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

REPORT No 4

2021

CSO FORUM MEETINGS AND TRAININGS

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

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VANI, TERJOLA, BAGDATI, KHONI AMBROLAURI, TSAGERI, LANCHKHUTI, OZURGETI

2021

C O N T E N T S

PROGRESS ASSESSMENT OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REFORM (PAR) IMPLEMENTATION IN LOCAL SELF - GOVERNMENTS

THE FOURTH MONITORING CONSOLIDATED REPORT

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1. INTRODUCTION

Proper and effective governance promotes and strengthens the building of a democratic state. The policy documents, strategies and development plans elaborated by the government determine the governance efficiency. According to the democratic and good governance principles, the inclusiveness of civil society and various actors in the decision-making process made by government and regarding public policy is crucial.

The inclusiveness of civil society in policy planning and implementation is considered one of the fundamental elements of democratic governance. In addition, public involvement increases trust in the political system and the government legitimacy.

Civil monitoring is one of the most powerful tools providing civil society participation in public policy implementation. The central part of the activities of non-governmental organizations is either aimed at monitoring a particular field or includes a monitoring component.

Successful implementation of Public Administration Reform (PAR) plays a fundamental role in Georgia's integration into the EU. Under the "Georgia-EU Association Agreement", the country must implement in-depth public administration and public service reforms.

The PAR Plan foresees two main objectives regarding the local government:

- **Strengthening of local governments by increasing their power;**

- **Gradual development and improvement of electronic services in municipalities to improve their accessibility in local self-governments.**

An essential component of strengthening local self-government is the gradual development and improvement of e-services in municipalities. The reform action plan for 2019-2020 responds to this issue.

Civil society must be involved more actively to ensure local governance transparency, accountability and inclusiveness and effectively implement PAR at the local level.

To contribute to the proper implementation of PAR at the local level, as well as, transparent, efficient, accountable and inclusive local administration, **Cultural-Humanitarian Fund "Sukhumi"** with "Fund of Women Entrepreneurs" and Imereti Scientists` Union "Spectri" is implementing the project - "A common forum for CSOs from Guria, Imereti and Racha-Lechkhumi for PAR Roadmap monitoring".

The project aims at actively involving the civil society organizations (CSO) from eight municipalities of Imereti, Racha-Lechkhumi and Guria in the monitoring process of PAR implementation at the local self-governments **through creation and strengthening of CSO Forum ("Forum").**

Eight inter-sectoral **"working groups"** have been set up in all the target municipalities to **strengthen the local coordination and cooperation** between CSOs and the structural units of local self-government in the process of PAR and analyse the shortcomings identified as a result of the monitoring and ensure the efficiency of the response. The working group is the first coordination mechanism created to promote the proper implementation of PAR in the target municipalities. It involves the representatives (10-12 people in total) of the local authorities, CSOs (including "Forum" members), media and vulnerable groups (persons with disabilities, single women, women victims of violence, IDPs, families with many children, etc.). Its activities and functions have been set forth by the relevant provision and approved by the municipalities. "Working groups" have elaborated the local action plans currently considered, adopted and approved by all the City Councils of target municipalities. It will contribute to improving the e-government system at the local level. Detailed advocacy strategies have been developed to address the existing problems. As a result of the active advocacy campaign conducted by the working groups and their efforts, several gaps and problems identified during the monitoring have been addressed and solved.

2. MONITORING AIM AND METHODOLOGY

The fourth monitoring aims to assess the progress in implementing recommendations to address the gaps identified through the first and subsequent monitoring sessions; to identify challenges regarding the transparency, efficiency and inclusiveness of the local self-government electronic services and elaborate new recommendations to improve the deficiencies.

The monitoring was conducted in July 2021 in 8 municipalities of Georgia, including Khoni, Bagdati, Terjola, Vani, Ozurgeti, Lanchkhuti, Tsageri and Ambrolauri municipalities, by 16 NGOs consolidated in the "CSO forum".

The level of efficiency, transparency and inclusiveness of local government work has been studied according to the monitoring mechanism and the questionnaire elaborated by the project partners. It implied 29 different criteria and assessment indicators. The PAR implementation assessment has been carried out based on the monitoring of the official websites of municipalities and the analysis of the information requested from the local authority representatives, and the observation of the citizens' participation practices on grounds. In addition, telephone communication, private meetings, and official online sources have been used to retrieve and verify the information.

