief training in research and monitoring methods.

It is advisable to follow the budget calendar in accordance with the Law of Georgia on Budget Code and the Organic Law of Georgia on Local Self-Government Code and the public should be informed in accordance with the budget requirements.

At present, the level of citizens' activity on the website by is 0. The site needs SED optimization which would assist citizens in finding the site, and help the site owners to increase citizen involvement. The site should be accessible for tablets and all mobile devices.

MONITORING REPORT THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REFORM (PAR) MONITORING IN LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENTS AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

BAGDATI MUNICIPALITY

Prepared by KHATUNA GOGUA
Consultant on the Issues of Local Self-Government
The Fund “Sukhumi”

INTRODUCTION

Successful implementation of the Public Administration Reform plays a central role in the process Georgia's integration into the European Union. According to the "Association Agreement between European Union and Georgia"¹⁶ the country is committed to carrying out fundamental reforms in public governance which should be reflected in the creation of accountable, effective, inclusive, transparent and professional public services and its implementation entered into an active phase in 2015 after the signing of the Association Agreement.

For successful implementation of the reform, the **Public Administration Reform Roadmap 2020** has been developed and with the purpose of its successful implementation the Georgian Government has adopted three national action plans since 2015¹⁷. **Local self-government reform** is one of the most important components of the reform which aims at promoting the process of decentralization and achieving good governance at the local level. It is noteworthy that the Government of Georgia has unequivocally acknowledged the need to increase the awareness and involvement of civil society in all stages of the implementation of the reform as well as in the process of monitoring and supervision.

The recent PAR action plan for 2019-2020 sets two main goals in the field of self-gov-

¹⁶ Association Agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States, of the one part, and Georgia, of the other part "Georgia-EU Association Agreement", article 4.

¹⁷ Publicgovernancereformactionplanfor2019-2020,p.4,availableat:http://gov.ge/files/72422_72422_512614_სამოქმედოგეგმა2019-2020_აღწერილობა.pdf

ernment: a) expansion of the powers of local governments for strengthening self-government; b) step-by-step development and improvement of electronic services in municipalities in order to improve the availability of electronic services in local self-governments.

Step-by-step development and improvement of electronic services is an important component for the empowerment of local self-government which would greatly support citizens in communicating their problems and needs to the local government without additional bureaucratic procedures and would ensure their active involvement at various stages of local policymaking and decision-making.

Nevertheless, the introduction of electronic services is advancing at a very low pace at the local level and the level of inclusion of the population and accountability is very low. According to the unified national assessment of municipalities in Georgia in 2019¹⁸, the overall e-governance rate of municipalities was 32%, and only 20% of municipal websites had allowed to request public information online.

Introduction of e-governance systems in the regions, especially in remote areas, is significantly hampered by the low-quality internet connection, high costs of internet services, limited access to technical equipment (computers, smartphones, etc.) for a large part of the population, and poor technical skills. Low awareness and involvement of civil society and the population in general in the process of reforms create additional barriers to the process of successful implementation of the public administration reform. Therefore, empowerment of civil society in the regions, initiating political dialogue with their active involvement and their participation in the process of monitoring and controlling the reform process is becoming increasingly important.

THE AIM OF THE MONITORING

With the purpose of promoting the effective implementation of the public administration reform at the local level, the Cultural-Humanitarian Fund “Sukhumi” in partnership with the Fund of Women Entrepreneurs and Imereti Scientists’ Union “Spectri” is implementing a project “A common forum for civil society organizations (CSO) from Guria, Imereti and Racha-Lechkhumi for PAR Roadmap monitoring”, which is funded by EU. The aim of the project is to ensure the involvement of the society and control of the process of monitoring of public administration reform in 8 municipalities of Imereti, Racha-Lechkhumi and Guria by creating and empowerment of West Georgia Civil Society Forum.

The aim of the project is to evaluate the degree of **efficiency, transparency and inclusiveness** of the local government; to identify strengths and weaknesses of e-governance at the local level based on the evidence-based information and findings, to develop and propose relevant recommendations to the local government.

¹⁸ The Local Self-Government Index "National Assessment of Georgian Municipalities" 2019, available at https://idfi.ge/public/upload/IDFI_2019/General/LSGINDEX_Report_GEO.pdf

THE MONITORING METHODOLOGY

The monitoring was carried out in 8 municipalities of Georgia, in particular, in Khoni, Bagdati, Terjola, Vani, Ozurgeti, Lanchkhuti, Tsageri and Ambrolauri from 27 January to 28 February 2020. The “Civil Society Forum”, established in October 2019 under the project, was actively involved in the process of monitoring and in the target regions it brought together 16 CSOs of various profiles and working on different thematic areas¹⁹.

The level of the efficiency, transparency and inclusiveness of the local self-government was evaluated by the project partners based on a pre-developed monitoring tool and a questionnaire which combined 32 different evaluation criteria and indicators (see the appendix “Questionnaire”). The process of the reform was assessed through monitoring the municipality official websites as well as by analyzing the public information requested from the representatives of the local self-government and observing the practices of involvement of citizens. Telephone communication with the representatives of the municipal bodies, personal meetings with them and all official online sources containing the information needed for evaluation of specific issues served as additional sources of researching and verifying the information.

THE ANALYSIS OF THE MONITORING RESULTS

This report presents the results of monitoring conducted in Bagdati municipality.

The project envisages conducting three similar monitorings that will form the basis for developing a local action plan for successful implementation of public administration reform in the local self-government.

Public Administration Reform Roadmap monitoring in Bagdati Municipality was conducted from February 3 to 26 and was carried out by the CSO NELE “Equality Now” and NELE “Union of Persons with Disabilities – Faith and Hope”.

The monitors used special pre-developed questionnaires. The websites and the Facebook pages of Bagdati Municipality Mayor’s Office and Sakrebulo, were studied to collect information. Also, interviews with the representatives of different bodies were conducted. The process went smoothly and within the planned timeframe. No obstacles or any other barriers were encountered while interviewing public servants. The monitoring team would like to express their gratitude to Bagdati Municipality Sakrebulo, Bagdati Municipality Mayor’s Office, Head of Organizational Service Department, the staff of the Center of Public Services, the Finance Department, the Head of Human Resources Department, The Head of Public Relations Department, The Head of Sakrebulo Office, and Sakrebulo Members for rendered support.

19 The information on the Civil Society Forum is available at
<http://csoforum.ge/index.php/ka/about-forum-ka-1>

The monitoring indicators of the Public Administration Reform Roadmap were based on three main components: Transparency, Efficiency and Inclusiveness.

■ TRANSPARENCY

The information obtained from the monitoring suggests that the main standards in terms of transparency are observed in Bagdati municipality; the website and the Facebook page are active and the citizens can observe the processes in the municipality online: read news, vacancy announcements, etc.

Legislative acts and regulations are uploaded and could be found on the relevant webpage. Contact details for communication with representatives of all bodies can be easily found. However, they can only be contacted by email; the biographies of civil servants often do not include phone numbers, which is an obstacle for citizens wishing to contact them. These obstacles are reflected in the recommendations for improving the level of transparency in the Municipality.

-Are online vacancy announcements accessible? Are the vacancy deadlines observed? For obtaining the information about these questions the municipality website was reviewed at <http://baghdati.gov.ge/ge>. From the obtained information it is clear **that the vacancy was announced at a specified time and was posted on the website of Civil Service Bureau (<https://www.hr.gov.ge/>)**. It was active for 10 days and after 10 days it cannot be found on the website which is in accordance with the legislation. The municipality has adopted the order N41 1946 of 17.11.2019 on vacancy announcement rules and order N41 1234 of 11.10.2018 on qualification requirements.

An important element in terms of transparency is that citizens have access to online information such as biographies of public servants, the positions of the heads of various departments, contact details.

With the purpose of obtaining information about the question: “**Does the website provide the information about organizational structure including the contact persons, their telephone numbers, emails and their tasks and responsibilities?**”, the municipality website: <http://www.baghdati.gov.ge/> and General Administrative Code of Georgia were reviewed.

The obtained information confirms that the information about the structure of municipality departments is posted on the website; there are also biographies of the officials together with their emails. However, the biographies of officials do not contain phone numbers (<http://baghdati.gov.ge/ge/meriis-samsaxurebi?person=0>), and since most citizens prefer to communicate with the local government over the phone, this is an obstacle to communicating with civil servants.

However, in response to this shortcoming it can be said that in accordance with the General Administrative Code of Georgia, citizens can communicate with the representatives of all municipal services via e-mail. Besides, the municipality website has a section “**Contact**

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the government". On the same page you can find a hotline number 595 909005 which is active for 24 hours.

For obtaining the information about the question: “***Is there a mechanism/form for online submission of complaints or proposals?***” the municipality website was studied. There is a link (<http://baghdati.gov.ge/ge/contact>) which allows citizens to submit a letter or complaint electronically. Checking all the sections on the website showed that there is a link to the website <https://mkhileba.gov.ge/>. This site allows all citizens to submit a complaint, make a claim, expose any public servant while guaranteeing their own anonymity (filling in the field “name and surname” is not mandatory).

The possibility of online communication in such forms demonstrates the willingness of the municipality to conduct transparent communication with citizens. However, it is recommended to develop a more simplified form that will directly connect the citizens with the local officials.

How open and transparent is the process of reporting between citizens and the government? “**Are the financial statements, adopted budgets, budget reports for 3, 6, 9 months and the annual report, the procurement plan published online?**” Examination of the webpage <http://baghdati.gov.ge/ge/documents> reveals that the adopted budget has been uploaded to the website and annual reports are linked to it, but **budget reports for 3, 6, 9 months have not been uploaded. The reports from various services cannot be found either, which is a significant detail in terms of transparency.**

According to the information received from reviewing the Municipality website, it is evident that **the structure of the Municipality website is adequate, the public information**, such as the biographies of the officials, agendas of the Sakrebulo/Mayor’s office sessions, normative acts adopted by the Sakrebulo, decrees, reports of various departments, **can be found on the website in accordance with the legislation** (<http://baghdati.gov.ge/ge/documents>).

Transparency implies access to the opportunity to meet with public officials. How simplified is this process in the municipality? **Do the Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Sakrebulo Chairperson, Deputy Sakrebulo Chairperson, Sakrebulo members, heads of departments have fixed open office hours for receiving and consulting citizens? If yes, is this information published on the municipality website?** In response to this question, review of the Bagdati municipality website shows that **information on open office hours is not available.**

To obtain full information on this issue, a meeting was organized with a representative of the Public Relations Department. It was clarified that the municipality has specific days for open office hours, for example, 2 days a week for 3 hours per day in the case of the Mayor and the Chairperson of Sakrebulo. Reception hours for representatives of other departments are not limited. **It is important to post this information on the website in order to facilitate communication with citizens.**

Citizens' involvement in the process of budget formation is important in terms of improv-

ing the level of transparency. How well are the municipality budget programs adjusted to the needs of the population? **Does the municipality have a participatory budget, social budget, gender budget?** – As it became evident, the municipality does not have a participatory budget but has a social budget. There is no separate gender budget, but gender programs as parts of various sub-programs are implemented in the municipality.

This information was obtained from an interview with the head of the Budgetary Planning, Analysis and Control Department. Also, the municipality website was reviewed for this purpose: <http://baghdati.gov.ge/>.

Using this source, the percentage of the gender budget could not be identified. As for the social budget, it constitutes 7.4%.

How well is transparency implemented in the municipality with respect to anti-corruption measures? Are anti-corruption measures implemented? Are **anti-corruption plans, regulations, financial regulations and the code of ethical conduct available on the website?** – In the process of monitoring the representatives of the self-government were interviewed within the scope of their competence. The municipality website was also reviewed to check if the legislative framework of the municipality contains the anti-corruption mechanisms. It became evident that relevant documents have not been uploaded to the municipality website. Interviews with those in charge showed that in order to use anti-corruption tools, the municipality bases its work on the Law of Georgia on Conflict of Interests and Corruption (<https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/33550>) and Decree on *Ethics* and Code of Conduct in Civil Service (<https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/3645402?publication=0>).

■ EFFICIENCY

Determining the efficiency of the municipality activities was a significant part of the monitoring. According to the information obtained by the monitoring group it is evident that the municipality of Bagdati has a well-coordinated working structure and an operational website that makes effective cooperation with citizens possible.

According to the information from the interview with the responsible persons in the Mayor's office and Sakrebulo and face-to-face meetings with the officials, the **open office hours in the Mayor's Office and Sakrebulo are planned for two days a week.**

If necessary, the reception of citizens in both institutions is organized without restrictions or any additional legislative regulations.

Is the average number of days for responding to citizens' complaints determined? An interview with the authorized person confirmed that the number of days for responding to the complaints submitted by citizens is in accordance with the legislation - 10 days, which is based on the following documents: General Administrative Code of Georgia, Foundations for administration of municipalities, the regulations of the Mayor's Office and Sakrebulo. It is recommended that the report on this issue is published on the website.

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- Number of services available electronically: submitting letters, petitions, complaints; scheduling meetings, receiving replies, etc. The information regarding this issue was found on the municipality website <http://www.baghdati.gov.ge/>.

A report on submitted letters, complaints and petitions cannot be found on the website. There is no such practice in the municipality.

The professionalism of the public servants and the efficiency of the municipality activities are often determined by their high qualifications. **Does the municipality have professional development plans for the employees?** It was evident that the professional development plans are adopted by the municipality order #41 549.

In accordance with this plan, 12 civil servants were trained in 2019. This information was confirmed in the interview with a representative of the Human Resources Management Unit. **This information cannot be found on the website.**

The monitoring gives information about the **number of trainings conducted for the representatives of local self-government, including the Sakrebulo members, the Sakrebulo and the Mayor's Office staff (total and over the past year) and what were the topics of the trainings.**

According to the interview with a representative of the Human Resources Management Service 4 trainings were conducted in 2019. The following orders for business trips were issued: 411960; 41 1340; 41 1551; 41 1255.

The representatives of the Sakrebulo and the Mayor's office participated in the trainings which covered the following topics: public relations, legal issues, evaluation of the public servants, implementing evaluation mechanisms with local self-government resources.

According to the interviews, the **percentage of the representatives who have participated in trainings (total and over the past year) is 12% of the total number of the employees.**

This information is based on the interview with a representative of the Human Resources Management Service as well as the Decree # - 41 549.

The question – “**Does the local self-government use any tools and techniques, such as trainings, workshops, exchange of information between various departments, for ensuring the quality of its activities (for example, for managing competencies)?**” was answered based on the interview with representatives of the HR Management and Public Relations departments and it was confirmed that experience and competencies received during the trainings are shared between different departments, which promotes professional development of public servants and ensures that activities are conducting at a high level. **It is recommended that the information about the reports on these meetings is posted on the website.**

The municipality has not developed **Forms for Evaluating Municipal Services.** Evaluation is mainly based on the audit reports. This information was received from the interview with a municipality representative.

One of the most important segments in terms of efficiency is the practice of sharing best practices. What is the situation in Bagdati district in this regard? **How many meetings were held with other local governments over the past year to share best practices/experience?** Monthly meetings are conducted in the Governor's administration office where the heads of the municipalities share their experience. The information received by the officials is disseminated in their municipalities. ***There is no record or official document*** about these meetings.

The monitoring reveals how effective the work of the legislative branch of the government is. **Is there an annual/monthly plan for conducting Sakrebulo sessions?** – According to an interview with an authorized person, there is a Sakrebulo rule of procedure - <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/2417270> and the schedule for conducting Sakrebulo meetings that regulate this issue.

It is important to have a monitoring system in the Municipality to evaluate the efficiency. **Are the timeframes and forms for monitoring the activities of the departments of the Mayor's Office determined?** It was confirmed that the audit service of the municipality has the authority to conduct periodical monitoring of the departments and this is regulated with the relevant legislation – the regulation of the audit service - <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/4006551?publication=1>

■ INCLUSIVENESS

The monitoring focused on inclusiveness as an important element. This area includes the information, highlighting the priority of the issue of inclusiveness in the municipality. However, a lot of challenges still remain and much work remains to be done to solve the problems completely.

To answer the question, “Do the Mayor’s Office and Sakrebulo buildings have ramps?” – the external inspection shows that this problem is only partially solved; there is a ramp at the entrance to the building, but, as in most municipalities, this issue is not resolved inside the building.

Are the Municipality vacancy announcements non-discriminatory? – In the process of monitoring the following website was studied <http://baghdati.gov.ge/><https://www.hr.gov.ge/>

Evaluation of the vacancy announcements reveals no forms of discriminatory restrictions, for example by gender, sex, persons with disabilities, religious or ethnic belonging, etc. Thus, the vacancy announcements are non-discriminatory.

How well is gender-balance observed in the municipality? **What is the percentage of female staff in the local self-government?** – The collected information on this topic clarifies that this issue is regulated by the local self-government code and by the regulations

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of the Sakrebulo. The percentage of women in the self-government is 37%. This information was also confirmed in an interview conducted with the representative of the Human Resources Management department.

Percentage of female officials in local self-government (The Mayor, the Deputy Mayor, Sakrebulo Chairperson, the Deputy Sakrebulo Chairperson, Heads of Commissions) is 2.9%.

Is translation service available for non-Georgian speakers? – According to the interview with a representative of the Department of Public Relations in the self-government, this service is not available in the municipality, because there is no such need due to the fact that the municipality has no other ethnic groups.

From the perspective of inclusiveness, **it is important if the municipality has a focal point for relations with vulnerable groups, such as women, socially disadvantaged, IDPs, persons with disabilities (with hearing, sight, mobility issues).** According to the monitoring, there is no such focal point, and the Department of Public Relations are in charge of these issues.

The municipality has the Council for People with Disabilities, Gender Equality Council and a Social Services Department. Representatives of these units work with vulnerable groups within their competence.

Are the representatives of the municipality (the Mayor's Office, Sakrebulo) aware of the legislation adopted by the State regarding inclusiveness? Are they familiar with The Law of Georgia on Social Protection of Persons with Disabilities; with the legislation on labor rights; with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities?

Based on the interview with a representative of the municipality it can be concluded that the municipality representatives are aware of these regulations and their work is based on this legislation.