MONITORING IMPLEMENTATION METHODS:

- Study of the municipality official website;

- Analysis of legislation regulating monitoring issues, normative acts and regulations of municipalities;

- Requesting public information;

- Sending test e-mails, telephone communication and meetings with the representatives of the municipality relevant services - to verify and fill in the information;

- Observing issues on the local political agenda.

The monitoring has revealed visible progress regarding the implementation of public administration reform in the municipalities. **In addition, the CSO Forum monitoring** contributed to making local political processes noticeably transparent and effective, increasing the level of citizen participation.

3. MONITORING FINDINGS - PROGRESS AND GAP ASSESSMENT

3.1. TRANSPARENCY

The local self-government transparency has been assessed based on the following indicators and parameters:

- Transparency of the vacancy announcement process in the municipalities;

- Accessibility of the organizational structure of City Council and City Hall, and CVs or contact information of the public servants on the municipality websites;

- Accessibility of the public information on City Council and City Hall sessions and meetings, reports and minutes of specific departments, normative acts adopted by the City Council, approved budgets on the websites;

- Availability of information on days of reception and consultation with citizens by the public servants;

- Availability of an anti-corruption strategy and plan at the local level and the public servants' ethics code.

During the present monitoring process, the quality of local authorities' responses to the shortcomings identified during the previous monitoring and the changes made have been studied.

➤ PUBLICITY AND TERMS OF VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

The monitoring has revealed the terms and conditions for posting vacancies in most municipalities (Bagdati, Terjola, Vani, Khoni, Tsageri, Ambrolauri, Lanchkhuti and Ozurgeti), are observed.

Based on the information received from the monitoring, it is evident that the basic standards in terms of transparency in Bagdati municipality are observed. **All the terms set by the legislation are observed:** placement, selection, appeal, interview stage, nomination and appointment of a candidate by the commission. All procedures are completed within three months after the vacancy announcement.

A website has been launched in Khoni Municipality. **The municipality has a rule of proactively publishing information**. However, there is no public information about

vacancies on the website and Facebook pages, as they do not have vacancies at the given moment.

According to the monitoring, the practice of online vacancies provided for by the legislation has been introduced in Terjola Municipality. In case of vacancies, access to information and openness is observed. No new vacancy has been announced in the City Council in the last four months. As for the City Hall, a vacancy has been announced for the tourism department head.

The monitoring conducted in Terjola Municipality revealed that the website http://terjola. gov.ge/ had been officially suspended since June 17. A new website https://terjolanews. ge/ was created with the funding of Fund "Sukhumi" and with the participation of the City Hall. According to the provided information, work is underway to activate the website in test mode, and all public information will be uploaded in stages. In Vani and Ambrolauri municipalities, the uploading of public information has been significantly improved after the previous monitoring recommendations and the active inclusiveness of the Working Group. Deficiencies have been eliminated in Ambrolauri, and the vacancy field has been added. The Facebook page is actively working, where all the current news is permanently spread. In both municipalities, all rules regarding vacancy terms are observed. For more visibility and publicity, the ads are uploaded on the municipality website.

The fourth monitoring reveals that online announcements for vacancies are available in Tsageri Municipality. However, we found out that only two vacancies were announced during the year. In this regard, the municipality is guided by the document "Resolution on the competition rules".

According to the monitoring materials, vacancies in Lanchkhuti and Ozurgeti municipalities are published within the timeframe set by the Civil Service Law, and information about them can also be obtained electronically. However, vacancies in Lanchkhuti have not been announced since 2020.

➤ PUBLICITY OF THE CVS AND CONTACT INFORMATION OF LOCAL PUBLIC OFFICIALS

Recent monitoring reveals that the recommendations made during the first monitoring and the active work of the working groups have significantly improved the **uploading and retrieval of information on the websites of Baghdati, Vani and Ambrolauri municipalities**. **Organizational structure, CVs and contact information (telephone**

numbers and e-mail addresses) of officials are available on every municipality website. Citizens can contact the municipality representatives via e-mail and phone. These shortcomings were eliminated based on the recommendations developed after the first monitoring. **This trend is fully maintained, and there is no need to fill in additional information.**

Through the monitoring in Khoni, it was revealed that *information about the City Hall officials and heads of services* is represented in detail on the website. However, the information is not complete regarding the City Council.

According to the responsible persons in Terjola, a new website is being launched, and all the necessary documents will be fully uploaded soon.

Based on the information found on the websites **of Tsageri, Lanchkhuti and Ozurgeti, the situation in terms of indicating the organizational structure, contact information of officials (telephone numbers, e-mail), their CVs and duties, is satisfactory.**

The innovative portal www.lcman.ge, introduced by the local civil society organizations in Lanchkhuti Municipality, also works smoothly. One can visit the website from the official municipality website (www.lanchkhuti.gov.ge).

It should be noted that the application has been expanded. In addition to council members, one can contact the mayor, deputy mayor, heads of departments and services, representatives of the mayor and receive answers. The platform shows the number of received letters, their addressees, how much correspondence was unread and by whom.

CITIZEN RECEPTION/OPEN CONSULTATION DAYS

The monitoring has revealed that in Bagdati, Khoni and Vani municipalities, the availability of dates, agendas, minutes and various normative acts of the City Council and City Hall sessions has significantly increased since the first monitoring. All shortcomings have been corrected following the recommendations. All kinds of information are posted on the website and are available to citizens. Working groups in all municipalities are actively cooperating to maintain progress with the self-government.

As a result of the monitoring, it was revealed that the City Council had not published information about the reception/open consultation hours on the Khoni Municipality website. However, according to the City Council office, a draft order has been prepared.

Today, due to working group activeness, all officials in Vani Municipality have set the days and hours of reception/consultation.

Unfortunately, the situation remains unchanged during the fourth monitoring in Ambrolauri. Therefore, the time for receiving citizens is not posted on the website.

The conditions for receiving and consulting citizens in Tsageri Municipality are still limited due to the Covid situation. Therefore, citizen reception hours are not posted on the website. However, during the previous monitoring, the days of reception and consultation (every day from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.) with the City Council head, deputies and the apparatus head were set as a result of the "working group" work. Therefore, it is posted at their rooms` entrances. As for the deputies, meetings are planned and organized in their communities.

All issues have been resolved in Lanchkhuti and Ozurgeti municipalities. It is noteworthy that the Ozurgeti Municipality City Council annually approves the schedule of reception and meeting between citizens and City Council members, which is published on the municipality's website (see the link) http://ozurgeti.mun.gov.ge/?p=3035 Due to pandemics, the population also communicates with officials online. For example, the City Council member›s report is broadcast live, which allows him to communicate with the voters. The recordings are uploaded in the video archive of the functional "Press Center".

➤ PUBLISHING OFFICIAL DOCUMENTATION

At the beginning of the project, it was revealed that there was no practice of uploading interim reports in Bagdati Municipality, which was followed by relevant recommendations. Through the active cooperation of the working group members, this shortcoming was gradually corrected. The same happened in Ambrolauri municipality. Progress is maintained in both municipalities: **financial reports, approved budget, 3, 6, 9-month budget execution reports, annual report, procurement plan and reports are systematically published on the website.** Comprehensive information about the budget is also represented in the local print media "Chveni Gazeti" (Our Newspaper), a source of information for citizens of a particular category. There are also 3, 6, 9-month and annual budget execution reports.

Unfortunately, the websites of Khoni and Terjola municipalities have shortcomings. **For example, financial reports, 3, 6, 9-month budget execution reports, annual reports and procurement plans have not been uploaded yet**. However, during the interview, the heads of the administrative services of City Hall and City Council explained that the process had started and all the information would be posted in stages.

The primary source of information on local processes is the newspaper "Terjola", which constantly provides citizens with information on the current situation through print and electronic platforms. At the same time, the public receives information from the Facebook page of the City Council and information boards. It is also possible to contact the mayor's representatives in communities and villages from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Similarly, the website of Vani Municipality is updated. With the "Working Group" 's active inclusiveness" **in the 2021 budget, money has been invested in updating the website. It will fill this gap, and all types of reports will be uploaded**.

The page has already been updated, and procurement plans and procurement reports are currently being uploaded. With the active inclusiveness of the "working group", all public information was provided and will be uploaded in the coming days.