Does the municipality have a normative act/regulation on the involvement of vulnerable groups in the decision-making process at the local level or on the provision of public services to them? A representative of the municipality confirms that the Citizens' Advisory Board, Equality Council of People with Disabilities and Gender Equality Council are established in the municipality. Their work is based on the appropriate normative documents: the Regulations of the Council of People with Disabilities - (<https://www.matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/2856192?publication=2>); the Regulations of the Gender Equality Council - (<https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/3652627?publication=2>); the decree N41 642 on establishing civil advisory board.

Is gender budgeting practiced at the local level? Are they aware of its functioning? - According to the monitoring, some gender programs are operational in the municipality. However, there is no competent knowledge about gender budgeting and its functioning. This information was obtained from the interview with the Head of the Department of Budgetary Planning, Analysis and Control.

The qualification of the municipality representatives can be improved through trainings and workshops on gender issues and this would promote inclusion of more gender programs in the budget.

According to the monitoring, the self-government is interested in cooperation with civil society organizations; there is a **focal point for relations with civil society organizations/working groups** in the municipality. This information is confirmed in an interview with a representative of the Public Relations Department of the local government; there is an order 41 974 of 01.08.2018 on appointing the focal point and this focal point is Mirian Tsintsadze, the Mayor's advisor in international relations.

Are an advisory board, a gender council, and other councils and working groups operational in the Mayor's Office and Sakrebulo? For information on this topic the municipality website was reviewed; in addition, the municipality representatives were interviewed. According to the information received, these councils are established in the municipality and their work is based on the following legislative acts: the Regulation of the Council of People with Disabilities - <https://www.matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/2856192?publication=2>, the Regulation of Gender Equality Council: - <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/3652627?publication=2>, the Decree N41 642 on Establishing of the Civil Advisory Board

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BAGDATI MUNICIPALITY DEVELOPED AS A RESULT OF MONITORING

■ TRANSPARENCY

In terms of transparency, it is desirable to analyze the rate of citizens' online activity and based on the received data, apply new mechanisms for providing easier access to email and the website.

The letters and complaints submitted electronically on the website <https://mkhileba.gov.ge/> should be analyzed and appropriate reports should be uploaded. This type of information will increase trust among citizens and contribute to improving transparency.

It is important that the information about open office hours for consultations with the Mayor and Sakrebulo Chairperson is posted on the website.

For improved transparency, citizen engagement and better communication with civil society, the practice of participatory budgeting should be introduced. Implementing this practice will open a new window for implementing civil initiatives and ideas.

The monitoring reveals that the municipality carries out anti-corruption activities based on the law on Conflict of Interests and Corruption in Public Institutions and Decree of the Government of Georgia on *Ethics* and Code of Conduct in Civil Service. *It is recommended that the municipality develop an anti-corruption plan, anti-corruption regulation, and a document on financial regulations. Also, it is advisable to develop a code of ethical con-*

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duct. These documents will strengthen the anti-corruption mechanisms in the municipality.

It is advisable to implement the practice of publishing the budget reports for 3, 6 and 9 months on the municipality website to make it accessible for the general public. To ensure more transparency, publishing the procurement plan and report is also recommended.

■ EFFICIENCY

To ensuring more efficiency it is possible to create a section on the municipality website for direct consultations with officials and for receiving the needed information (for example, a question to the Mayor, the Chairperson of Sakrebulo, the heads of departments, etc.).

In order to conduct the activities at a high standard, it is advisable to adopt an official document introducing the practice of sharing the information received during meetings and trainings, and to post relevant reports on the website. Introducing such practices will contribute to increasing the responsibility of the accountable persons for releasing the information and implementing the new innovative methods in the municipality.

In order to implement innovations in the municipality, it is recommended to conduct a cycle of meetings with other self-governments for sharing the best practices and to publish the information and reports on these meetings on the website.

As the municipality has not developed the forms needed for the evaluation of the municipal services and they mainly rely on the audit reports, it is recommended to develop a mechanism for evaluation municipal services; forms needed for the evaluation should be developed and adopted, that will promote the efficiency of the municipality work.

It is recommended that the municipality introduce the practice of participatory budgeting. This practice is efficient in other municipalities, as it promotes the involvement of citizens and activates the civil society sector.

■ INCLUSIVENESS

As the gender programs are implemented in the municipality, it is important to improve the competencies on gender budgeting, which can be achieved by specialized trainings. Increased qualification of the municipality representatives on this topic will contribute to the increase of gender parameters of the budget.

According to the monitoring, the municipality representatives are periodically informed about the legislation adopted by the government concerning inclusiveness. However, the relevant documents are not available. Therefore, it is recommended that the appropriate supporting documents are posted on the website.

MONITORING REPORT THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REFORM (PAR) IMPLEMENTATION IN LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENTS AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

KHONI MUNICIPALITY

Prepared by NAZI JIKIA
The Chairperson of Education and
Development Center – “Edelweiss”

INTRODUCTION

Successful implementation of the Public Administration Reform plays a central role in the process Georgia’s integration into the European Union. According to the “Association Agreement between European Union and Georgia”²⁰ the country is committed to carrying out fundamental reforms in public governance which should be reflected in the creation of accountable, effective, inclusive, transparent and professional public services and its implementation entered into an active phase in 2015 after the signing of the Association Agreement.

For successful implementation of the reform, the **Public Administration Reform Road-map 2020** has been developed and with the purpose of its successful implementation the Georgian Government has adopted three national action plans since 2015²¹. **Local self-government reform** is one of the most important components of the reform which aims at promoting the process of decentralization and achieving good governance at the local level. It is noteworthy that the Government of Georgia has unequivocally acknowledged the need to increase the awareness and involvement of civil society in all stages of the implementation of the reform as well as in the process of monitoring and supervision.

The recent PAR action plan for 2019-2020 sets two main goals in the field of self-gov-

²⁰ Association Agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States, of the one part, and Georgia, of the other part “Georgia-EU Association Agreement”, article 4.

²¹ Publicgovernancereformactionplanfor2019-2020,p.4,availableat:http://gov.ge/files/72422_72422_512614_სამოქმედოგეგმა2019-2020_აღწერილობა.pdf

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ernment: a) expansion of the powers of local governments for strengthening self-government; b) step-by-step development and improvement of electronic services in municipalities in order to improve the availability of electronic services in local self-governments.

Step-by-step development and improvement of electronic services is an important component for the empowerment of local self-government which would greatly support citizens in communicating their problems and needs to the local government without additional bureaucratic procedures and would ensure their active involvement at various stages of local policymaking and decision-making.

Nevertheless, the introduction of electronic services is advancing at a very low pace at the local level and the level of inclusion of the population and accountability is very low. According to the unified national assessment of municipalities in Georgia in 2019²², the overall e-governance rate of municipalities was 32%, and only 20% of municipal websites had allowed to request public information online.

Introduction of e-governance systems in the regions, especially in remote areas, is significantly hampered by the low-quality internet connection, high costs of internet services, limited access to technical equipment (computers, smartphones, etc.) for a large part of the population, and poor technical skills. Low awareness and involvement of civil society and the population in general in the process of reforms create additional barriers to the process of successful implementation of the public administration reform. Therefore, empowerment of civil society in the regions, initiating political dialogue with their active involvement and their participation in the process of monitoring and controlling the reform process is becoming increasingly important.

THE AIM OF THE MONITORING

With the purpose of promoting the effective implementation of the public administration reform at the local level, the Cultural-Humanitarian Fund “Sukhumi” in partnership with the Fund of Women Entrepreneurs and Imereti Scientists’ Union “Spectri” is implementing a project “A common forum for civil society organizations (CSO) from Guria, Imereti and Racha-Lechkhumi for PAR Roadmap monitoring”, which is funded by EU. The aim of the project is to ensure the involvement of the society and control of the process of monitoring of public administration reform in 8 municipalities of Imereti, Racha-Lechkhumi and Guria by creating and empowerment of West Georgia Civil Society Forum.

The aim of the project is to evaluate the degree of **efficiency, transparency and inclusiveness** of the local government; to identify strengths and weaknesses of e-governance at the local level based on the evidence-based information and findings, to develop and propose relevant recommendations to the local government.

²² The Local Self-Government Index "National Assessment of Georgian Municipalities" 2019, available at https://idfi.ge/public/upload/IDFI_2019/General/LSGINDEX_Report_GEO.pdf

THE MONITORING METHODOLOGY

The monitoring was carried out in 8 municipalities of Georgia, in particular, in Khoni, Bagdati, Terjola, Vani, Ozurgeti, Lanchkhuti, Tsageri and Ambrolauri from 27 January to 28 February 2020. The “Civil Society Forum”, established in October 2019 under the project, was actively involved in the process of monitoring and in the target regions it brought together 16 CSOs of various profiles and working on different thematic areas²³.

The level of the efficiency, transparency and inclusiveness of the local self-government was evaluated by the project partners based on a pre-developed monitoring tool and a questionnaire which combined 32 different evaluation criteria and indicators (see the appendix “Questionnaire”). The process of the reform was assessed through monitoring the municipality official websites as well as by analyzing the public information requested from the representatives of the local self-government and observing the practices of involvement of citizens. Telephone communication with the representatives of the municipal bodies, personal meetings with them and all official online sources containing the information needed for evaluation of specific issues served as additional sources of researching and verifying the information.

THE ANALYSIS OF THE MONITORING RESULTS

This report presents the results of monitoring conducted in Khoni municipality carried out by the initiative group of IDPs and Khoni Centre for Education and Development “Edelweiss”, the supervising organization was the Fund “Sukhumi”.

Under the project it is planned to conduct three similar monitorings which will form the basis for developing a local action plan for successful implementation of public administration reform in local self-government.

The monitoring team would like to express their gratitude to Khoni Municipality Sakrebulo, the Head of the Administration Unit of the Mayor’s Office of Khoni Municipality, the staff of the Center of Public Services, the Finance Department, the Head of the Department of Records Management and Public Relations, the Head of the Sakrebulo Secretariat, the Members of the Sakrebulo.

Public Administration Reform Roadmap monitoring **in Bagdati Municipality** was conducted in Imereti, in particular in Khoni municipality under the project “A common forum for civil society organizations (CSO) from Guria, Imereti and Racha-Lechkhumi for PAR Roadmap monitoring”.

Three main indicators: transparency, efficiency and inclusiveness were the basis of the research. Each of them is an important component of self-government and they are supported by Georgian legislation.

²³ The information on the Civil Society Forum is available at <http://csoforum.ge/index.php/ka/about-forum-ka-1>

■ TRANSPARENCY

Self-government has an obligation to be **transparent and informed** within its municipal boundaries. The current law of Georgia on self-government, as well as obligations under the Open Government Partnership (OGP) initiative, oblige local self-government to permanently inform the population and actively (immediately) disseminate information.

Monitoring Khoni municipality Mayor's office and Sakrebulo in order to examine and evaluate transparency of their work included the review of the khoni.gov.ge portal, analysis of legislation, internal regulations and requested public information.

According to the monitoring, Khoni Municipality has a website and official Facebook page. Four newspapers are published in Khoni municipality: "Khoni", Taoba", "Tanadgoma", "Atinati".

Khoni municipality has a reception area for citizens. The hotline is not operational. At present, the website has the telephone number of the public relations officer responsible for providing public information. Obtaining information about available municipal services by phone or remotely is not feasible.

Measures taken in the framework of public service reform since 2014 have significantly improved the functioning of the system. Numerous legislative changes have been implemented which have influenced the process of recruiting the staff, the vacancy announcement process has been simplified. Announcements for vacancies in Khoni Sakrebulo and Mayor's Office are accessible on Mayor's Office Facebook page, as well as on the website khoni.gov.ge and are also posted on hr.gov.ge, the website of the Civil Service Bureau of Georgia. The vacancy deadlines are always observed.

In terms of public access to the information about the self-government officials, their biographies, work experience, qualifications and contact details, all the requirements are fully observed by the Mayor's office. All required information about the Sakrebulo members and officials is fully posted on the web portal.

The website of Khoni municipality does not allow interested citizens to submit complaints and applications online. The site khoni.gov.ge has a section for submitting offers and letters online, but it is not operational. As we were informed, this is due to a technical problem.

Adopted budget and procurement plan are published on the website of Khoni municipality. Information about the 9-month report and annual budget report are posted in the news section (the official documents are not published). There are no budget reports for 3 and 6 months, internal audit reports or procurement report documents on the website.

The Sakrebulo resolutions, adopted normative acts are available on the municipality website khoni.gov.ge. There is no information on the reports of the departments and units on the website.

Monitoring visits have confirmed that on the days of open office hours in the Mayor's Office, the Mayor of the municipality and his deputies meet with the citizens and listen to their needs. This is also confirmed by the list (document) with the information about the citizens who request meetings with officials, which is compiled in the Mayor's office on a weekly basis.

The Municipality Sakrebulo does not have fixed days for open office hours. Therefore, it is hard to estimate if the rights of citizens are respected and if they are allowed to receive answers to their questions directly from the Sakrebulo members. However, according to the Sakrebulo members, they are ready to receive citizens on any day and they have always followed this practice. The information about open office hours in the Mayor's Office is available on the municipality website.

The monitoring has revealed that the municipality does not have participatory and gender budgets.

As for the social budget, the municipality has developed social programs. The special rules for developing and implementing social programs are in place (Resolution #88 of 7 March 2019 of the Khoni Municipality Sakrebulo).

The monitoring has found the municipality has not adopted anti-corruption measures, plans and regulations. The municipality does not have their own financial regulations. There is no regulation on ethical conduct. Decision-makers are guided by anti-corruption measures and legislation, as well as financial rules that are effective countrywide.

It should be noted that Khoni Municipality has developed a "Strategy for Promoting Transparency and Good Faith for 2019-2022" (Khoni municipality Sakrebulo decree #40 74 25.12.2019), that is a significant step forward, since it is an unambiguous plan and guarantee of the recognition of existing shortcomings and gradual resolution of problems.

EFFICIENCY

Another important commitment of the self-government is to ensure **efficiency** in implementing their activities, which implies promoting increased involvement of citizens in the process of self-governance.

As a result of monitoring in the municipality of Khoni, we have the following picture from the point of view of effective management:

The Mayor and his deputies have 8 days during a month for open office hours to meet the citizens and listen to their problems. Informally, if they are in office, the officials of the Mayor's office receive citizens without restriction on any day and listen to their needs.

As for the Sakrebulo, there is no official document where specific days are set by the

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Sakrebulo officials for open office hours. However, they claim that they are ready to receive citizens on any day and they have always followed this practice.

3-10 days are generally used to respond the complaints in both self-government bodies. However, depending on the scale of the issue, in some cases it takes much longer to prepare the documentation.

As a result of the monitoring, it was found that letters, complaints can be submitted and the answers can be received electronically via e-mail of the Mayor's office khonismeria@yahoo.com, but there is no section on the website for submitting letters and meetings cannot be scheduled electronically.

As of May 2019, 127 people were employed in Khoni Municipality Mayor's Office (including 3 political officials, 106 public servants, 18 contracted staff). This does not include the staff employed in the municipality NELEs and LLCs. There are 17 NELEs in the municipality, including those in the field of public utilities, cemeteries, healthcare, social services, sports, tourism and culture.

Assessment of Khoni Municipality Mayor's office staff training needs, standardization of the issues related to training/retraining and their consistent implementation still remains a challenge. 40 trainings were conducted during 2019 for decision-makers and public servants of Khoni Municipality Mayor's office and Sakrebulo (in total 80 employees of Mayor's Office and Sakrebulo, or 56% of the staff, participated in the trainings). The main topics of the trainings were the following: electronic document keeping, communication, provision/implementation of social services, finances, public procurement, accounting, public property management, cooperation, statistics and gender issues. The trainings were aimed at increasing the qualification of the staff. Besides, the municipality self-government developed a "Strategy for Promoting Transparency and Good Faith" in which staff development is one of the priorities. According to the action plan this issue will gradually be solved during 2020-2021. The staff will be trained according to the needs.

In order to raise the awareness of employees and to share information, working meetings are held once a week in Khoni Municipality and Sakrebulo. The meetings are attended by heads of departments, representatives and officials of the Mayor's Office, who in their turn share the received information with their employees.

Internal audit and control are carried out in accordance with the plan and relevant findings and recommendations are developed. Monitoring and evaluation forms and mechanisms are described in the "Strategy for Promoting Transparency and Integrity".

Mechanisms for sharing best practice have not been implemented locally. At the initiative of the Imereti Regional Administration, heads of municipalities and heads of major departments meet in the form of an advisory board and exchange information on best practices, implemented innovations and services.

INCLUSIVENESS

An interesting picture emerged in terms of the **inclusiveness** of the work of self-government, in particular, in terms of creating opportunities for the realization of the rights of persons with disabilities on a municipal scale in accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities of 2006, and creating equal opportunities for the access to the municipal programs and services for various vulnerable groups.

In Khoni Municipality the social policy is implemented by the social service unit of the Mayor's office which consists of the head of the unit, the head of the department and four specialists. The social services unit is funded by the local budget and administering the social programs in the municipality is its main function. Basically, local social programs complement the social programs of the central government, and mainly, like the central social programs, they provide lump-sum benefits. The methodology of developing local social programs is interesting. Local social policy is mainly based on applications from beneficiaries in previous years, and the programs are developed in accordance with the needs specified in the applications. The municipality does not use public involvement and needs assessment in this process, which is caused by limited financial resources. Khoni municipality budget with 7 239 000 Lari is among the lowest in Imereti region.

Carrying out the beneficiaries' needs assessment and developing a database are still a challenge for the municipality of Khoni. This problem requires a comprehensive approach, and the NGO sector and the population should be involved in its solution. Low involvement of citizens in the decision-making process at the local level is also a challenge. Naturally, on the one hand, it is important that the citizens show interest and participate in the planning of the local budget and social programs, but on the other hand, the municipality should also make more efforts to ensure more active participation of citizens. Another important challenge is attracting new donors and fundraising which would help to solve many local problems and improve the conditions of vulnerable groups.

The research has revealed that the Khoni municipality administration building does not have ramps which is an obstacle for people with disabilities and violates their rights.

The vacancy announcements for public servants in the Mayor's Office and Sakrebulo do not contain any discriminatory provisions.

According to the statistics provided by the Gender Council, the total number of employees in the municipality is 902, of which 566 are female. The proportion of working women in public service is 63%. Among 232 employees in leadership positions, 120 are women.

According to the monitoring, neither the Mayor's office nor the Sakrebulo have translation services. However, there is no such need as there are no ethnic minorities in the municipality.