In Lanchkhuti and Ozurgeti municipalities, positive dynamics are maintained. All public information is published following the norms and deadlines provided by law. In Ozurgeti, the "visual budget", one of the transparency tools, was not properly functioning on the site during the third monitoring. However, the data is specified, the test information is uploaded to the database, and the function is working.

ANTI-CORRUPTION MEASURES OF THE SELF-GOVERNMENT

One of the essential indicators of transparency is the **anti-corruption plans and anti-corruption regulations, the code of ethics**, which the municipalities of Bagdati, Vani and Tsageri did not have during the first monitoring.

Today, a positive result is observed in all three municipalities. In particular, through the active work of the "working groups", the municipalities have developed and approved a code of ethics and published it on official websites.

Tsageri City Hall is actively cooperating with the organization, and an anti-corruption plan will be prepared as soon as possible.

The monitoring revealed that Khoni Municipality had not adopted anti-corruption measures, plans and regulations. It does not have financial regulations as well. There is no provision for ethical conduct. The municipality is governed by the country's anti-corruption measures and legislation and general financial regulations. However, there is a positive dynamic: **the commitment made by the municipality at the initiative of the project working group and included in one of the crucial paragraphs in the action plan is the development of an anti-corruption plan**. According to the received information, the issue should be initiated and supported politically this year.

In Terjola municipality, **work is progressing slowly regarding introducing anti-corruption measures and regulations. However, the issue became the subject of active discussion, and the e-Services Development Action Plan 2020-2021 has been developed at the initiative of the working group to facilitate the implementation of the Public Administration Reform Action Plan. In addition, the** provision on ethical conduct has been adopted in the municipality and is prominently posted on information boards.

Following the first monitoring recommendation in Ambrolauri Municipality, **an anti-corruption council was established. An anti-corruption plan was prepared, which has already been submitted to the City Council for consideration**. **Once approved, they will start its implementation.** A draft version of the code of ethics was also developed by the working group members, which was also submitted to the municipality. Consultations and discussions are underway and will soon be approved by the City Council, which will be an essential step forward in improving the quality of transparency for Ambrolauri Municipality.

According to previous monitoring materials, there were no anti-corruption documents in Lanchkhuti Municipality. However, progress is observed in this regard, and **the City Hall anti-corruption have been developed, which must be approved shortly**.

Ozurgeti is one of the first municipalities to adopt an anti-corruption document Ozurgeti Municipality **Strategy for Transparency and Integrity and an Action Plan**. A strategy monitoring frame and assessment methodology have been developed in collaboration with international organizations. The working meeting of the members of the Anti-Corruption Council is broadcast online, and citizens have the opportunity to monitor their activities. Progress in this regard is visible.

3.2. EFFICIENCY

The level of efficiency of self-governments was assessed based on the following indicators and parameters: availability of the e-service (i.e. whether a citizen has an opportunity to submit proposals, complaints and petitions, register appointment and frequency of the responses to their written requests); availability of the assessment mechanism of the services provided by the municipality; monitoring of the activities undertaken by the City Hall (whether there are any forms and terms for monitoring); whether needs of the local officials' qualification are assessed and whether the municipality has an appropriate professional development plan elaborated and adopted based on the results of the assessment.

LEVEL OF RESPONSES TO THE COMPLAINTS AND LETTERS OF CITIZENS

The monitoring reveals that in all municipalities, the deadlines for responding to citizens' letters are observed.

In Bagdati, Vani and Khoni municipalities, statistics on letters and complaints received from citizens are kept and submitted to the City Council as an annual report. Unanswered and overdue correspondence is also analyzed. This practice was introduced as a result of the **second monitoring** recommendation. There is some novelty. The relevant fields have been added to the municipalities' websites. The statistics on the request and issuance of public information are recorded.

A petition window has been added to the Khoni Municipality website, where 21 completed and two ongoing petitions have already been registered. In Vani municipality, **in 2021, 310 letters were received via "e Dokument" and 894 letters through MMS**. Compared to the previous figures, data indicate an increase in the citizens` activeness.

The study of the practice of responding to citizens' letters, complaints and feedbacks by the Terjola Municipality has shown that a citizen's application, complaint and letter is answered within the timeframe set by law. However, incoming letters are not analyzed, and reports are not prepared. Also, statistics on citizens' letters and complaints are not produced.