Khoni Municipality Mayor's office has allocated a space for the reception of citizens where a person with special training provides consultation and assistance to the persons from vulnerable groups. There is no such space in the Sakrebulo building.

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The Mayor's Office of Khoni Municipality employs a team of lawyers and there is a special department where they are assigned roles according to their competencies. Among them there is a lawyer who specializes in the legislation on social issues. As for the municipality of Sakrebulo, they also have a legal specialist whose experience and qualifications are in compliance with the requirements.

The work of the Mayor's Office of the Khoni Municipality is guided by the Local Self-Government Code, which implies the involvement of vulnerable groups of population in the decision-making process. A transparency document has been developed and its action plan envisages the implementation of specific activities in 2020-2021.

The monitoring shows that on the one hand, there is knowledge about "gender budgeting" in the municipality, but on the other hand, the program budgeting is not implemented in practice.

Two specialists from the Department of Records Management and Public Relations at the Mayor's Office and one specialist from the Sakrebulo Public Relations Department are assigned the duties of the focal points for relations with the public sector, working groups and with the public in general.

A Council of the Persons with Disabilities, the Mayor's Advisory board, Gender Council, an Advisory Board with the Social Services Unit operate in the municipality.

MONITORING FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

a) There is no hotline in Khoni Municipality. There are also certain problems in the process of disseminating public information. The information about resolutions, orders, budget and procurement reports for 3 and 6 months', council meeting agendas, audit findings, contact information of the officials and open office hours are not published. The online petitioning and online consultation process need to be adjusted and refined to maintain the required standards.

Recommendations: A "hotline" should be introduced and due technical support provided. Society should be informed about this through direct meetings, information billboards and online and printed media.

The municipality website khoni.gov.ge should be updated, the report should be produced about increased functional capabilities of the website and the population should be given the detailed information.

b) Assessment of the need for advanced training and standardization of training/retraining issues and their consistent implementation in accordance with the Ordinance of the Government of Georgia on "Requesting Public Information in Electronic Form and Publishing It Proactively" of 26 August 2013 for the Khoni Municipality Mayor's office staff remains a challenge.

Recommendation: Evaluation and needs assessment of the Mayor's office staff

should be carried out. A document certifying the qualifications of the Mayor's Office employees should be created, and a list of necessary trainings and advanced training seminars should be compiled.

c) Low involvement of the citizens in the decision-making process at the local level is one of the challenges. Naturally, on the one hand, it is important that citizens show interest and participate in the planning of the local budget and social programs, but on the other hand, the municipality should also make more efforts to ensure more active participation of citizens

Recommendation: With the participation of representatives of the Mayor's Office, it is necessary to assess the needs of socially vulnerable groups and families living in the municipality, and inform them of the services, programs and processes implemented here. At the same time, a survey of the citizens' satisfaction with existing social and medical programs, as well as a study of the efficiency of programs, will allow the local government to draw up a budget based on local needs and motivate ordinary citizens to participate in the process. It is advisable to expand the capacity of the Advisory Board and other councils operating in the municipality in order to increase the representativeness of the reporting process and its results.

d) It was revealed that no translation service is available in the Sakrebulo and Mayor's office, which can create a problem in providing services to non-Georgian speakers.

Recommendation: The Mayor's office and Sakrebulo of the municipality should assign a public servant from their staff or contract a person externally who will provide translation to non-Georgian speaking citizens.

e) The buildings of the Mayor's Office and Sakrebulo are not adjusted to the needs of people with disabilities which is clearly a violation of their rights.

Recommendation: Proper space planning should be done, and the Mayor's office and Sakrebulo buildings must be adapted to the needs of persons with disabilities.

f) The municipality does not have an anti-corruption plan, regulation on financial spending, code of ethics.

Recommendation: All needed documents should be developed which will make the work of the self-government more transparent and flexible.

MONITORING REPORT THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REFORM (PAR) IMPLEMENTATION IN LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENTS AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

AMBROLAURI MUNICIPALITY

Prepared by ANZHELA CHIKLADZE

Consultant on the Issues of Local Self-Government

The Fund of Women Entrepreneurs

INTRODUCTION

Successful implementation of the Public Administration Reform plays a central role in the process Georgia's integration into the European Union. According to the "Association Agreement between European Union and Georgia"²⁴ the country is committed to carrying out fundamental reforms in public governance which should be reflected in the creation of accountable, effective, inclusive, transparent and professional public services and its implementation entered into an active phase in 2015 after the signing of the Association Agreement.

For successful implementation of the reform, the **Public Administration Reform Roadmap 2020** has been developed and with the purpose of its successful implementation the Georgian Government has adopted three national action plans since 2015²⁵. **Local self-government reform** is one of the most important components of the reform which aims at promoting the process of decentralization and achieving good governance at the local level. It is noteworthy that the Government of Georgia has unequivocally acknowledged the need to increase the awareness and involvement of civil society in all stages of the implementation of the reform as well as in the process of monitoring and supervision.

The recent PAR action plan for 2019-2020 sets two main goals **in the field of self-government:** a) expansion of the powers of local governments for strengthening self-govern-

²⁴ Association Agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States, of the one part, and Georgia, of the other part "Georgia-EU Association Agreement", article 4.

²⁵ Publicgovernancereformactionplanfor2019-2020,p.4,availableat:http://gov.ge/files/72422_72422_512614_სამოქმედოგეგმა2019-2020_აღწერილობა.pdf

ment; b) step-by-step development and improvement of electronic services in municipalities in order to improve the availability of electronic services in local self-governments.

Step-by-step development and improvement of electronic services is an important component for the empowerment of local self-government which would greatly support citizens in communicating their problems and needs to the local government without additional bureaucratic procedures and would ensure their active involvement at various stages of local policymaking and decision-making.

Nevertheless, the introduction of electronic services is advancing at a very low pace at the local level and the level of inclusion of the population and accountability is very low. According to the unified national assessment of municipalities in Georgia in 2019²⁶, the overall e-governance rate of municipalities was 32%, and only 20% of municipal websites had allowed to request public information online.

Introduction of e-governance systems in the regions, especially in remote areas, is significantly hampered by the low-quality internet connection, high costs of internet services, limited access to technical equipment (computers, smartphones, etc.) for a large part of the population, and poor technical skills. Low awareness and involvement of civil society and the population in general in the process of reforms create additional barriers to the process of successful implementation of the public administration reform. Therefore, empowerment of civil society in the regions, initiating political dialogue with their active involvement and their participation in the process of monitoring and controlling the reform process is becoming increasingly important.

THE AIM OF THE MONITORING

With the purpose of promoting the effective implementation of the public administration reform at the local level, the Cultural-Humanitarian Fund “Sukhumi” in partnership with the Fund of Women Entrepreneurs and Imereti Scientists’ Union “Spectri” is implementing a project “A common forum for civil society organizations (CSO) from Guria, Imereti and Racha-Lechkhumi for PAR Roadmap monitoring”, which is funded by EU. The aim of the project is to ensure the involvement of the society and control of the process of monitoring of public administration reform in 8 municipalities of Imereti, Racha-Lechkhumi and Guria by creating and empowerment of West Georgia Civil Society Forum.

The aim of the project is to evaluate the degree of **efficiency, transparency and inclusiveness** of the local government; to identify strengths and weaknesses of e-governance at the local level based on the evidence-based information and findings, to develop and propose relevant recommendations to the local government.

²⁶ The Local Self-Government Index "National Assessment of Georgian Municipalities" 2019, available at https://idfi.ge/public/upload/IDFI_2019/General/LSGINDEX_Report_GEO.pdf

THE MONITORING METHODOLOGY

The monitoring was carried out in 8 municipalities of Georgia, in particular, in Khoni, Bagdati, Terjola, Vani, Ozurgeti, Lanchkhuti, Tsageri and Ambrolauri from 27 January to 28 February 2020. The “Civil Society Forum”, established in October 2019 under the project, was actively involved in the process of monitoring and in the target regions it brought together 16 CSOs of various profiles and working on different thematic areas²⁷.

The level of the efficiency, transparency and inclusiveness of the local self-government was evaluated by the project partners based on a pre-developed monitoring tool and a questionnaire which combined 32 different evaluation criteria and indicators (see the appendix “Questionnaire”). The process of the reform was assessed through monitoring the municipality official websites as well as by analyzing the public information requested from the representatives of the local self-government and observing the practices of involvement of citizens. Telephone communication with the representatives of the municipal bodies, personal meetings with them and all official online sources containing the information needed for evaluation of specific issues served as additional sources of researching and verifying the information.

THE CONTENT OF THE MONITORING

The present report represents the results of monitoring conducted in Ambrolauri municipality and carried out by “Resource Centre of Racha-Lechkhumi and Lower Svaneti Self-Government” and “Abkhazinterkont” regional hub in Racha-Lechkhumi and Lower Svaneti; the supervising organization was the “Fund of Women Entrepreneurs”.

The project envisages conducting three similar monitorings that will form the basis for developing a local action plan for successful implementation of public administration reform in the local self-government.

*The monitoring indicators for the realization of the Public Administration Reform Roadmap in three main areas: **transparency, efficiency, inclusiveness**.*

■ TRANSPARENCY

The information obtained from the monitoring suggests that the main standards in terms of transparency are observed in Ambrolauri municipality; however, there are some drawbacks on the website. The Facebook site is active and the citizens can partly observe the processes in the municipality online. Working on the drawbacks and correcting them would improve the level of transparency in the municipality.

27 The information on the Civil Society Forum is available at
<http://csoforum.ge/index.php/ka/about-forum-ka-1>

-Are online vacancy announcements accessible? Are the vacancy deadlines observed? - for obtaining the information about these questions the municipality website was reviewed: <http://ambrolauri.gov.ge/>. In order to verify whether the vacancies were active, the link <https://www.hr.gov.ge/> was also checked but in the process of monitoring it was not feasible to verify this component as announced vacancies are automatically deleted after the deadlines.

To obtain the information about the question: “**Does the website provide the information about organizational structure including the contact persons, their telephone numbers, emails and their tasks and responsibilities?**” , the monitoring group reviewed the municipality website: <http://ambrolauri.gov.ge/>. The obtained information confirms that the information about the structure of municipality departments is posted on the website. There is also information about officials together with their emails and contact telephones.

To obtain the information about the question: “**Is there a mechanism/form for online submission of complaints or proposals?**” the municipality website: <http://ambrolauri.gov.ge/> was reviewed (it should be noted that the website was being updated during the monitoring process). The monitoring group concluded that such a format was not available at the time of the monitoring.

How open and transparent is the process of reporting between citizens and the government? “**Are the financial statements, adopted budgets, budget reports for 3, 6, 9 months and the annual report, the procurement plan published online?**” Examining the webpage http://ambrolauri.gov.ge/sajaro_info.php?id=1 reveals that all the financial statements for the last year and current year’s budget are published. Every citizen can see these documents on the website.

In response to the question: “**Does the municipality website include public information, for example, the biographies of officials, the agendas of the Sakrebulo / Mayor’s Office meetings, normative acts adopted by the Sakrebulo, decrees, reports from various departments?**” the monitoring group concluded that the biographies of the officials, except for the Mayor and the Sakrebulo Chairperson, are published on the municipality webpage http://ambrolauri.gov.ge/page_t.php?id=63. Agendas of the meetings, normative acts adopted by the Sakrebulo, decrees and all the above-mentioned information are also posted.

Transparency implies access to the opportunity to meet with public officials. How simplified is this process in the municipality? **Do the Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Sakrebulo Chairperson, Deputy Sakrebulo Chairperson, Sakrebulo members, heads of departments have fixed open office hours for receiving and consulting citizens? If yes, is this information published on the municipality website?** Answering this question, the monitoring group concluded that since citizens have to arrive from different villages, there are no fixed days for their reception in order to make scheduling a meeting with government officials easier and more convenient on any of the weekdays.

The involvement of citizens in the process of budget formation is important in terms of im-

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proving the level of transparency. How well are the municipality budget programs adjusted to the needs of the population? **Does the municipality have a participatory budget, social budget, gender budget?** – As it became evident the municipality has neither participatory nor social or gender budgets. This information was received from the head of the Mayor's Office Finance Department.

How well is transparency implemented in the municipality with respect to anti-corruption measures? Are anti-corruption measures implemented? Are **anti-corruption plans, regulations, financial regulations and the code of ethical conduct available on the website?** – In the process of monitoring the Head of the Legal Department of the Mayor's office was interviewed and according to the information provided by him, Ambrolauri municipality does not have anti-corruption plans, the regulations, financial regulations and the code of ethical conduct.

Transparency: The results of the monitoring in Ambrolauri district show that public opinion has to be taken into account in order to make the right decisions ensuring achievement of the set goals and to forecast expected trends and challenges. It is necessary to develop a participatory budget in order to adequately budget social and gender priorities. Also, it is desirable to develop anti-corruption plans, the regulations, financial regulations and the code of ethical conduct. Moreover, it is important that the citizens have access to all public information on the municipality website, to submit proposals and complaints and to receive public feedback from the officials in the form of public answers, which would contribute to transparency and would increase the level of trust from the citizens. On the other hand, following these recommendations will facilitate the fulfillment of the obligations under the EU Association Agreement. The realization of public administration reform will contribute to effective and efficient governance.

■ EFFICIENCY

Determining the efficiency of the municipality activities was an important part of the monitoring. According to the information obtained by the monitoring group, it is evident that **the number of days for open office hours in the Mayor's office and Sakrebulo** is not set and the citizens can address the officials on any of the weekdays without restrictions. The monitoring group received these answers from the interviews with the Mayor, Sakrebulo Chairperson, the representative of the Public Relations Department of the Mayor's office and Sakrebulo and the head of the Finance Department of the Mayor's Office.

The average number of days for responding to citizens' complaints. A meeting was conducted with the administration heads of the Mayor's office and Sakrebulo which clarified that the complaint submitted by a citizen receives a response within 10 days, in accordance with the legislation. 3 administrative complaints were submitted to the Mayor's office in the current year.

Number of services available electronically: submitting letters, petitions, com-

plaints; scheduling meetings, receiving replies, etc. According to the interviews in the Human Resource Department, services are provided electronically in two ways: 1) by electronic access to the program of the Ministry of Justice; 2) sending SMSs to applicants regarding land registration, awarding highland status, permission for construction and social and health programs. As for obtaining this information on the municipality website, this is hardly possible as the website has a limited storage capacity. The posted information is deleted after a certain period of time.

The professionalism of the public servants and the efficiency of the municipality activities are often determined by their high qualifications. **Does the municipality have professional development plans for the employees?** This information was covered in an interview with Ineza Bandzeladze, a representative of the Human Resources Management Service. The professional development plans are not uploaded to the website, as she explained, due to temporary technical problems. However, the work is underway to resolve them. According to the information the professional development plans are regulated by the municipality order #17.

The monitoring gives information about the **number of trainings conducted for the representatives of the local self-government, including Sakrebulo members, the Sakrebulo and the Mayor's Office staff (total and over the past year) and the topics of these trainings.**

According to the interview with the representative of the Human Resources Management Service and the findings of the monitoring group, the Mayor's office has an agreement with the Association of Financiers of *Local Self-Government* Units of Georgia which provides the services to the municipality. The trainings have been conducted on the following topics: "Pre-school Education", "Rebranding, Preparing Accounts and Effective Presentations", "Project Writing", etc. The total number of trainings has not been recorded. Approximately 150 trainings were conducted over the past year.

According to the interviews, the **percentage of the representatives who have participated in trainings (total and over the past year) is 70% of the total number of employees.** This information is based on an interview with a representative of the Human Resources Management Service.

The question – "**Does the local self-government use any tools and techniques, such as trainings, workshops, exchange of information between various departments, for ensuring the quality of its activities (for example, for managing competencies)?**" was answered based on the interview with a representative of the HR Management Service and reviewing the webpage http://ambrolauri.gov.ge/sajaro_info.php?id=2. It was revealed that at the meetings of the Mayor's Office a 15-20-minute presentations are made during which experience and competencies are shared between different departments. They also use telephone and means of electronic communication for experience sharing.

The municipality has developed **Forms for Evaluating Municipal Services**. This information was obtained from an interview with an HR representative.

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How many meetings were held with other local governments over the past year to share best practices/experience? One of the most important segments in terms of efficiency is sharing best practices. What is the situation in Ambrolauri district in this regard? According to the interview with a representative of the Human Resources Management Service conducted by the monitoring team, about 50 meetings are conducted with the participation of various municipality services to share practices/experience.

The monitoring reveals how effective the work of the legislative branch of the government is, **is there an annual/monthly plan for conducting Sakrebulo sessions?** – We interviewed Teona Gudumidze, the head of the Organizational Department of Sakrebulo Administration on this question, and, as a result, the monitoring team received an answer that in accordance with Sakrebulo regulations the quarterly plans are outlined in the rule of procedure which is posted on Sakrebulo website. This was verified by visiting the web link http://ambrolauri.gov.ge/sajaro_info.php?id=2.

It is important to have a monitoring system in the Municipality to evaluate the efficiency. **Are the timeframes and forms for monitoring the activities of the departments of the Mayor's Office determined?** According to the interview with Tamar Kavanashvili, the Head of the Legal Department of the Mayor's Office, the staff is evaluated in June (midterm) and at the end of the year. The work of the heads of departments is evaluated by the Mayor as regulated by special forms developed by the Civil Service Bureau and is implemented in accordance with a decree adopted by the Sakrebulo.

According to the monitoring for assessing **Efficiency**, it is recommended that specific days are allocated for open office hours in order to better implement Public Administration Reform in Ambrolauri Municipality. In order to improve the standard of their activities, it is advisable to produce an official document establishing the practice of sharing information obtained from meetings and trainings and to post relevant reports on the website. Establishing this practice will help to increase the responsibility of accountable persons to release the information and establish new methods in the municipality. It is recommended to develop the forms for evaluating municipal services.

■ INCLUSIVENESS

The monitoring focused on how Ambrolauri municipality deals with the implementation of inclusiveness mechanisms. This area includes information highlighting the priority of the issue of inclusiveness in the municipality. However, a lot of challenges still remain and much work remains to be done to solve the problems completely.

To answer the question, “Do the Mayor's Office and Sakrebulo buildings have ramps?” – the monitoring team inspected the buildings of self-government and concluded that this issue has been resolved in Ambrolauri self-government.

Are the Municipality vacancy announcements non-discriminatory? – The website was studied in the process of monitoring but the monitoring team was not able to assess

this issue as by that time there were no active vacancies on the website.

Ambrolauri municipality staff is gender-balanced. **What is the percentage of female staff in the local self-government?** – As a result of the interview with the representative of the Department of Human Resource Management it was revealed that 50% gender balance is always observed when recruiting the staff using vacancy announcements.

Percentage of female officials in local self-government (The Mayor, the Deputy Mayor, Sakrebulo Chairperson, the Deputy Sakrebulo Chairperson, Heads of Commissions) is 20% which was confirmed in the interview with the representative of Human Resources Management.

Is translation service available for non-Georgian speakers? – According to the interview with a representative of the Department of Public Relations in the self-government, there is no such service in the municipality. However, they claim that in the case of need the majority of the staff can speak other languages, although there is no such need as the vast majority of Ambrolauri municipality population are ethnic Georgians.

From the perspective of inclusiveness, **it is important if the municipality has a focal point for relations with vulnerable groups, such as women, socially disadvantaged, IDPs, persons with disabilities (with hearing, sight, mobility issues)**. According to the information from the representative of the Public Relations Department, there is no such focal point. However, the Head of the Administration Department usually receives such individuals and redirects them to the relevant departments.

Are the representatives of the municipality (the Mayor's Office, Sakrebulo) aware of the legislation adopted by the State regarding inclusiveness? Are they familiar with The Law of Georgia on Social Protection of Persons with Disabilities; with the legislation on labor rights; with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities? Based on the interview with a representative of the municipality it can be concluded that the municipality representatives are aware of these regulations and their work is based on this legislation. (Sakrebulo Decree #32, articles 16 and 18)

Does the municipality have a normative act/regulation on the involvement of vulnerable groups in the decision-making process at the local level or on the provision of public services to them? According to the interview with a representative of the municipality – the Head of the Social Services Department of the Mayor's Office, according to the Decree #19, the Council of Persons with Disabilities has been created. The relevant body has applied to the Sakrebulo to include a person with disabilities in the Council and is awaiting its approval.

Is gender budgeting practiced at the local level? Are they aware of its functioning? - According to the monitoring carried out by the monitoring group, in the municipality there is no competent knowledge about gender budgeting and its functioning. This information was obtained from the interview with the Head of the Finance Department of the self-government.

According to the monitoring, the self-government is interested in cooperation with civil so-

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society organizations; there is a **focal point for relations with civil society organizations/working groups** in the municipality. This information is confirmed in an interview with a representative of the Public Relations Department of the local government. According to the job descriptions, the Public Relations Department staff undertake this function, in particular, Nino Rusishvili and Marika Dvali in the Mayor's Office and Sophio Khidureli in the Sakrebulo.

Are an advisory board, a gender council, and other councils and working groups operational in the Mayor's Office and Sakrebulo? According to the monitoring and the interview with a representative of Human Resource Management Department, the Gender Council, Advisory Board, Working Group for Granting and Revoking the Highland Status, Council for Monitoring Public Property Disposal Issues, the Council of Persons with Disabilities and Commission for Monitoring Social Issues are operational in Ambrolauri municipality. <http://ambrolauri.gov.ge/>

In terms of **inclusiveness**, it is established that having a ramp in Ambrolauri Municipality building puts it in a privileged position. However, other components related to the inclusiveness component need to be refined and activated. For example, conducting trainings on gender budgeting and its functions will help improve the competencies of representatives of the municipality on issues of gender budgeting, which will contribute to an increase in budget allocations for gender-sensitive programs.

It has to be noted that during the process of monitoring following a recommendation from the monitoring team the problem with the website was resolved and the personal information of the officials (about the Military Registration and Conscription Service) was corrected.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AMBROLAURI MUNICIPALITY DEVELOPED AS A RESULT OF MONITORING

1. The relevant services of Ambrolauri municipality should establish the needed storage capacity for the municipality website that will ensure posting of all public information on the website and making it accessible for all visitors of the site;
2. All the municipality departments should assign an authorized person who will be responsible for providing all needed information and documents to the appointed responsible person in order to ensure that they are posted on the municipality website in a timely manner;
3. The open office hours for the Mayor's Office and Sakrebulo public servants (officials) should be fixed and published;
4. In order to increase the trust of the citizens and ensure transparency, the complaints and proposals should be analyzed and answers should be published electronically on the municipality website;

5. The appropriate bodies of the municipalities should be instructed to develop a participatory budget, social budget, gender budget and publish them on the website;
6. A regulation on the rules of involving citizens in planning, discussing and financing the budget should be developed, which will promote improved communication, increased trust and accurate needs assessment;
7. Anti-corruption regulation and plans, finance regulations and code of ethics should be developed in the municipality and published on the municipality website for all stakeholders;
8. Forms for evaluating municipal services should be developed including creation of evaluation mechanisms and developing/adopting forms needed for assessment;
9. The relevant authorities of the municipality should be instructed to design plans for the professional development of the personnel in the following areas: budgeting, gender, inclusiveness, efficiency and to develop exchange programs with other successful municipalities for sharing competencies and experience.
10. Seminars on developing participatory, social and gender budget should be conducted for the relevant bodies of the Mayor's office and Sakrebulo and the Head of Commission;
11. In order to conduct the activities at a high standard, it is advisable to produce an official document establishing the practice of sharing information obtained from meetings and trainings, and to post relevant reports on the website.

The monitoring team would like to express their gratitude to Ambrolauri Municipality Sakrebulo and Ambrolauri Municipality Mayor's Office for their support.

MONITORING REPORT THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REFORM (PAR) IMPLEMENTATION IN LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENTS AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

TSAGERI MUNICIPALITY

Prepared by ANZHELA CHIKLADZE

Consultant on the Issues of Local Self-Government
The Fund of Women Entrepreneurs

INTRODUCTION

Successful implementation of the Public Administration Reform plays a central role in the process Georgia's integration into the European Union. According to the "Association Agreement between European Union and Georgia"²⁸ the country is committed to carrying out fundamental reforms in public governance which should be reflected in the creation of accountable, effective, inclusive, transparent and professional public services and its implementation entered into an active phase in 2015 after the signing of the Association Agreement.

For successful implementation of the reform, the **Public Administration Reform Roadmap 2020** has been developed and with the purpose of its successful implementation the Georgian Government has adopted three national action plans since 2015²⁹. **Local self-government reform** is one of the most important components of the reform which aims at promoting the process of decentralization and achieving good governance at the local level. It is noteworthy that the Government of Georgia has unequivocally acknowledged the need to increase the awareness and involvement of civil society in all stages of the implementation of the reform as well as in the process of monitoring and supervision.

The recent PAR action plan for 2019-2020 sets two main goals in the field of self-gov-

²⁸ Association Agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States, of the one part, and Georgia, of the other part "Georgia-EU Association Agreement", article 4.

²⁹ Publicgovernancereformactionplanfor2019-2020,p.4,availableat:http://gov.ge/files/72422_72422_512614_სამოქმედოგეგმა2019-2020_აღწერილობა.pdf

ernment: a) expansion of the powers of local governments for strengthening self-government; b) step-by-step development and improvement of electronic services in municipalities in order to improve the availability of electronic services in local self-governments.

Step-by-step development and improvement of electronic services is an important component for the empowerment of local self-government which would greatly support citizens in communicating their problems and needs to the local government without additional bureaucratic procedures and would ensure their active involvement at various stages of local policymaking and decision-making.

Nevertheless, the introduction of electronic services is advancing at a very low pace at the local level and the level of inclusion of the population and accountability is very low. According to the unified national assessment of municipalities in Georgia in 2019³⁰, the overall e-governance rate of municipalities was 32%, and only 20% of municipal websites had allowed to request public information online.

Introduction of e-governance systems in the regions, especially in remote areas, is significantly hampered by the low-quality internet connection, high costs of internet services, limited access to technical equipment (computers, smartphones, etc.) for a large part of the population, and poor technical skills. Low awareness and involvement of civil society and the population in general in the process of reforms create additional barriers to the process of successful implementation of the public administration reform. Therefore, empowerment of civil society in the regions, initiating political dialogue with their active involvement and their participation in the process of monitoring and controlling the reform process is becoming increasingly important.

THE AIM OF THE MONITORING

With the purpose of promoting the effective implementation of the public administration reform at the local level, the Cultural-Humanitarian Fund “Sukhumi” in partnership with the Fund of Women Entrepreneurs and Imereti Scientists’ Union “Spectri” is implementing a project “A common forum for civil society organizations (CSO) from Guria, Imereti and Racha-Lechkhumi for PAR Roadmap monitoring”, which is funded by EU. The aim of the project is to ensure the involvement of the society and control of the process of monitoring of public administration reform in 8 municipalities of Imereti, Racha-Lechkhumi and Guria by creating and empowerment of West Georgia Civil Society Forum.

The aim of the project is to evaluate the degree of **efficiency, transparency and inclusiveness** of the local government; to identify strengths and weaknesses of e-governance at the local level based on the evidence-based information and findings, to develop and propose relevant recommendations to the local government.

³⁰ The Local Self-Government Index "National Assessment of Georgian Municipalities" 2019, available at https://idfi.ge/public/upload/IDFI_2019/General/LSGINDEX_Report_GEO.pdf

THE MONITORING METHODOLOGY

The monitoring was carried out in 8 municipalities of Georgia, in particular, in Khoni, Bagdati, Terjola, Vani, Ozurgeti, Lanchkhuti, Tsageri and Ambrolauri from 27 January to 28 February 2020. The “Civil Society Forum”, established in October 2019 under the project, was actively involved in the process of monitoring and in the target regions it brought together 16 CSOs of various profiles and working on different thematic areas³¹.

The level of the efficiency, transparency and inclusiveness of the local self-government was evaluated by the project partners based on a pre-developed monitoring tool and a questionnaire which combined 32 different evaluation criteria and indicators (see the appendix “Questionnaire”). The process of the reform was assessed through monitoring the municipality official websites as well as by analyzing the public information requested from the representatives of the local self-government and observing the practices of involvement of citizens. Telephone communication with the representatives of the municipal bodies, personal meetings with them and all official online sources containing the information needed for evaluation of specific issues served as additional sources of researching and verifying the information.

THE RESULTS OF THE MONITORING

This report presents the results of monitoring in Tsageri municipality conducted by **NELE “Women’s Rights and Gender Equality Center”** (currently registered as NGO **“Women’s Rights and Gender Equality Center”**) and **“Active Citizen – Accountable Government”**. The supervising organization was The Fund of Women Entrepreneurs.

Under the project it is planned to conduct three similar monitorings which will form the basis for developing a local action plan for successful implementation of public administration reform in local self-government.

*The monitoring indicators for the realization of the Public Administration Reform Roadmap in three main areas: **transparency, efficiency, inclusiveness**.*

■ TRANSPARENCY

In the process of monitoring the following questions were answered to assess the transparency of the work of the self-government:

31 The information on the Civil Society Forum is available at
<http://csoforum.ge/index.php/ka/about-forum-ka-1>

- ✓ **Are online vacancy announcements accessible? Are the vacancy deadlines observed?** - for obtaining the information on these questions, the representatives of the monitoring team of the partner organizations talked to the head of the administration of the Mayor's office and the Head of Sakrebulo office; also, they reviewed the website of the Mayor's office: tsageri.gov.ge/ge ; hr.gov.ge and the Facebook page – "Tsageri Municipality". The resolution of the Government of Georgia on competitive recruitment in public service was also analyzed and it was noted that the vacancy announcements are accessible online and the timeframes are set to 10 days.
- ✓ **"Does the website provide the information about organizational structure including the contact persons, their telephone numbers, emails and their tasks and responsibilities?"** Studying the municipality website: tsageri.gov.ge/ makes is clear that the contact details are posted.
- ✓ **"Is there a mechanism/form for online submission of complaints or proposals?"** Analysis of reviewing the website tsageri.gov.ge confirms that there is a mechanism for submission of complaints/proposals.

✓ **Are the following financial statements published online?**

- **Adopted budget**
- **Budget reports for 3, 6, 9 months and annual report**
- **Procurement plan and report**

Online financial statements, adopted budget, budget reports for 3, 6, 9 months, annual report, procurement plan are published. Municipality annual budget for 2019, according to the decree # 60 is published on 28 December 2018 and the last updated information was posted on the municipality website tsageri.gov.ge on 5 February 2020 together with 3, 6, 9 months' reports, budget plan and reports. This information is also published in the local newspaper "**Akhali Lechkhumi**" and covered by the media holding "**Kvira**". The materials are also uploaded to the Facebook page – "**Tsageri Municipality**".

✓ **Does the municipality website include public information? for example,**

- **Biographies of the officials;**
- **Agendas of the Sakrebulo/Mayor's officemeetings;**
- **Normative acts adopted by the Sakrebulo;**
- **Decrees;**
- **Reports from various departments.**

From the monitoring and review of the website tsageri.gov.ge it is clear that the normative acts adopted by the Sakrebulo – resolution on the provision of social assistance and resolution on the budget for 2020 were published in "Legislative Herald of Georgia" on 5 February, 2020; the agendas of the Sakrebulo/Mayor's office meetings are not published on the web but they are posted on the information board; The normative acts are published on the web within two days oftheir adoption in accordance with the legislation.

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✓ **Do the following officials have fixed open office hours for receiving and consulting citizens?**

- **The Mayor;**
- **The Deputy Mayor;**
- **The Sakrebulo Chairperson;**
- **The Deputy Sakrebulo Chairperson;**
- **Sakrebulo members;**
- **The deputy heads of the departments;**
- **If yes, is this information published on the municipality website?**

From the study of the website and notices on the office doors as well as the interviews with the Head of the Administration it is evident that none of the municipality officials, including the Mayor, the Chairperson of the Sakrebulo, the Deputy Chairpersons of the Sakrebulo, the heads of departments, have set specific open office hours. According to them, the personal telephone number of the Head of the Administration is linked to the hotline and citizens are received without restrictions.

✓ **Does the municipality have:**

- **A participatory budget?**
- **A social budget?**
- **A gender budget?**

After studying the budget, a meeting with the Head of the Finance Department and browsing the website it becomes clear that there is no participatory budget, but the municipality has a social budget which was included among the priorities for 2020 by Tsageri municipality. It is planned to spend 385,000 Laris on the social budget which is 5% of the total budget. As for gender budgeting, the NELE “Center of Women’s Rights and Gender Equality” has been established, which is actively involved in gender budgeting issues. Ms. Shorena Dvali has been appointed as a gender focal point. Equal participation of men and women is ensured by Sakrebulo resolution 9-45/03.07.2017 (<https://tsageri.gov.ge/page/shpsebi>).

✓ **Are anti-corruption measures implemented in the municipality? Are the following documents available on the website?**

- **Anti-corruption plans;**
- **Anti-corruption regulations;**
- **Financial regulations;**
- **A code of ethical conduct.**

The monitoring team interviewed Datuna Letodiani, Head of Internal Audit and Inspection

Service and Tamaz Chabukiani, Chairperson of the Sakrebulo Commission of Ethics and Mandate. The interviews revealed that resolution #37 of 7 March 2018 on Internal Audit and Inspection Service and Tsageri Municipality Sakrebulo resolution #39 were adopted in accordance with Georgian legislation; Inspection of seven NELEs, two LLCs and three structural units revealed no cases of significant violations. There is no information about the financial regulations; the regulation on ethical conduct is adopted by Tsageri municipality Sakrebulo resolution #39; Commission of Ethics and Mandate is established in Sakrebulo.

Transparency monitoring shows that public servants in Tsageri Municipality are well aware of the public administration reform, although its implementation mechanisms are not fully operational; there are some shortcomings, consequently, recommendations were offered on how to fix them and there is a high degree of willingness to accept these recommendations. Various forms of electronic services are used in the municipality. Citizens can follow the processes developing in the municipality online: get acquainted with news, announcements, vacancies, programs, legislative acts, etc.

Efficiency

In order to evaluate the efficiency of the work of the self-government, the following questions were considered in the process of the monitoring:

- ✓ **Number of days per month for open office hours in the Mayor's Office and Sakrebulo for:**

- **The Mayor;**
- **The Deputy Mayor;**
- **The Sakrebulo Chairperson**
- **The Deputy Sakrebulo Chairperson**
- **Members of the Sakrebulo**
- **Heads of departments**

According to the interview with Tamar Davituliani, the Head of the Public Relations Department of the Mayor's Office and Sakrebulo, conducted by the monitoring team, since there are no fixed days for open office hours, the days and hours of meetings with the citizens cannot be counted. According to her the number of days and hours is not limited. According to the interview with the Head of the Sakrebulo Secretariat, the representatives of villages in Sakrebulo have set specific days when they meet with the population and they play an intermediary role with the self-government (**The internal labor regulations of Tsageri municipality Mayor's Office**) <https://tsageri.gov.ge/page/cageris-municipalitetis-meriis-shinaganatsesi>; <https://tsageri.gov.ge/page/cageris-municipalitetis-meriis-debuleba>

- ✓ **What is the average number of days for responding to citizen's complaints?**

Based on the interviews with the heads of administration in both structures, the monitoring team found that the average response time is 3-10 days in the case of the Mayor's office

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(depending on the severity of the complaint and the volume of the information sought) and 4-5 days in the case of the Sakrebulo.

✓ **Number of services accessible electronically:**

- Submitting letters;
- Submitting petitions;
- Submitting complaints;
- Scheduling appointments;
- Receiving answers, etc.

Interviewing the Head of the Public Relations Department of the self-government and reviewing the website reveals that there are no cases of scheduling meetings in the Mayor's Office, but there are such cases in the Sakrebulo; 4 cases of responding to letters electronically have also been recorded (<https://tsageri.gov.ge/page/117-gasachivrebis-tsesi>).

✓ **Does the municipality have professional development plans for the staff?**

The interviews with the representatives of the administration and with Maka Bendeliani, the Head of Human Resource Management Department, it is evident that there are no plans for the professional development of the staff in the municipality.