In Ambrolauri Municipality, the project "Improving the Accountability and Transparency of Ambrolauri Municipality and City Council through Modern Technologies" has allowed the population to easily and quickly access public information at any time and register for events online, ask questions and get prompt answers from local authorities.

According to the Tsageri City Hall Citizens' Community Center, the City Council received 95 letters answered within ten days, while the City Hall received 47 letters. Unfortunately, the electronic registration of the mentioned is not carried out.

In Lanchkhuti, the positive practice of **responding to citizens' letters and complaints on time** revealed during the recent monitoring continues. **In terms of data accounting, the statistics of citizens› letters/complaints in the City Council are carried out automatically through the City Council program** www.lcman.ge.

Ozurgeti Monitoring materials show that the practice of online communication with citizens is maintained. Live broadcast of meetings, submission of reports allows interactive communication. It should be noted that the Ozurgeti Municipality City Council does not register complaints. However, according to the received information, it is planned to create a register for referrals. The situation in this regard has not changed.

➤ MECHANISMS FOR MONITORING AND EVALUATING THE SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE MUNICIPALITY

The monitoring reveals that there is a practice of monitoring in all municipalities (Bagdati, Khoni, Terjola, Vani, Tsageri, Ambrolauri, Lanchkhuti and Ozurgeti) City Hall activities, carried out by the City Hall Internal Audit Service on time. In addition, the work rendered by each service is heard and analyzed at the City Council sessions.

However, the lack of an additional monitoring system remains a shortcoming everywhere. Therefore, although the municipalities were given the relevant recommendations, **no significant changes have been made so far except for exceptions.**

Besides, **there is no practice of assessing the population's satisfaction with municipal services.** Therefore, no particular forms have been developed for it. However, after updating the municipalities› website, work is underway to conduct online surveys to assess the population›s satisfaction with municipal services.

In this regard, a particular form for assessing the population's satisfaction with social services has been created in **Bagdati Municipality**. Citizens can complete it, and it is desirable to introduce similar practices in other municipality services.

The assessment of public satisfaction with the municipal services and the introduction of the necessary forms for evaluation are outlined in the Strategy for Increasing Transparency and Good Faith of Khoni Municipality for 2019-2022, where the monitoring and evaluation mechanisms and forms are clearly described.

In Terjola municipality, there is a practice of monitoring the activities of the City

Hall services. Therefore, the monitoring timeframe and relevant forms are identified.

Monitoring in Terjola has revealed that after citizens evaluated services and identified their needs, new programs tailored to the needs of vulnerable groups emerged in the local budget.

An interview conducted by the Ambrolauri Monitoring Group confirms that the mid-term assessment of employees takes place in June and at the end of the year. As for the heads of services, their activities are assessed by the mayor. It is regulated by the forms developed by the Civil Service Bureau and carried out by an ordinance of the City Council.

At this stage of the monitoring, we found out that the Lanchkhuti Information Center has developed and conducted a survey on the population's satisfaction with municipal services. The results were provided to the City Hall. In addition, commissioned by the City Hall Georgian Rural Council conducts a study of the population's satisfaction with social programs. **It should be noted that this practice was introduced after considering the previous monitoring recommendation.**

Ozurgeti Municipality has introduced **assessment of population`s satisfaction with services**. The implementation of this activity started within the framework of the Open Governance Partnership Action Plan.

➤ CAPACITY BUILDING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF SELF-GOVERNMENT PUBLIC OFFICIALS

The monitoring revealed that the professional development of public servants was facilitated by the commitment to invest 1% of the salary fund in training and dramatically increased the number of trainings conducted for self-government representatives.

Professional development plans for civil servants have been approved in almost all municipalities. These plans outline how each officer should develop, identify their preferred topics, vocational training methods, necessary resources, timelines, and expected outcomes.