✓ **Number of trainings conducted for the representatives of the local self-government:**

- Number of trainings conducted for the Sakrebulo members, the Sakrebulo and the Mayor's office staff (total, during the last year, topics of the trainings)

Based on the interview with the administration officials it was found that five trainings have been conducted in the Sakrebulo on the following topics: "Human Resource Management", "Economic Development", "Finances", "Solid Waste Management" and "Public Administration". In 2019 27 public servants were trained, including the Mayor, the Deputy Mayors and other staff - tsageri.gov.ge; 2/3-ml 136, 18.10.2019.

✓ **Percentage of the trained representatives of local self-government (total and during the last year).**

In order to receive an answer to this question the monitoring team interviewed a representative of the Human Resource Management Department. As a result, the following figures were obtained: 35% - for the Mayor's Office and 40% for the Sakrebulo.

✓ **Does the local self-government use any tools and techniques for ensuring the quality of its activities (for example, for managing competencies)?**

- trainings, workshops
- reports, exchange of information between various departments.

In order to clarify this issue, the monitoring team interviewed the Head of the Human Resource Management Department and found that each Monday the meetings are con-

ducted in the Mayor's office, where the various departments share the information, the results of the work, trainings and reports for the past week are summarized. No evidence was found of using other tools and techniques.

✓ **Have the forms for evaluation municipality services been developed?**

According to the interview with the head of the Secretariat no such forms have been developed.

✓ **How many meetings have been held with other local governments over the past year to share best practices/experience?**

According to interviews with the Head of the Administration, the Mayor, the Head of the Sakrebulo, the coordination meetings are conducted monthly in the Governor's Office where the four municipalities share their experience and develop recommendations. In 2019 the Mayor and the Deputy Mayors visited Carnikava municipality in Latvia as part of an exchange program for advanced training in the field of tourism and agricultural management. (<https://www.matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/2097940?publication=0>).

✓ **Does the Sakrebulo have an annual/monthly plan for conducting sessions?**

For clarifying this issue, the Sakrebulo website <https://tsageri.gov.ge/page/sakrebulos-skhdomebi> was studied and it was found that three months (quarterly) plan for conducting Sakrebulo sessions was developed and posted on the website.

✓ **Are the timeframes and forms for monitoring the activities of the departments of the Mayor's Office determined?**

The interview with the Head of the Administration of the Mayor's office revealed that **there are no timeframes and forms developed for monitoring the activities of the departments of the Mayor's Office.**

In terms of **efficiency**, there are several issues to be addressed and relevant recommendations will be outlined in the document. As for the effective involvement of citizens in the process of self-governance, Tsageri municipality fully supports this process. It is recommended to set specific days for open office hours, develop professional development plans for the staff, special forms for evaluating the municipality services, the timeframe and form of monitoring the activities of the units of the Mayor's office.

■ INCLUSIVENESS

A questionnaire on this component of monitoring assesses the priority of inclusion in Tsageri municipality.

✓ **Do the buildings of the Mayor's Office/Sakrebulo have ramps?**

By inspecting the administrative buildings during the monitoring, it became clear that this issue is not resolved.

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✓ Are the Municipality vacancy announcements non-discriminatory?

The vacancy announcements were reviewed and it was concluded that they are not discriminatory <https://tsageri.gov.ge/>.

✓ What is the percentage of female staff in the local self-government?

According to the interview with the Head of Administration, in Tsageri municipality 40% of the total employed staff is female, as regulated by the Local Self-governance Code and the Sakrebulo regulations <https://tsageri.gov.ge/page/sakrebulos-skhdomebi>).

✓ What is the Percentage of female officials in local self-government (The Mayor, the Deputy Mayor, Sakrebulo Chairperson, the Deputy Sakrebulo Chairperson, Heads of Commissions)?

5 women (or 17%) in the Mayor's office and 3 women (or 8%) in the Sakrebulo. (<https://tsageri.gov.ge/page/meriis-tanamshromlebi>). This information was confirmed in an interview with a representative of the Human Resource Management Department.

✓ Is translation service available for non-Georgian speakers?

As the head of the Public Relations Department explained in the interview, if necessary they use the services of an on-call translator and one-time payments are made in such cases (<https://tsageri.gov.ge/page/cageris-municipalitetis-meriis-debuleba>).

✓ Is there a focal point for relations with vulnerable groups in the municipality? In particular, with:

- Women;
- Socially Disadvantaged;
- IDPs;
- Persons with disabilities (with hearing, sight, mobility issues).

The information on this issue was obtained from an interview with the Public Relations Service Department, reviewing the webpage <https://tsageri.gov.ge/page/cageris-municipalitetis-meriis-debuleba> <https://tsageri.gov.ge/page/samoqalago-sabcho> and the decree 2-204 03.12.2019. Ms. Shorena Dvali is the gender focal point. Social Services Division was established to work with socially vulnerable population, IDPs and people with disabilities and is headed by Mr. David Dvali., The civil Council created by the Mayor's order includes representatives of vulnerable groups and their involvement ensures that their interests are taken into account. The Sakrebulo also has a commission on social issues headed by Ms. Marika Kopaliani.

✓ Are the representatives of the municipality (the Mayor's Office, Sakrebulo) aware of the legislation adopted by the State regarding inclusiveness?

Are they familiar with:

- The Law of Georgia on Social Protection of Persons with Disabilities?
- The legislation on labor rights?
- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities?

According to the interviews with the representatives of the Mayor's Office and Sakrebulo, a commission working with the persons with disabilities was created in January 2019 by the Mayor's Order #45, which ensures their awareness of these issues.

- ✓ **Does the municipality have a normative act/regulation on the involvement of vulnerable groups in the decision-making process at the local level or on the provision of public services to them? If not, is it planned to implement/promote such an approach?**

The Head of the Sakrebulo Secretariat gave the following answer to this question in an interview: - Resolution No. 7/73 of 2016, adopted at a meeting of the Commission on Social Affairs, regulates the participation of vulnerable groups in the decision-making process at the local level and the availability of public services to them.

- ✓ **Is gender budgeting practiced at the local level? Are they aware of its functioning?**

According to the interview with the Head of Finance Department in the municipality there is no competent knowledge about this issue. Conducting meetings and trainings on this topic in Tsageri municipality would promote the inclusion of gender programs in the budget.

- ✓ **Does the municipality have a focal point for cooperation with civil society organizations/working groups? Who is such a person in the municipality?**

The monitoring team found that by the document "N2/p- personnel 91-30.09.2018" Mr. Vasil Saginadze was appointed as a focal point for cooperation with civil society organizations/working groups. This proves that there is a high degree of willingness in the municipality to cooperate effectively with civil society organizations.

- ✓ **Are the following councils operational in the municipality?**

- **An advisory board?**
- **A gender council?**
- **Other councils and working groups**

From the information obtained in an interview with the Human Resource Management Department representative and reviewing the municipality website (tsageri.gov.ge), 7 councils in total, including the Mayor's advisory board were created by the Order # 3/87 of 05.07.2017, by the Decree of Sakrebulo #2-167 of 9.07.2017 and Sakrebulo Resolution #7-98/45. There is a practice of creating ad hoc councils if required. The Sakrebulo Gender Council is led by the Sakrebulo Chairperson Mr. Giorgi Gugava.

To summarize, in terms of **Inclusiveness**, the absence of ramps in the buildings remains a challenge. As for other components of inclusiveness, they function relatively smoothly.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TSAGERI MUNICIPALITY DEVELOPED AS A RESULT OF MONITORING

1. The open hour days for the Mayor's Office and Sakrebulo officials should be set and the information made accessible for the population.
2. In order to increase public confidence and transparency, complaints and proposals submitted electronically should be analyzed on the website of the municipality and answers to them should be posted.
3. Anti-corruption regulations and plans, financial regulations and a code of ethical conduct should be developed and made public for all stakeholders on the website.
4. The appropriate structures should be instructed to develop a participatory budget, a social budget and a gender budget and to publish them on the website;
5. Forms for evaluation of municipal services should be developed, along with the creation of evaluation mechanisms and developing/adopting forms needed for assessment.
6. A project for adapt municipality building for persons with disabilities should be developed and implemented.
7. The relevant authorities of the municipality should be instructed to develop plans for the professional development of personnel on the following topics: budgeting, gender, inclusiveness, efficiency and develop exchange programs with other successful municipalities for sharing the competencies and experience.
8. In order to conduct the activities at a high standard, it is advisable to adopt a document that will introduce the practice of sharing the information received during meetings and trainings, to post relevant reports on the website.

The monitoring team would like to express their gratitude to Tsageri Municipality Sakrebulo and Tsageri Municipality Mayor's Office for their support.

MONITORING REPORT THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REFORM (PAR) IMPLEMENTATION IN LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENTS AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

LANCHKHUTI MUNICIPALITY

Prepared by EMA KAMKIA

Consultant on the Issues of Local Self-Government
The Fund “Sukhumi”

INTRODUCTION

Successful implementation of the Public Administration Reform plays a central role in the process Georgia's integration into the European Union. According to the "Association Agreement between European Union and Georgia"³² the country is committed to carrying out fundamental reforms in public governance which should be reflected in the creation of accountable, effective, inclusive, transparent and professional public services and its implementation entered into an active phase in 2015 after the signing of the Association Agreement.

For successful implementation of the reform, the **Public Administration Reform Roadmap 2020** has been developed and with the purpose of its successful implementation the Georgian Government has adopted three national action plans since 2015³³. **Local self-government reform** is one of the most important components of the reform which aims at promoting the process of decentralization and achieving good governance at the local level. It is noteworthy that the Government of Georgia has unequivocally acknowledged the need to increase the awareness and involvement of civil society in all stages of the implementation of the reform as well as in the process of monitoring and supervision.

The recent PAR action plan for 2019-2020 sets two main goals in the field of self-gov-

³² Association Agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States, of the one part, and Georgia, of the other part "Georgia-EU Association Agreement", article 4.

³³ Publicgovernancereformactionplanfor2019-2020,p.4,availableat:http://gov.ge/files/72422_72422_512614_სამოქმედოგეგმა2019-2020_აღწერილობა.pdf

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ernment: a) expansion of the powers of local governments for strengthening self-government; b) step-by-step development and improvement of electronic services in municipalities in order to improve the availability of electronic services in local self-governments.

Step-by-step development and improvement of electronic services is an important component for the empowerment of local self-government which would greatly support citizens in communicating their problems and needs to the local government without additional bureaucratic procedures and would ensure their active involvement at various stages of local policymaking and decision-making.

Nevertheless, the introduction of electronic services is advancing at a very low pace at the local level and the level of inclusion of the population and accountability is very low. According to the unified national assessment of municipalities in Georgia in 2019³⁴, the overall e-governance rate of municipalities was 32%, and only 20% of municipal websites had allowed to request public information online.

Introduction of e-governance systems in the regions, especially in remote areas, is significantly hampered by the low-quality internet connection, high costs of internet services, limited access to technical equipment (computers, smartphones, etc.) for a large part of the population, and poor technical skills. Low awareness and involvement of civil society and the population in general in the process of reforms create additional barriers to the process of successful implementation of the public administration reform. Therefore, empowerment of civil society in the regions, initiating political dialogue with their active involvement and their participation in the process of monitoring and controlling the reform process is becoming increasingly important.

THE AIM OF THE MONITORING

With the purpose of promoting the effective implementation of the public administration reform at the local level, the Cultural-Humanitarian Fund “Sukhumi” in partnership with the Fund of Women Entrepreneurs and Imereti Scientists’ Union “Spectri” is implementing a project “A common forum for civil society organizations (CSO) from Guria, Imereti and Racha-Lechkhumi for PAR Roadmap monitoring”, which is funded by EU. The aim of the project is to ensure the involvement of the society and control of the process of monitoring of public administration reform in 8 municipalities of Imereti, Racha-Lechkhumi and Guria by creating and empowerment of West Georgia Civil Society Forum.

The aim of the project is to evaluate the degree of **efficiency, transparency and inclusiveness** of the local government; to identify strengths and weaknesses of e-governance at the local level based on the evidence-based information and findings, to develop and propose relevant recommendations to the local government.

³⁴ The Local Self-Government Index "National Assessment of Georgian Municipalities" 2019, available at https://idfi.ge/public/upload/IDFI_2019/General/LSGINDEX_Report_GEO.pdf

THE MONITORING METHODOLOGY

The monitoring was carried out in 8 municipalities of Georgia, in particular, in Khoni, Bagdati, Terjola, Vani, Ozurgeti, Lanchkhuti, Tsageri and Ambrolauri from 27 January to 28 February 2020. The “Civil Society Forum”, established in October 2019 under the project, was actively involved in the process of monitoring and in the target regions it brought together 16 CSOs of various profiles and working on different thematic areas³⁵.

The level of the efficiency, transparency and inclusiveness of the local self-government was evaluated by the project partners based on a pre-developed monitoring tool and a questionnaire which combined 32 different evaluation criteria and indicators (see the appendix “Questionnaire”). The process of the reform was assessed through monitoring the municipality official websites as well as by analyzing the public information requested from the representatives of the local self-government and observing the practices of involvement of citizens. Telephone communication with the representatives of the municipal bodies, personal meetings with them and all official online sources containing the information needed for evaluation of specific issues served as additional sources of researching and verifying the information.

THE ANALYSIS OF THE MONITORING RESULTS

The present report represents the results of monitoring conducted in Lanchkhuti municipality and carried out by NELE Georgian Rural Council and NELE Lanchkhuti Information Centre with the support of the supervising organization **Imereti Scientists’ Union “Spectri”**.

The project envisages conducting three similar monitorings that will form the basis for developing a local action plan for the successful implementation of Public Administration Reform in the local self-government.

The monitoring indicators were considered according to three main components: Transparency, Efficiency, Inclusiveness

■ TRANSPARENCY

Resolution #37 of 25.12.2017 of Lanchkhuti Municipality Sakrebulo on Adopting the Regulations of Lanchkhuti Municipality Mayor’s Office³⁶ specifies that the municipality website ensures the awareness of the citizens on the activities of the Mayor’s Office.

³⁵ The information on the Civil Society Forum is available at
<http://csoforum.ge/index.php/ka/about-forum-ka-1>

³⁶ <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/3943691?publication=0>
<https://www.matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/4315644?publication=0>

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Legislative acts of the Mayor's Office, the information on the structure and procedures of the Mayor's Office and the Mayor's Office officials, regulating acts (the statute, internal regulations, and address), the addresses, emails and the telephone numbers of the Mayor's office and its structural units and other public information³⁷ must be published on the municipality website in accordance with the Sakrebulo rule of procedure.

Availability of public information is one of the indicators of transparency of municipality activities. On the official website of the municipality there is a special application that allows you to request information from both, the Sakrebulo and the Mayor's Office. However, even though there is a section "**Rules for requesting public information and making appeals**", no relevant entries have been found on the website.

Interesting observations were made concerning the "Vacancy Announcements" section: the online vacancy applications section is available on the municipality's website, but only one vacancy announcement dated October 29, 2019 can be found there.³⁸ This situation does not comply with the established rule, according to which information about vacancy competitions announced in the municipality should be published on the next business day after the competition is announced.³⁹

Monitoring showed that the organizational structure of the Sakrebulo and the Mayor's Office with contact persons, their photos, phone numbers, email addresses and specific responsibilities are fully posted on the website of the municipality.⁴⁰

The procedure for publishing information on the activities of Lanchkhuti municipal authorities and private legal entities financed from the municipal budget is determined by Resolution #499 of Sakrebulo of the Lanchkhuti municipality of December 29, 2015. (Amendments were made on 31 August 2018).

The person responsible for disseminating the public information in Lanchkhuti Municipality is responsible for the proactive publication of public information in the municipality.

The proactive publication of public information is ensured by the Administrative and Procurement Service Unit of the Mayor's office and the Sakrebulo secretariat.

Review of the website reveals that there is a mechanism for submitting complaints or proposals online in the municipality. According to the information obtained, two complaints were submitted, but this could not be verified on the website.

A register of incoming questions is maintained in the municipality – the time of entry, the content of the question, the name of the addressee public institution are recorded in Excel format. At the same time, in the case of each question, it is indicated when the answer was given. The monitoring found that the average time for responding to the submitted letters is 4-5 days.

37 <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/3943691?publication=0>

38 <http://lanchkhuti.gov.ge/?cat=120>

39 *Lanchkhuti municipality Sakrebulo resolution №37*

<https://www.matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/4315644?publication=0>

40 http://lanchkhuti.gov.ge/?page_id=3563

The online financial statements are uploaded to the municipality website, including adopted budget, 3, 6, 9 months reports and annual budget reports, procurement plan and report (the last uploaded statement: The Sakrebulo Chairperson's report on the municipality procurement of 22 November, 2019).

The municipality's website also contains comprehensive public information in the following areas: biographies of the officials; agendas of the Sakrebulo /Mayor's Office Sessions; normative acts adopted by the Mayor's Office; Sakrebulo resolutions; reports of various departments/divisions.

The monitoring revealed that the open office hours are set by the Mayor, the Deputy Mayor, the Sakrebulo Chairperson, the Deputy Sakrebulo Chairperson, Sakrebulo members and the deputy heads of departments. According to the information received from the Sakrebulo Secretariat and Organizational Department of the Mayor's Office, the schedule of the open office hours is as follows: the Mayor – 4 hours on Fridays; the Deputy Mayor – every day; the Sakrebulo Chairperson – 4 hours on Mondays, The Deputy Sakrebulo Chairperson – every day; the Sakrebulo members - every day, the deputy heads of departments - every day. The news about the meetings is published proactively.

EFFICIENCY

The problem of the formation of local self-government is one of the most important issues of the democratic organization of society.

Local self-government is the right and ability of citizens of Georgia residing in a self-government unit to solve local issues through local authorities elected by them.⁴¹

Active society and a high degree of participation are the key to successful self-government, open and effective management. Only in such conditions can local problems be resolved locally in a timely, efficient and transparent manner. A high degree of public participation promotes the appropriate and efficient use of local resources.⁴²

The citizens' attitude is determined by the approach of self-government bodies to public participation. Some local officials do not realize their accountability to citizens.

Civil budgeting is not introduced in Lanchkhuti Municipality. However, some preparatory steps have already been taken in this direction. The Mayor confirmed the readiness of the municipality in this regard: "*I hope that Lanchkhuti will be actively involved in the implementation of the [participatory budget] project and our citizens will demonstrate more enthusiasm in the process of developing the budget*".⁴³

41 The Local Self-Government Code of Georgia
<https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/2244429?publication=46>

42 <https://bit.ly/3aQAXrE> -Reform of the Local Governance – Exit from a Grey Zone

43 *A meeting within the framework of the project "Participation of Citizens in Developing the Local Budget"*

MONITORING

A training on the topic of participatory budgeting was conducted for the members of the local government and representatives of the local media In Lanchkhuti. The training was aimed at studying the models and forms of planning the local budget with the participation of citizens, so that the municipality could introduce participatory budgeting in the coming years.