To raise the public servants' qualifications, municipalities actively use the resources of various NGOs (e.g. trainings offered by them). **Also, as a result of the first monitoring recommendation, exchanging information is introduced in the municipalities, not only between different departments but also between municipalities in the region. It** is mainly done by organizing joint meetings. **Also, within the project, sharing experiences between municipalities of different regions have been introduced.**

Compulsory basic training provided by the professional development program was procured for seven municipal officials in Bagdati at the current stage. In addition, three officers begin to study the mandatory management program. After the previous monitoring, 23 trainings have been conducted in the municipality for City Hall and City Council employees. Thus, 17% of the total number of officials have been trained. Furthermore, the municipality has recently introduced a new teaching practice, "Mentoring". For a certain period, new employees are mentored by experienced staff members responsible for providing essential information to them.

During the monitoring, up to 15 trainings were conducted in Khoni Municipality for the leaders and employees of the City Hall and City Council. Most of them were held online. From January 2021 until today, up to 20 City Hall and City Council employees have participated in the trainings - 28%. However, the monitoring has revealed that the number of training participants during the pandemics significantly reduced.

Terjola City Hall has an assessment methodology provided by the Civil Service Bureau, which allows identifying the qualifications of employees and the existing challenges.

There is a staff development plan for **Vani** Municipality. However, due to the pandemic, the municipality 2021 budget did not provide funds for trainings. As for the professional trainings for the self-government representatives, 11 public servants of the City Hall and five public servants of the City Council have passed online trainings organized by non-governmental organizations since the beginning of 2021. The percentage of local self-government representatives participating in the trainings before this period comprised 30%. **However, the rate is growing, which indicates positive dynamics**.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic in Ambrolauri Municipality, trainings and attendance have decreased compared to the previous monitoring. To exchange information with local self-governments, share best practices/experiences, within the project, a debate was held on the topic: "Results achieved in Ambrolauri Municipality, sharing successful examples with other municipalities", where Ambrolauri Municipality representatives were allowed to get acquainted with the practice of Khoni Municipality in drafting the petition, as well as Tsageri Municipality shared information on the adoption of the Code of Ethics.

A total of 10 trainings have been conducted in Tsageri Municipality during the last four months. To share best practices/experiences, Tsageri Municipality participated in a meeting where successful practices of Tbilisi City Council were shared. Furthermore, the official delegation of Tsageri Municipality and City Council and representatives of local civil society visited Estonia to share the experience of the local government. With-

in the framework of the project, debates were also held on the topic: "Results achieved in Tsageri Municipality, sharing successful examples with other municipalities", where representatives of Tsageri Municipality were allowed to get acquainted with the practice of Khoni Municipality in drafting the petition, as well as the example of Tskaltubo Municipality regarding civil budgeting.

Seven trainings have been held for the Lanchkhuti local self-government representatives and three trainings for officials. The training was conducted by the Audit Institute and funded by the municipality.

In Ozurgeti, ten trainings have been conducted for the City Council members and five training sessions for the City Council staff. In total, more than 30 online meetings and trainings have been conducted.

3.3. INCLUSIVENESS/PARTICIPATION

Citizens` participation and inclusiveness in the local policy-making process is a cornerstone of self-government. The main principle of open and good governance is a cooperation between citizens and local government, frequency of communication, participation of different segments of society in identifying local policies and programs when all vulnerable groups (women, youth, people with disabilities) have equal opportunities, any vulnerable groups are involved in the process. Their views have a tangible impact on local politics.

During the present monitoring, inclusiveness was assessed based on the following indicators: provision of standards of inclusiveness in self-governments; active participation of citizens in the elaboration of the municipal budgets and programs, and the existence of the regulations providing participation; implementation of social and gender budgets in municipalities; using the mechanisms of inclusiveness by citizens (submission of petition/complaint, sending letters), the functioning of the local gender equality and civil advisory councils, and the councils of persons with disabilities.

➤ PRESERVING THE STANDARDS OF INCLUSIVENESS

The monitoring reveals that most municipal buildings have outdoor ramps, although the interior space has not been adapted.

Public servants in all municipalities have information on inclusiveness standards set by the state. The monitoring has revealed that there is a council of persons with dis-

abilities in all municipalities approved by the relevant regulations. The council will increase the knowledge of the municipality representatives on the issues of inclusiveness.

The monitoring showed that no vacancy announcements of the municipalities contained any discriminatory restrictions.

Public officials provided for in the municipal staff list, and contracted persons are in charge of communication with vulnerable groups in municipalities. Therefore, they communicate with the groups within their responsibilities.