According to the Finance Department, the social budget is 5% of the total budget. They state also that the municipality allocated gender expenditures in the budget - 5,000 GEL. Moreover, it should be noted that some clearly gender-oriented programs are integrated in other areas of the budget, and if the budget is considered in terms of gender indicators, their index will be quite high; the examples of the above include funding of women's football club, rehabilitation program for women suffering from breast cancer.

According to the Sakrebulo members, anti-corruption measures are not applied in the municipality. Anti-corruption plans, an anti-corruption regulation, financial regulations, code of ethical conduct cannot be found on the website.

As part of the monitoring, interviews were conducted with the Deputy Mayor, the Specialist of the Service Centre, the Head of Sakrebulo Secretariat. According to the information received, the number of days for open office hours is set in the Mayor's office and in Sakrebulo.

The information obtained shows that the average number of days to respond to complaints is 10 days on average. Over the past year, 2 complaints have been registered. The average response time was 7 days. Although there is a relevant section on the website, no information can be found there.

In addition to the "Complaints" section, there are other electronic services on the municipality's website: submission of letters, petitions.

There is only one petition on the website "The Gurian Horsemen Square in Lanchkhuti".⁴⁴

According to the obtained information, the web-application for submitting petitions was developed under the project "Applying Innovative Approaches in Strengthening Citizen Participation" implemented by the International Civil Culture Centre with the financial support of the Small Grants Scheme (SGS). Despite the smooth operation of the application and user-friendly electronic submission forms, lack of interest in using this form of public involvement is evident.

Objectively, the municipality's website has capacity to provide uninterrupted communication between a citizen and the municipality Mayor's Office and Sakrebulo. For example, there is a section for online surveys that allows citizens to express their opinions after filling out a demographic profile (place of residence, gender, age): "What would you like to

⁴⁴ The petition was posted on - 12.04.19 http://lanchkhuti.gov.ge/?page_id=712

do first of all at your place of residence (in a village/district)? (Please give maximum three priorities)".⁴⁵

The municipality's website has a "Subscribe to News" section, where a citizen, after indicating his phone or email, can receive news about selected areas: infrastructure and transport, environment and waste management, water supply and sewage, local taxes and duties, etc.

It should be noted that the website does not allow citizens to schedule an appointment.

TRAININGS FOR THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT

The competence of local public servants and their continual training in effective management is of great importance for the quality and effective functioning of services in the municipality. Georgian municipalities actively participate in permanent education programs for local government officials, which are implemented by qualified organizations.⁴⁶

According to the interview with the Head of the HR Department, the significance of this issue is well understood in the municipality. The trainings conducted for the Sakrebulo members, the Mayor's Office and Sakrebulo staff involved 100% of the Sakrebulo members, 70% of the Sakrebulo secretariat staff and 45% of the Mayor's office staff. The trainings were conducted on the following topics: program budgeting, public relations and communication, local self-governance and local development groups.

Despite the declaration of the importance of the educational component for local civil servants, there are no tools or methods for quality management (in terms of personnel knowledge management) in Lanchkhuti municipality, except for the introduction of an electronic document management system. Only a few workshops, trainings are conducted; there is little sharing of reports, internal information between various units and departments.

The representatives of the municipality were able to recall only a few meetings with representatives of other self-government bodies with the aim of exchanging best practices/experience conducted during the past year, which were mainly organized by NGOs.

According to the information obtained from the Head of the Organizational Department, the forms required for the assessment of municipal services have not been developed, although the municipalities have long been given the recommendation to introduce the practices of assessing program impacts.

The monitoring has shown that the municipality has the annual and quarterly plan for con-

45 http://lanchkhuti.gov.ge/?page_id=540

46 Government Resolution #319 of 7 July, 2015<https://bit.ly/3cWlHL6>

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ducting sessions. The sessions are conducted in accordance with the rule of procedure. The announcements about the planned sessions and minutes of the sessions are posted on the website.

According to the monitoring materials, in Lanchkhuti Municipality the timeframes and the form for evaluating the activities of the Mayor's Office departments have been determined.⁴⁷ They include: assessment/monitoring of compliance of the activities of the Mayor's Office with Georgian legislation; control over the compliance with and implementation of the requirements of the legislation, analyzing and preventing the anticipated shortcomings and violations; presenting the recommendations to the Mayor; ensuring the publicity and transparency of the activities of the Mayor's Office; promoting and supporting the operation of public control mechanisms, etc.

Information on the powers of the Internal Audit Service is available on the website.⁴⁸

■ INCLUSIVENESS

Along with monitoring proactively published information on the websites of public institutions, it is no less important to check the services and applications whose main task is to ensure a high degree of involvement of citizens in political life.⁴⁹

It is believed that local democratic governance is based on the participation and involvement of citizens and «bottom-up» initiatives, how well the local self-government can motivate the inclusive groups for local engagement, how actively women and other gender groups participate in local governance.

According to the interview with the Head of the HR Department and the Head of the Sakrebulo Secretariat, the proportion of women in the local self-government staff is quite high: 54% for the Mayor's Office and 78% for the Sakrebulo.

The proportion of female officials in the local self-government (the Mayor, the Deputy Mayor, the Sakrebulo Chairperson, the Deputy Chairperson, Heads of commissions) is 45% for the Mayor's Office and 78% for the Sakrebulo.

The website does not provide gender-segregated data. The “statistics” section, which should contain the information segregated by sex and other socio-demographic characteristics, is empty. The fact that this section does not provide any data indicates the lack of practice of assessing services and implementation of programs by citizens in the municipality.

47 <https://bit.ly/3d0CrRt>

48 <https://bit.ly/2y1zLo5>

49 <https://idfi.ge/public/migrated/uploadedFiles/files>

Are the ethnic minorities living in the municipality guaranteed to receive and release information without difficulty? As it turns out, periodically there is a need for translation services for ethnic minorities, which is provided, but only in the case of prior notification of such a need.

According to the monitoring in the municipality there is a focal point for relations with the vulnerable groups (women, socially disadvantaged, IDPs, **persons with disabilities (with hearing, sight, mobility issues)**). Such a focal point in the Sakrebulo is the Chairperson of the Gender Council; in the Mayor's Office – Specialist of the Social Service Department.

According to the current legislation, municipalities have certain obligations to persons with disabilities: “**The Sakrebulo should take into account the provisions of the law of Georgia on “Social Protection of Persons with Disabilities”.** Paragraph 1 of article 9 of the law states that the municipalities have the obligation to provide conditions for people with disabilities so that they can freely use cultural and entertainment and sports facilities, also provide them with special sports equipment and other needed instruments. In addition, article 11 of the Law instructs Sakrebulos to establish special rules and conditions for the provision of social and household services for persons with disabilities, including food and public goods, utilities and other services.”⁵⁰

At present, ramps are arranged only at the entrance of the ground floor of the administrative building of the municipality. This is where a citizen service center and social services are located, where most visitors come. However, attending meetings of the Sakrebulo and visits to the Mayor/deputies are limited, as Sakrebulo sessions are held on the third floor, and the reception of the Mayor is on the same floor. The building was constructed 40 years ago and it is difficult to reconstruct it now.

The monitoring has revealed the low level of awareness of the representatives of the municipality (the Mayor's Office, Sakrebulo) of the legislation adopted by the State regarding inclusiveness, which includes the Law of Georgia on Social Protection of Persons with Disabilities; with the legislation on labor rights; with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

However, it should be noted that, compared to previous years, the municipality has significantly expanded its efforts to create friendly environment for people with disabilities.

The amendments have been made in the rules of procedure of the Sakrebulo and the regulations of the Mayor's Office to reflect the issues of persons with disabilities in accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.⁵¹

50 <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/30316?publication=9>

51 Sakrebulo Rule of Procedure - http://lanchkhuti.gov.ge/?page_id=495

MONITORING

Lanchkhuti Municipality Sakrebulo adopted a resolution (№24 of April 27, 2018, Lanchkhuti) on the Approval of the Statute of the Council Working on the Issues of Persons with Disabilities in Lanchkhuti Municipality.⁵²

The agenda of the meeting of the Council of Persons with Disabilities in Lanchkhuti Municipality (January 30, 2020) is the latest information on the website of the municipality in this regard. However, the information about this Council, its members and the regulations is not available on the website.

Information on whether there is a normative act/regulation in the municipality regarding involvement of vulnerable groups in the decision-making process at the local level or the provision of public services to them was received from the Head of the Public Relations service, as well as from the Head of the Sakrebulo Secretariat. According to them, there is no such regulation in the municipality. They have no information about whether it is planned to introduce such regulations in the future.

On the website there are sections “Infrastructure services for persons with disabilities”, “Special infrastructure services for children and seniors”, although, no records can be found when entering the relevant search term. The same is true for other services in this section.

Provision of assistance to persons with disabilities, IDPs, single parents, senior citizens, women victims of violence and other vulnerable groups is determined by the rules for issuing social assistance approved by the Sakrebulo.⁵³ It is commendable that various gender groups are integrated into local policy documents and regulations, which gives more legitimacy to the statements about local gender policies.

According to the monitoring there are various councils in the Mayor’s Office and Sakrebulo: Advisory Council, Gender Council, Council of Persons with Disabilities, Council of the Elect are operational in the municipality. Lanchkhuti Sakrebulo of Youth also carries out interesting activities. However, little is posted on the website about the activities of these councils and there is no information at all about the Sakrebulo of Youth.

In the local self-government, and in the Mayor’s Office in particular, there is no focal point for relations with civil organizations/groups. The Head of the Secretariat has this role in the Sakrebulo.

The information about NGOs cannot be found on the website.

According to the monitoring various councils and working groups are created periodically in the municipality. Last year, a working group was set up for the development of the coastline of the village of Grigoleti (Sakrebulo resolution #33).

52 <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/download/4162533/0/ge/pdf>

53 <http://lanchkhuti.gov.ge/?p=5304>

The website provides information on the Gender Equality Council, in particular, the list of members, their job positions, but no contact information is available.

The municipality's gender equality plan is not posted on the municipality's website, which makes the municipality's efforts in the area of local gender policy less visible.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The monitoring identified strengths, successful practices, as well as challenges and weaknesses in the realization of the goals set for self-governments in the process of implementation of Public Administration Reform.

It is essential that the local government does not limit itself to the initiatives coming from the top and proactively and independently promotes principles of good governance locally, the cornerstone of which, according to public administration reform, is e-government. In particular, the launch of a large-scale process of introducing full e-government modules at the local level by 2021 should be met with clear political commitment from local officials and citizens at the local level, as well as appropriate technical infrastructure.

■ TRANSPARENCY

In the case of efficient use of Internet resources, it is possible to simplify bureaucratic procedures, establish direct communication with various groups, share the information and, in general, achieve greater openness of the government. The prerequisite for all these positive developments is the large-scale internetization and mass access to the Internet throughout the country. Otherwise, only a limited number of citizens will be able to use the introduced electronic services. This is a serious challenge for the successful implementation of the reform on the local level.

Another challenge is that a certain number of citizens are still unaware of this particular opportunity for public activity and participation in the political process. In many cases, the information on specific civil initiatives is not properly disseminated.

Active use of electronic resources by citizens is hampered by insufficient Internet access. Citizens show little willingness to cooperate with the local government and offer their own initiatives and suggestions. This is evidenced by the small number of petitions and proposals submitted electronically, little feedback and interaction in social networks.

It can be said that even those who use electronic municipal services, for the most part, are only recipients of information and are less likely to use tools focused on interaction and exchange of information (submitting petitions, proposing ideas).

MONITORING

Recommended: *Internet access should be provided for the population of municipalities. Appropriate informational and educational activities should be carried out, which will help them to use e-services, cooperate and demonstrate their social needs.*

It should be noted that the technical and methodological resources of electronic services in Lanchkhuti Municipality are more or less in line with modern standards. In addition to the capability to receive important information proactively and provide other services, it allows citizens to get more involved through interactive surveys and other methods.

The local government can use these tools to constantly monitor the needs of citizens, ideas and projects proposed by them, already implemented programs and to determine their efficiency; although the challenge is that the citizens and local officials are less aware of methodologies for evaluating the efficiency of municipalities. Assessment of beneficiaries' satisfaction with the programs and the needs assessment of beneficiaries are not conducted, and the programs based on them have not been introduced.

Recommended: *Appropriate forms for identifying the efficiency of service delivery to citizens, mechanisms for identifying needs should be introduced in order to develop programs tailored to the needs of citizens. Material and human resources should be allocated for raising the competencies of the staff in this area.*

The fact that citizens rarely use electronic application forms, less actively initiate petitions and their own ideas, there is a low activity of respondents in supporting petitions, indicates that a certain part of respondents is not aware of this important platform for political dialogue.

Recommended: *Those responsible for improving the electronic services of the municipality should create a system ensuring the higher citizen involvement and more active feedback.*

The practice of disseminating electronic information about vacancies announced in the local government has not implemented in Lanchkhuti municipality. This makes it difficult to evaluate if the principle of non-discrimination by gender or other social categories is respected.

Recommended: *Transparency and openness of the activities of the Sakrebulo as well as the Mayor's Office in terms of announcing vacancies, publicity and observing deadlines should be achieved.*

EFFICIENCY

In the municipality there is a low awareness of the methodology of program/gender budgeting, which is reflected in the budget. (The program objectives and indicators, outputs and outcomes are vague. The links of sub-programs with the objectives and outcomes of the program are weak. The importance of correct indicators, especially gender indicators, in the monitoring is not well understood).

Despite the steps taken, the practice of civil budgeting is not being implemented at the adequate pace. Its use will have several effects: local governance will be implemented more effectively; higher citizen engagement in local governance will be ensured; local policies will become more transparent and they will have more trust and legitimacy.

Recommended: *Program budgeting methodology should be implemented more effectively; awareness of gender budgeting issues should increase and the budgets should become more oriented to local needs; gender indicators should be used during the program monitoring; civil budgeting implementation process should be carried out at a faster pace. The resources of the Gender Equality Council should be used and its efficiency should be promoted.*

The municipality does not have a professional development plan for public servants and the corresponding long-term, medium-term and short-term strategies. Meetings to share best practices are very rare.

Recommended: *A specific professional development plan for public servants should be developed and internal (budget) and external (NGO proposals) resources should be used in this regard. In addition to the topics suggested in the manual for training course design, trainings should be provided in the areas of gender equality, gender and program budgeting, civil budgeting, outsourcing municipal services; also, online courses offered by the various NGOs should be considered. In order to share experience, more communication with the Georgian National Association of Self-Governments should be established; the practice of inter-municipal cooperation on various issues should be introduced.*

The municipality has not developed an anti-corruption plan, regulations, a code of ethics.

Recommended: *The relevant experts should inspect the decisions made locally and develop anti-corruption regulations; a specific plan for monitoring the Mayor's Office departments should be developed.*

MONITORING

In order to promote local involvement it is essential to create equal opportunities for all vulnerable groups. Despite some important steps taken in this direction, creating an adequate environment needed for the protection and development of persons with disabilities still remains a challenge.

Recommended: *Funds should be allocated for equipping the municipality building with ramps.*

INCLUSIVENESS

Despite the fact that the majority of Lanchkhuti municipality public servants are female, women are in the minority among the officials. We can see very little of the positive practice of recruiting persons with disabilities. There is no legislative act adopted that would promote the involvement of vulnerable groups in the decision-making process.

Recommended: *The municipality should implement a non-discriminatory principle of job description and equal payment. A municipal gender equality strategy and action plan should be developed, supported by financial commitments; the Gender Council, Council of Persons with Disabilities, as local equality mechanisms, should be strengthened; measures for persons with disabilities provided for by the law of Georgia on local self-government should be implemented, which include improvement of appropriate infrastructure and creation of opportunities for development.*

In the process of monitoring it was revealed that the citizens' engagement in the budgeting process is very low. Their awareness of the adopted budget is also very low.

Recommended: *Given that the current budget and financial statements are largely difficult to understand for ordinary citizens, it is important to publish them in the form of infographics.*

It is possible to create the so-called «Budget Council» consisting of representatives of civil society organizations and social groups, or conduct focus groups that will help to identify existing trends and needs.

One of the implemented mechanisms of involvement and representation of citizens "the elect of the settlement", whose function is to voice social demands of a certain group of citizens and to act as a "bridge of communication" between citizens and self-government or other public institutions, has been ineffective.

Recommended: The representatives of the self-government should communicate more intensively on specific topics with the “elect of the settlements”. Their activities should be supported and they should be motivated to enhance political dialogue at the local level.

MONITORING REPORT THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REFORM (PAR) IMPLEMENTATION IN LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENTS AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

OZURGETI MUNICIPALITY

Prepared by EMA KAMKIA

Consultant on the Issues of Local Self-Government

The Fund “Sukhumi”

INTRODUCTION

Successful implementation of the Public Administration Reform plays a central role in the process Georgia's integration into the European Union. According to the "Association Agreement between European Union and Georgia"⁵⁴ the country is committed to carrying out fundamental reforms in public governance which should be reflected in the creation of accountable, effective, inclusive, transparent and professional public services and its implementation entered into an active phase in 2015 after the signing of the Association Agreement.

For successful implementation of the reform, the **Public Administration Reform Roadmap 2020** has been developed and with the purpose of its successful implementation the Georgian Government has adopted three national action plans since 2015⁵⁵. **Local self-government reform** is one of the most important components of the reform which aims at promoting the process of decentralization and achieving good governance at the local level. It is noteworthy that the Government of Georgia has unequivocally acknowledged the need to increase the awareness and involvement of civil society in all stages of the implementation of the reform as well as in the process of monitoring and supervision.

The recent PAR action plan for 2019-2020 sets two main goals in the field of self-gov-

⁵⁴ Association Agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States, of the one part, and Georgia, of the other part "Georgia-EU Association Agreement", article 4.