Following the recommendation developed after the first monitoring in Bagdati Municipality, the Social Service started periodically studying vulnerable groups' needs. Needs assessment reports are also submitted to the municipal council.

The monitoring reveals that **there is no need for translator services for non-Georgian speakers in any of the municipalities. Consequently, none of the municipalities has an interpreter on the staff. However, they note that if necessary, the staff can provide services to a non-Georgian citizen.**

In Khoni municipality, innovations are being introduced in the self-government to improve the social protection of people with disabilities. They adopted a strategic document and an action plan to improve the conditions of persons with disabilities. **The City Hall building has also been adapted, and people with disabilities can use the citizens' reception space**. This positive change was achieved through the working group efforts set up within the project.

An official person is appointed in the municipality to deal with vulnerable groups. In addition, there is a citizens' reception space in the City Hall where a person with appropriate competence communicates and consults vulnerable groups.

The monitoring revealed that the lists of vulnerable groups in Terjola Municipality are updated once a year - in November, before adopting next year's budget. Their needs are studied in the case of referrals.

There is no practice of conducting needs in Ambrolauri municipality so far.

In Lanchkhuti municipality, a service centre on the ground floor has become available for people with disabilities**. Besides, there is a person responsible for communication with vulnerable groups:** in City Council, the issue is supervised by the Gender Council; and at the City Hall by a social service specialist. The study of the specific needs of the beneficiaries of vulnerable groups by the social service is also a novelty.

There is news in Ozurgeti municipality as well. Under the City Council decision, an article has been included in the budget envisaging the optimal adaptation of the building for

people with disabilities. The municipality also **has a person in charge of communication with vulnerable groups** at the City Council and the City Hall. In addition, the practice of studying the needs of vulnerable groups is being introduced in the municipality.

➤ LEVEL OF USE OF EXISTING CITIZEN PARTICIPATION MECHANISMS

Significant progress has been made in this regard since the first monitoring in all municipalities. Work is underway in Bagdati Municipality to improve the website. Various functional windows are being added to it. **An online petition has been added to the Khoni website.** Besides, by the mayor's decision, the 1% margin of the petition has been reduced to 0.5%. 21 completed, and two ongoing petitions have already been registered. **Similar news is being introduced on the websites of Terjola and Vani.** There is also a novelty in **Ambrolauri municipality**. An electronic manager has been created within the framework of the Fund "Sukhumi" grant. Citizens can directly contact the City Council and the City Hall employees through it. A "Create Petition" window has been added to the **Tsageri Municipality** website. There are also electronic application forms (application form, complaint form). The field "Your Idea to the Mayor" will be added to the website of **Bagdati Municipality**, which will allow citizens to submit ideas reflecting their needs online.

The monitoring reveals that in all municipalities (Bagdati, Vani, Khoni, Tsageri, Ambrolauri, Terjola, Lanchuti and Ozurgeti), there are **Civil Advisory Council, Gender Council, Council of Persons with Disabilities and Council on Social Matters**, contributing to a high level of inclusiveness in the activities of municipalities. In addition, recent monitoring has shown that **Youth Councils** have been added to these councils.

The Council of Persons with Disabilities statute has been updated in **Khoni Municipality,** and the selection process of its members is underway. The working group created within the project is also active. The social budget is quite large and accounts for 15% of the total budget.

After the previous monitoring, the activities of the Terjola Municipality Mayor deliberative body - the Civil Advisory Council was resumed, and its new statute was approved. The City Hall also has several working groups: financial, infrastructural and working groups promoting PAR implementation.

On May 10, 2021, under the order of the Terjola Municipality mayor, the Civil Budget Council was established, and its activities were outlined. In addition, the action plan of the Council of Persons with Disabilities was also approved.

During the last monitoring in **Vani Municipality**, the City Hall deliberative body, the

Civil Advisory Council, was established. Thus, there is a "working group" in the municipality. As a result, the City Council approves its action plan**, and the format of its work today is a guarantee of effective, transparent and inclusive governance of the municipality.**

Mayor's Civil Advisory Council, a Gender Equality Council and several working groups, operate in Lanchkhuti Municipality. Compared to the previous monitoring, there is progress - a **Youth Advisory Council** has been established in the City Hall. In addition, a working group is actively working to support the implementation of Public Administration Reform in Ozurgeti Municipality.