⁵⁵ Publicgovernancereformactionplanfor2019-2020,p.4,availableat:http://gov.ge/files/72422_72422_512614_სამოქმედოგეგმა2019-2020_აღწერილობა.pdf

ernment: a) expansion of the powers of local governments for strengthening self-government; b) step-by-step development and improvement of electronic services in municipalities in order to improve the availability of electronic services in local self-governments.

Step-by-step development and improvement of electronic services is an important component for the empowerment of local self-government which would greatly support citizens in communicating their problems and needs to the local government without additional bureaucratic procedures and would ensure their active involvement at various stages of local policymaking and decision-making.

Nevertheless, the introduction of electronic services is advancing at a very low pace at the local level and the level of inclusion of the population and accountability is very low. According to the unified national assessment of municipalities in Georgia in 2019⁵⁶, the overall e-governance rate of municipalities was 32%, and only 20% of municipal websites had allowed to request public information online.

Introduction of e-governance systems in the regions, especially in remote areas, is significantly hampered by the low-quality internet connection, high costs of internet services, limited access to technical equipment (computers, smartphones, etc.) for a large part of the population, and poor technical skills. Low awareness and involvement of civil society and the population in general in the process of reforms create additional barriers to the process of successful implementation of the public administration reform. Therefore, empowerment of civil society in the regions, initiating political dialogue with their active involvement and their participation in the process of monitoring and controlling the reform process is becoming increasingly important.

THE AIM OF THE MONITORING

With the purpose of promoting the effective implementation of the public administration reform at the local level, the Cultural-Humanitarian Fund “Sukhumi” in partnership with the Fund of Women Entrepreneurs and Imereti Scientists’ Union “Spectri” is implementing a project “A common forum for civil society organizations (CSO) from Guria, Imereti and Racha-Lechkhumi for PAR Roadmap monitoring”, which is funded by EU. The aim of the project is to ensure the involvement of the society and control of the process of monitoring of public administration reform in 8 municipalities of Imereti, Racha-Lechkhumi and Guria by creating and empowerment of West Georgia Civil Society Forum.

The aim of the project is to evaluate the degree of **efficiency, transparency and inclusiveness** of the local government; to identify strengths and weaknesses of e-governance at the local level based on the evidence-based information and findings, to develop and propose relevant recommendations to the local government.

⁵⁶ The Local Self-Government Index "National Assessment of Georgian Municipalities" 2019, available at https://idfi.ge/public/upload/IDFI_2019/General/LSGINDEX_Report_GEO.pdf

THE MONITORING METHODOLOGY

The monitoring was carried out in 8 municipalities of Georgia, in particular, in Khoni, Bagdati, Terjola, Vani, Ozurgeti, Lanchkhuti, Tsageri and Ambrolauri from 27 January to 28 February 2020. The “Civil Society Forum”, established in October 2019 under the project, was actively involved in the process of monitoring and in the target regions it brought together 16 CSOs of various profiles and working on different thematic areas⁵⁷.

The level of the efficiency, transparency and inclusiveness of the local self-government was evaluated by the project partners based on a pre-developed monitoring tool and a questionnaire which combined 32 different evaluation criteria and indicators (see the appendix “Questionnaire”). The process of the reform was assessed through monitoring the municipality official websites as well as by analyzing the public information requested from the representatives of the local self-government and observing the practices of involvement of citizens. Telephone communication with the representatives of the municipal bodies, personal meetings with them and all official online sources containing the information needed for evaluation of specific issues served as additional sources of researching and verifying the information.

THE ANALYSIS OF THE MONITORING RESULTS

This report presents the results of monitoring conducted in Ozurgeti municipality and carried out by NELE Education and Equality Centre with the support of the supervising organization **Imereti Scientists’ Union “Spectri”**.

The project envisages conducting three similar monitorings that will form the basis for developing a local action plan for the successful implementation of public administration reform in the local self-government.

The monitoring indicators were considered according to three main components: Transparency, Efficiency, Inclusiveness

■ TRANSPARENCY

Standards and forms of communication with the citizens in Ozurgeti district are set by the legislation.

Resolution #30 of 4 December, 2019 (registration code 010250000.35.113.016410) provides the list of public information to be published proactively and standards of requesting public information electronically.⁵⁸

57 The information on the Civil Society Forum is available at
<http://csoforum.ge/index.php/ka/about-forum-ka-1>

58 <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/4724129?publication=0>

Information about this resolution became public through the municipality Facebook page⁵⁹, where the Sakrebulo session was also broadcast (in general – Ozurgeti municipality was among the first to introduce live broadcasting of Sakrebulo sessions).

Appendix #2 of the Sakrebulo Resolution #30 provides the list of public information to be published proactively and/or in print by the municipality bodies, institutions and private legal entities financed from the municipal budget and timeframes for publication. It also outlines how the information needs to be updated (“to be updated in case of changes”; “published annually”; “published quarterly”, “within 10 days after adoption by Sakrebulo”, etc.).⁶⁰

The standard of requesting the public information in electronic form is also provided there (appendix #3).

Article 5 of the Resolution sets the procedures and timeframes for releasing information requested electronically.⁶¹

Availability of public information, as one of the indicators of transparency and open governance at the local level, is quite well ensured in the municipality of Ozurgeti. There is a special web-application on the municipality official website which allows citizens to request the information from the Sakrebulo, as well as from the Mayor’s Office. Full information is posted on the persons responsible for processing and proactively publishing public information of the Mayor’s Office and the Sakrebulo⁶². There is a special section on the website where the forms for requesting public information⁶³ and filing administrative complaints⁶⁴ can be found.

The section of public information contains the following: annual report, legislative acts, minutes of sessions, archives, municipal procurement, information on municipality property, municipal programs, priorities, work plans and reports, public services, certificates, petitions, administrative complaints, number of employees, vacancies. All these sections except “administrative complaints” (no information can be found there) contain relevant information.

The section contains an application for project proposals that can be downloaded in Word format and is easy to use. By sending test emails, it was confirmed that the “window” of the municipality website for submitting online complaints or suggestions is active. This section is operational and the citizens can use it freely.

Only the application for old vacancies can be found in the vacancies box in the same section of the website. On the initial stage of the monitoring several websites were reviewed (<http://oz.gov.ge> www.job.ge www.hr.gov.ge). During the monitoring, no new vacancies

59 <https://www.facebook.com/sakrebulo/photos/a.2605104086238440/2605104929571689/?type=3&theater>

60 <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/4724129?publication=0>

61 <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/4724129?publication=0>

62 <http://oz.gov.ge/ge/pages/view/pasukhimgebeli-pirebi>

63 <http://oz.gov.ge/ge/pages/view/sajaro-informaciis-motkhovnis-forma>

64 <http://oz.gov.ge/ge/pages/view/administraciuli-sachiviris-forma>

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announced by the municipality of Ozurgeti Sakrebulo and the Mayor's Office were found. According to the information from the Sakrebulo, when there are vacancies, Ozurgeti municipality Sakrebulo ensures full access to detailed information about them, including posting them on the official website, in accordance with the norms established by the legislation. Work is underway to create a new website with the participation of local NGOs. It is believed that after completing this work the standards of municipal services will be improved. Vacancy announcements will also be uploaded to the new website.

In response to the question whether the deadlines for announcing vacancies are observed, we received an answer that the deadlines are observed in accordance with the requirements established by law.

To achieve transparency in the activities of the municipality, it is important to ensure availability of information about the persons involved in local government by posting on the website the organizational structure of the municipality, contact persons, their phone numbers, email addresses and specific responsibilities. It was revealed that on the official website of the municipality you can find the organizational structure of the municipality, contact persons, phone numbers and emails.⁶⁵

Submitting citizens' online petitions is an established practice in Ozurgeti municipality. There is a relevant resolution **on considering the proposals and draft normative acts submitted through petitions.**⁶⁶ Information on already submitted petitions can be found on the website. You can check at what stage the petition review process is, whether it has been accepted or rejected.⁶⁷ (Two petitions have been accepted). The monitoring has revealed that online financial statements are published on the website, including adopted budget; annual report; budget reports for 3, 6, 9 months;⁶⁸ procurement plan and report.⁶⁹ The municipality website also contains information about the agendas of the Sakrebulo/Mayor's office sessions; the minutes of the sessions, normative acts adopted by the Sakrebulo, resolutions and reports from various departments/units are also posted there.⁷⁰

The monitoring revealed whether the local officials have set the days for open office hours: as it was found each Wednesday is set as a day of open office hours in Ozurgeti municipality Mayor's Office. As for the Sakrebulo, they receive citizens every day. This information is not available on the municipality website.

The hotline telephone +995 577309925 operates in the Mayor's Office and Sakrebulo.

In terms of transparency and citizens' engagement, the participatory budgeting is successfully practiced in Ozurgeti municipality. The unique model of participatory budgeting was introduced by the Municipality. The project entitled "Be a Co-Manager" was first imple-

65 <http://oz.gov.ge/ge/pages/view/gamgeobahttp://oz.gov.ge/ge/pages/view/sakrebulo>

66 <https://www.matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/3868658?publication=0>

67 <http://oz.gov.ge/ge/pages/view/peticiahttp://petition.lsg.ge/ozurgeti/>

68 <http://oz.gov.ge/ge/pages/view/biujeti>

69 <http://oz.gov.ge/ge/pages/view/yoveltsliuri-angarishi>

<http://oz.gov.ge/ge/pages/view/samushao-gegmebi-da-angarishebi>

70 <http://oz.gov.ge/ge/pages/view/gamgeobahttp://oz.gov.ge/ge/pages/view/sakrebulo>

mented last year, it covered the town of Ozurgeti and its budget was 150,000 Laris.

This form of citizen involvement gives the municipality the opportunity to plan part of the budget for the implementation of infrastructure projects, based on the cost of the project and the votes received.

Citizen engagement in the process of local self-government was ensured through the website <http://votes.oz.gov.ge/>⁷¹. Three winners were identified among infrastructure projects, and their implementation has already started.

The share of the participatory budget in the 2020 budget has increased and amounts to 300,000 Laris.

Special video instruction is provided on the website for completing and submitting project proposals online.

In total, 2261 citizens have voted for three winning projects (283, 803 and 1175 respectively). This can be cited as an example of the successful practice of citizen engagement and transparency of local processes.

The monitoring has identified some general information about the social budget. As it turned out, health care and social security are among the budget priorities in Ozurgeti. 15 healthcare projects are operational. The budget for social security and healthcare for 2020 is set at 1,800,000 Laris. The Sakrebulo has adopted a resolution on the rules for the issuance and receipt of social assistance provided for in the 2020 budget⁷².

Gender budget – The Gender Equality Council with very significant experience (one of the first local advisory councils for gender equality piloted by the Fund “Sukhumi” has been operating since 2013) works actively on gender issues with the municipality, among them, the inclusion of gender programs in the budget. 20,000 Laris are allocated for gender projects in the budget of the current year. Funding of vulnerable groups has increased compared to the previous year.

Ozurgeti Municipality in 2015 became the winner of the award of the Parliament of Georgia and the Government of Sweden for the gender budgeting. It is noteworthy that the Ozurgeti municipality was one of the first to include a gender budgeting program in the local budget document, and the corresponding budget line was added to the budget document.

According to the monitoring, the work to develop anti-corruption and financial regulations have already started in the Mayor’s office of Ozurgeti municipality.

Ozurgeti municipality Sakrebulo has adopted “a Strategy for Transparency and Good Faith” and the relevant action plan. The work on developing an anti-corruption plan, regulations and financial regulations is underway with the active involvement of Sakrebulo representatives.⁷³

71 <http://votes.oz.gov.ge/>

72 http://oz.gov.ge/pictures/dadgenileba_2020_1.pdf

73 <https://bit.ly/3aPPYdh>

EFFICIENCY

The monitoring evaluated the efficiency of the local self-government based on several indicators.

According to the law, “**Local self-government is the right and ability of citizens of Georgia residing in a self-government unit to solve local issues through local authorities elected by them.**”⁷⁴

For increased communication with the citizens in Ozurgeti municipality the days of open office hours per month are set in the Mayor’s office and Sakrebulo for meetings with the Mayor, the Deputy Mayor, the Chairperson of the Sakrebulo, the Deputy Chairperson, Sakrebulo members and the department heads.⁷⁵ In 2019 4000 citizens in total received this service.

The information about the days of the open office hours in the Mayor’s Office was posted on the website and the Facebook page in 2017. The meetings with citizens are held every Wednesday, without exception, and the photos of the meetings are posted on the Mayor’s Office website and the Facebook page.

The schedules of receiving citizens by the Ozurgeti municipality Sakrebulo members are available and they are published on the municipality website and information boards in administrative units. Information about the meetings with citizens is posted in advance on the municipality website and Sakrebulo Facebook page “Ozurgeti Municipality Sakrebulo”.

Ozurgeti municipality has determined an average number of days for answering complaints (the issue is regulated by articles 10, 28, 37 and 40 of the General Administrative Code of Georgia). The rules for releasing and receiving public information, requesting the information and filing complaints are established⁷⁶.

The average number of days for receiving the response to a complaint is 3-10 days. The citizen can receive the answer online as well as directly.

By monitoring the website we can view the list of available electronic service including the following sections: requesting public information, annual reports, legislative acts, minutes of sessions, archives, municipal procurement, municipal property, municipal programs, priorities, work plans and reports, public services, certificates, petitions, administrative complaints, number of employees, vacancies.

It is notable that the information about the employees on the website is gender-segregated.

74 *The Organic Law of Georgia on Local Self-Government*
<https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/2244429?publication=46>

75 http://oz.gov.ge/pictures/brzaneba_2020_1.pdf
http://oz.gov.ge/pictures/brzaneba_2020_1_dan.pdf
http://oz.gov.ge/pictures/brzaneba_2020_2.pdf
http://oz.gov.ge/pictures/brzaneba_2020_3.pdf

76 <http://oz.gov.ge/ge/pages/view/sajaro-informaciis-motkhovnis-forma>
<http://oz.gov.ge/ge/pages/view/informaciis-motkhovnis-da-gasachivreibis-tsesi>
<http://oz.gov.ge/ge/pages/view/sajaro>

As existing successful practices suggest, a consistent system of improving the qualification of the staff is essential for ensuring effective self-governance. No plan for the professional development of the staff has been developed in Ozurgeti municipality. However, it should be noted that some work has been carried out to introduce a system of evaluating local public servants.

The practice of identifying needs is being introduced in the municipality: based on the information about social problems received from the administrative units a questionnaire was developed which included the following sections: families that are eligible for social assistance but do not receive any; 5 most vulnerable households; condition of abandoned and faceless buildings in the administrative units. The questionnaire was submitted to the Administration of the State Representative in Guria for appropriate response.

In accordance with Decree #1334 of 11 June 2019 of the Government of Georgia on “Implementing Some Measures for Institutional Capacity Building of Municipalities” and on the basis of the agreement concluded on 16 August, 2019 between the LEPL “Municipal Development Fund of Georgia” (ID no 206074193) and NELE “Municipal Services Development Agency” (ID no 40526877) (hereinafter – the “Agency”), the first stage of the work for reviewing records management and business processes in Ozurgeti municipality was carried out from 16/09/2019 to 15/10/2019 in the framework of the project “United Online Services in the Municipalities of Georgia” which aims at ensuring an effective online records management and quick access to needed documents and tasks by introducing an innovative and refined records management system.

According to the Mayor’s report for 2019, “with the development of technology, citizens are increasingly focused on higher standards of services and are more demanding towards the quality of services; therefore providing services to citizens requires greater responsibility and the application of higher standards of service.”

In 2019 trainings were conducted for the Mayor’s Office and Sakrebulo staff of Ozurgeti Municipality in partnership with the following providers: consultancy company “Cardno” (Cardno Emerging Markets USA, Ltd); Centre for Training and Consultancy (CTC), the Fund “Sukhumi”, etc.

The trainings were conducted in six areas on the following topics: professional communications, events management, financial management, project management, ethics in public institutions, human resources management, strategic planning and management, training of women public officials, new developments in the program budgeting, comprehensive approaches in the development of local budgets, gender analysis and citizens engagement, gender equality issues, evaluating the work of the local self-government and the level of citizens’ engagement, promoting human rights protection at the local level, inclusiveness of the budgeting process.

Trainings are available for all staff without restrictions. 170 persons, or 85% of the staff have participated in the trainings.

In order to carry out the activities of the municipality at a high standard, a system for the

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professional evaluation of civil servants is introduced in coordination with the Public Service Bureau. Several trainings and workshops have been conducted to ensure that evaluation is carried out properly.

The competencies and skills applicable to each employee were determined in accordance with their job descriptions, special forms were developed and provided to each employee electronically.

As part of the monitoring, information was collected on how many meetings have been conducted with other local self-governments for sharing the best practices/experience over the past year. The Mayor's office of Ozurgeti municipality cooperates with neighboring Lanchkhuti and Chokhatauri municipalities. A memorandum of cooperation was signed between Ozurgeti and Zugdidi municipalities which implies multilateral partnership including sharing of experience.

Participants of the monitoring claimed that the innovative mechanisms introduced in Ozurgeti Municipality Sakrebulo and effective steps towards transparency and publicity often set an example for other municipalities, which often becomes the main topic of meetings within the framework of various projects. For example, at the meeting initiated by Ozurgeti for the municipalities involved in the Open Government Partnership (OGP) sharing the practices and experience gained by the municipalities in the process of fulfilling their obligations under the OGP Action Plan was one of the main topics.

Ozurgeti has annual/monthly plans for conducting the Sakrebulo sessions (Resolution #4)⁷⁷. Monitoring revealed that the timeframes are set for monitoring the activities of the departments of the Mayor's Office.

■ INCLUSIVENESS

According to various studies of service provision at the local level, together with monitoring the websites of public institutions for the information published proactively is in no way more important than verifying the availability of the services and applications which aim at ensuring a high rate of citizen involvement in political life.⁷⁸

Persons with disabilities are among the most vulnerable groups in the municipality. According to the information from the Social Service Agency of the Ministry of Social Affairs 4,487 persons with disabilities live in Guria.⁷⁹ The biggest portion – 2,119 persons live in Ozurgeti municipality and the town of Ozurgeti. In order to assess the quality of how the needs of people with disabilities are taken into account, the Mayor's Office and Sakrebulo buildings were inspected at this stage. The building has a ramp at the entrance only. Wheelchair users can only move on the ground floor.

Acting legislation (*The Law of Georgia on Social Protection of Persons with Disabilities*)

77 <http://oz.gov.ge/ge/pages/view/reglamenti>

78 <https://idfi.ge/public/migrated/uploadedFiles/files>

79 source - <http://www.gurianews.com/article/mtavari/sazogadoeba/21345>

ties) obliges self-governments to deal with specific issues of adjustment to the needs of persons with disabilities (articles 9 and 11 of the law).⁸⁰

213,900 Laris are allocated in the social program of the municipality for certain categories of persons with disabilities.

It should be noted that the section “Service of adjusting infrastructure to the needs of persons with disabilities” on the municipality website is empty. This section is a part of a bigger section “Important municipal services” which also contains services for other vulnerable groups, for example, “service of adjusting special infrastructure for the children and seniors”, “Service of providing shelters for homeless”, although no records can be found for the relevant search terms.

Assistance in local social packages for people with disabilities, IDPs, single parents, senior citizens, women victims of violence and other vulnerable groups is determined by the rules of social assistance approved by the Sakrebulo.

A number of councils operate in Ozurgeti Mayor’s Office and Sakrebulo, including the Advisory Board, a Gender Council, Council of the Persons with Disabilities, Council of the Elect, the Youth Council, Youth Gender Council. However, no information can be found about most of them on the website.

The monitoring revealed the proportion of women in Ozurgeti local self-government staff⁸¹. Among the employees of the Mayor’s Office 38% are women and 62% are men; in the Sakrebulo - 45% are women and 55% are men. Gender segregated data for total number of employees as well as for officials can be found on the website: there is one woman among 13 officials of the Mayor’s Office, also among 13 officials of the Sakrebulo only one is a woman.

The website does not contain information on the local NGOs and working groups created in the self-government.

According to the monitoring, translation services are available for non-Georgian speaking citizens of Ozurgeti. Although the municipality cannot offer this service, it cooperates with the Governor’s administration which provides it.

The municipality has a focal point for relations with the vulnerable groups (women, socially disadvantaged, IDPs, persons with disabilities (**with hearing, sight, mobility issues**)). **This is the Head of the Healthcare and Social Service Department. The local self-government, the Mayor’s office as well as the Sakrebulo, has a focal point for relations with civil society organizations.**

Ozurgeti municipality Mayor’s office funds inclusive education programs in pre-school institutions. They also support the implementation of inclusive programs in public and parish schools.

Currently, the municipality does not have a normative act/regulation on the participation of

80 <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/30316?publication=9>

81 <http://oz.gov.ge/ge/pages/view/dasaqmebul-pirta-odenoba>

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vulnerable groups in the decision-making process at the local level or on the provision of public services to them. According to the information from the officials, the work is underway to introduce them.

The Mayor's Office has a consultative body - the Council of Civil Advisors consisting of 17 members. The Council conducts meetings monthly. A Civil Chamber operates in Ozurgeti municipality Sakrebulo.

Special trainings are planned in 2020 for awareness-raising and sharing the best practices on gender budgeting.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The monitoring has identified the situation with implementing the Public Administration Reform in Ozurgeti municipality. **It has identified strengths, successful practices, as well as challenges and weaknesses in the realization of goals set for self-governments in the process of the reform.**

It is obvious that Ozurgeti Municipality has introduced a number of interesting innovations in recent years which is an important step forward in terms of transparency, efficiency and citizen participation in the activities of the municipality. These include the introduction of innovations related to electronic services for citizens, the successful practice of civil budgeting, developing gender programs and their introduction into the budget, which makes Ozurgeti an example of a municipality with a successful practice.

According to Public Administration Reform, e-governance is a cornerstone for promoting the principles of good governance locally. By 2021 a large-scale process of introducing local e-government modules will be launched at the local level which Ozurgeti municipality will meet with clear political commitment from local officials and citizens at the local level as well as appropriate technical infrastructure. Nevertheless, *it is necessary to technically improve the available resources and bring them into line with modern standards (this is especially true for the municipality website which definitely needs modernization).*

■ TRANSPARENCY

The use of electronic resources in the municipality and the piloting of electronic services have simplified many procedures and made it possible to establish direct communication with citizens and various groups. This is evidenced by the electronic voting system for civil budget projects, a large number of online petitions compared to other municipalities, although it is clear that only a small and most active group of citizens uses e-services and it is not accessible to a significant number of citizens. This is a major challenge for the successful implementation of the reform at the local level.

We have to admit that some citizens are still unaware of the specific means of public activity and involvement in the political process. Its importance has also not been fully realized

by some public servants. The feedback and interaction in social networks is also very low.

Recommended: *Internet access in Ozurgeti Municipality should be improved. The appropriate informational and educational activities should be carried out, which will help them to use e-services, cooperate more actively with the self-government.*

The website has some drawbacks, for example the “contacts” section does not function. Many other sections, including the section of available services are empty and the relevant information cannot be found.

The timeframes and forms of monitoring of the Mayor’s Office departments are not visible on the website.

Recommended: *It is advisable for the municipality to design a plan providing the timeframes and forms of monitoring of the Mayor’s office departments and post it on the website.*

EFFICIENCY

There is a fair level of awareness of program budgeting, gender budgeting and civil budgeting in Ozurgeti municipality and the desire to implement them successfully. However, the practice of citizens’ needs assessment, data analysis and evaluation of program results is not developed sufficiently. Therefore, although the innovative approaches to the budgeting process are in place in Ozurgeti municipality, these issues require further improvement.

Recommended: *To improve the practice of program budgeting, it is recommended to introduce some form of measuring the efficiency of the services provided to citizens and evaluating citizen satisfaction, as well as a system of needs assessment in order to obtain materials for justifying the implementation of programs tailored to the citizens’ needs. Gender indicators should be used in the process of development and monitoring programs.*

In Ozurgeti municipality large-scale measures are taken to improve the competencies of local public servants; most of the employees from various departments of the municipality participate in trainings. However, there is no short, medium or long term training strategy; work on a staff development plan has only recently begun. When developing the document it is advisable to take into account the training needs of the staff as well as the recommendations of citizens.

Recommended: *In order to improve the efficiency of the municipality’s activities, it is necessary to develop a specific plan for the development/evaluation of public servants in the municipality. In addition to the topics suggested in the manual for training course design, trainings should be provided in the areas of gender equality, gender and program budgeting, civil budgeting, outsourcing municipal services.*

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It is important to introduce standards of the evaluation system for public servants and to evaluate their performance. If necessary, forms of incentives for public servantsshould be introduced. It is also important to conduct a small study to assess satisfaction with the services provided by public servants, and in this process take into account the opinions and recommendations of citizens.

The Mayor's Office and Sakrebulo cannot provide translation services which is a problem for non-Georgian speakers. This might be perceived as discrimination, affect public trust to the self-government and negatively impact the efficiency of the municipality's work for this group.

Recommended: A way should be found to ensure that this vulnerable group (non-Georgian speakers) is provided with translation services for their communication with the Mayor's Office and the Sakrebulo.

Ozurgeti municipality does not have an anti-corruption plan, although the work in this direction is underway. It is important that citizens see that work is being done in this direction as it will create confidence that anti-corruption measures are given due attention in the municipality, and that the public can observe the process of monitoring the departments of the Mayor's Office.

Recommended: *It is desirable to take into account the positive practices of other municipalities in terms of developing and implementing a “Strategy of Integrity” and its action plan. The group working on this document should be representative which implies increased involvement of various sectors (NGOs, civil sector in general, media) in this process. The plan and results of monitoring of the Mayor’s office’s departments should be visible on the website.*

■ INCLUSIVENESS

Creating equal opportunities for all vulnerable groups is key to promoting local inclusiveness.

Although Ozurgeti was one of the first to pilot a Gender Advisory Council and the municipality received an award as the leader in terms of gender policies, it should be recognized that for some of the local public servants the importance of budgeting based on gender equality and needs is a mere declaration and they do not fully appreciate it's necessity. The Gender EqualityCouncil does not effectively participate in developing local policies. The work of other councils, such as the advisory board, the civil council, etc., is not duly represented on the website.

Recommended: The Gender Equality Council as a mechanism for gender equality should be strengthened and used as the voice of public demand and a bridge of

social communication with citizens. In practice, various working groups should be established under the auspices of the Council and initiatives should be developed for more effective and efficient local policy implementation. The information about the work of the Advisory Board, Civil Council and Gender Council should be published through the municipality website and social networks and the working plans of these councils should be available.

Despite the declared policies and a number of measures taken regarding social protection and assistance to vulnerable groups (especially people with disabilities), providing opportunities for the protection and development of people with disabilities is still a problem. The municipality has not yet developed its own vision of inclusiveness in accordance with the state legislation. There is no normative act/regulation on the participation of vulnerable groups in the decision-making process and the provision of public services to them.

Recommended: *The municipality should develop a specific plan and vision for the involvement of vulnerable groups in the decision-making process. Funds should be allocated to equip the municipality and other social infrastructure facilities with ramps.*

“Civil Budget Project” which is successfully implemented in the municipality provides a double opportunity for different groups of citizens: to submit a project and vote for the preferred project. This is the best example of involvement and participation, although more inclusiveness can be achieved.

Recommended: *Alongside with large-scale projects, the focus should be on smaller projects that do not require large expenditures, but can have significant social consequences and will be tailored to the needs of many citizens. The gender indicators should be taken into account in developing and evaluating projects. The share of men and women in the process of developing and approving projects and its impact on the living conditions of women and men should be monitored.*

APPENDIX

THE MONITORING MECHANISM (QUESTIONNAIRE) FOR PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REFORM ROADMAP MONITORING IN TARGET MUNICIPALITIES

Transparency	How will the monitoring be conducted/ what documents have to be analyzed	Basic indicators	Monitoring Results/ Indicators
1. Are vacancy announcements available online?	Analyzing the following websites: -www.hr.gov.ge -The Municipality Website -www.jobs.ge	-----	Yes/No If not available, an interview may be conducted to find out the reasons for this and clarify how vacancies are announced
2. Are vacancy announcement deadlines observed?	Analyzing the following documents: - The Ordinance of the Government of Georgia on the “Procedure for Conducting Competitions in Public Service” -Staffing standards/rules in the municipality (if available)	10 days	Yes/No
3. Does the municipality website provide information about organizational structure including the contact persons, their telephone numbers, emails and their tasks and responsibilities?	Analyzing the municipality website	-----	Yes/No If not, an interview should be conducted to clarify how a citizen can communicate with the contact persons

4. Is there a mechanism/form for online submission of complaints or proposals?	Analyzing the municipality website	-----	Yes/No If not, an interview should be conducted to clarify why this mechanism is not available.
5. Are the financial statements published online? Adopted budget? Budget reports for 3, 6, 9 months and annual report? Procurement plan and report	Analyzing the municipality website	-----	Yes/No; The Date of the last report; If not, an interview should be conducted to clarify where citizens can find these reports, for example, on TV, radio, in newspapers, etc.
6. Does the municipality website include public information, for example, the biographies of officials, the agendas of the Sakrebulo / Mayor's Office meetings, normative acts adopted by the Sakrebulo, decrees, reports from various departments?	Analyzing the municipality website	-----	Yes/No The date of the last update
7. Do the following officials have fixed open office hours for receiving and consulting citizens? the Mayor, Deputy Mayor Sakrebulo Chairperson Deputy Sakrebulo Chairperson, Sakrebulo members, heads of departments If yes, is this information published on the municipality website?	1. Analyzing the municipality website 2. Calling the municipality hotline	-----	Yes/No Frequency: How many days per week? How many hours?

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8. Do the municipalities have: Participatory budget? Social budget? Gender budget	1. Interviewing a representative of the Mayor's Office (Finance Department) 2. Analyzing the municipality website	-----	Yes/No Yes/No Yes/No The date of the last budget Proportion of participatory /gender / social budget in total budget (%)
9. Are anti-corruption measures implemented in the municipality? Are the following documents available on the website? Anti-corruption plans; Anti-corruption regulations; Financial regulations; A code of ethical conduct.	Interviewing representatives of the self-government	-----	Yes/No Yes/No When was it last updated?

Efficiency	How will the monitoring be conducted/ what documents have to be analyzed	Basic indicators	Monitoring Results/ Indicators
1. Number of days per month for open office hours in the Mayor's Office and Sakrebulo for the Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Sakrebulo Chairperson, Deputy Sakrebulo Chairperson, Sakrebulo members, heads of departments	Interviewing Public Relations Department representatives of the Mayor's Office and Sakrebulo Scheduling an appointment with an official in the capacity of a regular citizen	Number of planned days	Actual number of days
2. Average number of days for answering complaints	Interviewing the Mayor's Office and/or Sakrebulo representatives Submitting a complaint from a citizen	10 days	Actual number of days

<p>3. Number of services available electronically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - submitting letters; - petitions; - complaints; - scheduling meetings, -receiving replies, etc. 	<p>Analyzing the municipality website Interviewing the self-government's Public Relations Department representative</p>	-----	<p>Number of electronic services provided</p>
<p>4. Do the municipalities have a professional development plan for the staff?</p>	<p>Analyzing the municipality website Interviewing a representative of the self-government 's Human Resources Management Department</p>	-----	<p>Yes/No</p>
<p>5. Number of trainings conducted for the representatives of local self-government, including the Sakrebulo members, the Sakrebulo and the Mayor's Office staff (total and over the past year) and what were the topics of the trainings</p>	<p>Interviewing a representative of the Self-government's Human Resources Management Department</p>	-----	<p>1.Total number of trainings 2. Number of trainings over the last year</p>
<p>6. Percentage of the local self-government representatives who have participated in trainings (total and over the past year)</p>	<p>Interviewing a representative of the Self-government's Human Resources Management Department</p>	-----	<p>1.Percentage of training participants in total 2. Percentage of training participants over the last year</p>
<p>7. Does the local self-government use any tools and techniques, such as: trainings, workshops, exchange of information between various departments for ensuring the quality of its activities (for example, for managing competencies)?</p>	<p>Interviewing a representative of the Self-government's Human Resources Management Department</p>	-----	<p>Yes/No If yes, which tools and techniques are used: regular meetings, exchange of information between various departments, trainings?</p>

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8. Have the forms for evaluating municipality services been developed?	Interviewing the municipality representative	-----	Yes/No
9. How many meetings were conducted over the last year with representatives of other self-governments to share best practices/ experience?	Interviewing a representative of the Self-government's Human Resources Management Department	-----	Number of meetings conducted
10. Is there an annual/ monthly plan for conducting Sakrebulo sessions?	Analyzing the information on the municipality website Interviewing a municipality representative	-----	Yes/No
11. Are the timeframes and forms for monitoring the activities of the departments of the Mayor's Office determined?	Interviewing the municipality representative	-----	Yes/No

Inclusiveness	How will the monitoring be conducted/ what documents have to be analyzed	Basic indicators	Monitoring Results/ Indicators
1. Are the Mayor's Office/ Sakrebulo buildings equipped with ramps	Inspection		Yes/No
2. Are the municipality vacancy announcements non-discriminatory	Analyzing the vacancy announcements		Number of restrictions for the applicants (for example, by age, sex, status, etc.)
3.What is the percentage of women employed in the local self-governance staff	Interviewing a representative of the Self-government's Human Resources Management Department		%

4. What is the percentage of women working in senior positions in local self-government (Mayors, Deputy Mayors, Sakrebulo Chairpersons, Heads of commissions)	Interviewing a representative of the Self-government's Human Resources Management Department		%
5. Is the translation service available for non-Georgian speakers?	Interviewing the Self-government's Public Relations Department representative		Yes/No
6. Does the municipality have a focal point for relations with vulnerable groups: -women -socially disadvantaged -IDPs -persons with disabilities (with hearing, sight, mobility issues).	Interviewing the Self-government's Public Relations Department representative		Yes/No
7. Are the representatives of the municipality (the Mayor's Office, Sakrebulo) aware of the legislation adopted by the State regarding inclusiveness? Are they familiar with The Law of Georgia on Social Protection of Persons with Disabilities; legislation on labor rights; Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities	Interviewing a municipality representative		Yes/No If yes, please list the documents and programs

8. Does the municipality have a normative act/regulation on the involvement of vulnerable groups in the decision-making process at the local level or on the provision of public services to them? If not, is it planned to implement/promote such an approach?	Interviewing a municipality representative		Yes/No If yes, please list of documents and programs
9. Is gender budgeting practiced at the local level? Are they aware of its functioning?	Interviewing the local Self-government's Finance Department representative		Yes/No
10. Does the municipality have a focal point for cooperation with civil society organizations/working groups?	Interviewing the Self-government's Public Relations Department representative		Yes/No
11. It should be clarified who is appointed as a focal point for cooperation with civil society organizations.	To be clarified in the interview		The Mayor, Vice-Mayor, Deputies, etc.
12. Do - an advisory board, - a gender council, - other councils and working groups operate in the Mayor's Office and Sakrebulo?	Interviewing a representative of Human Resources Management Department		Yes/No Yes/No Yes/No

MEETING IN VANI MUNICIPALITY



MEETING IN AMBROLAURI MUNICIPALITY



MEETING IN TERJOLA MUNICIPALITY



MEETING IN TSAGERI MUNICIPALITY



MEETING IN BAGDATI MUNICIPALITY



MEETING IN LANCHKHUTI MUNICIPALITY



MEETING IN KHONI MUNICIPALITY



MEETING IN OZURGETI MUNICIPALITY



VANI MUNICIPALITY



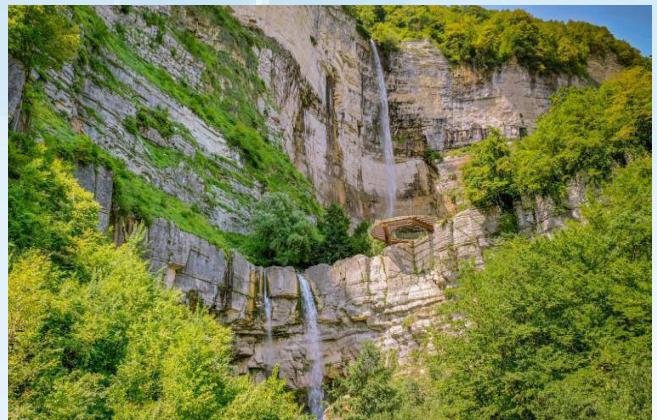
TERJOLA MUNICIPALITY



BAGDATI MUNICIPALITY



KHONI MUNICIPALITY



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