GENDER COMPOSITION OF MUNICIPALITY STAFF

The monitoring reveals that most municipalities do not have statistics on the gender distribution of employees on the website. **For example, similar statistics can currently be found only on the websites of Vani Municipality.** However, at this stage, the websites of Bagdati, Vani, Tsageri, Ambrolauri municipalities are being updated, and it is planned to upload gender statistics.

As for the gender distribution of employees in the municipalities, no significant changes have been identified.

The first monitoring report revealed that the advertisements of the municipalities about the vacancies did not contain any discriminatory approaches.

In Bagdati municipality, 68% of the employees in the City Council are men, whereas, in the City Hall, it comprises 60%. And **the percentage of women in leadership positions is distributed as follows**: 31% of female employees in the City Hall hold leadership positions. And 33.33% of women work in a leadership position in the City Council.

63% of the staff are women in Khoni municipality. 52% of them work in **leadership positions**.

32% of employees in Terjola Municipality are women. The number of women employed in Vani self-government is 33%. The percentage of women in leading positions in the City Hall is 18.2%, while the percentage in such positions in the City Council is 11.7%.

The percentage of women employed in Ambrolauri is 40%. Leading positions are staffed mainly by men, although it should be noted that the chair of one commission is a woman.

Gender statistics are available on **the Tsageri Municipality** website**.** The indicator

has not changed since the first report. It comprises 10% in the City Council and 11% in the City Hall.

Also, the **percentage of women employed** in Lanchkhuti municipality has not changed. It is 54% in the City Hall and 78% in the City Council. **The percentage of women in leading positions** in local self-government is also the same: City Hall - 54%; City Council - 20%.

According to the monitoring results in Ozurgeti, the total percentage of women employed in local self-government is 83%. In addition, the monitoring revealed that the percentage of women in leadership positions in local self-government has increased by 5% compared to previous monitoring.

➤ REFLECTING THE SPECIFIC NEEDS OF VULNERABLE GROUPS IN MUNICIPAL BUDGET

The monitoring reveals that no normative act regulates citizens` participation in any of the municipalities. However, all of them have a social budget. There is also a person in charge of civil society relations everywhere.

Bagdati municipality does not have a gender budget. However, expenses in terms of gender are broken down into different sub-programs. The municipality does not have a civil budget. No changes have been made in this regard yet. The social budget share will be 7.3% of the total budget in 2021.

Regarding the inclusiveness of vulnerable groups in the decision-making process in Bagdati, we found out that only the relevant acts of the Council of Persons with Disabilities and the Gender Equality Council established in the municipality regulate it. Therefore, it serves to strengthen the interest of relevant groups. Furthermore, the website improvement project envisages online streaming of City Council and Commission meetings to increase citizens' participation. It would be the best mechanism in this regard.

The Mayor adviser cooperates with civil society organizations in Bagdati Municipality. The practice in this direction has already been introduced, and the cooperation process is underway **in Terjola municipality.** However, **the participatory budget has already been introduced and amounts to 50 000 GEL, which is 3% of the total budget.** The social budget is 1 034 000 GEL, which is 8.3% of the total budget. The head of City Council staff provides communication with interest groups in Terjola. As for the City Hall, the Gender Equality Council representative and the City Hall public relations specialist share this function.

Vani Municipality does not have a participatory (civil) budget yet. However, the municipality has a social budget, which is 9.2% of the total budget.

Ambrolauri Municipality with the National Association of Local Self-Government of Georgia is currently working on a gender budget. There is a window "Plan your budget" on the municipality website where citizens can voice their initiatives.

The partner organization in Tsageri Municipality is implementing an information campaign on participatory and gender budgeting issues within the project. They cooperate with the municipality representatives and relevant services in this direction. Trainings have been conducted, and boxes for ideas have been placed in public spaces, where citizens can put their ideas.

Lanchkhuti municipality also has a social, participatory and gender budget. The share of the gender budget is 0.049% (5000 GEL) of the total budget. Participatory budgeting comprises 0.569% (69900 GEL), and social programs - 5.49% (625500 GEL). The gender equality program reflected as a separate program in the budget can be considered progress. The flexible system of participatory budgeting allows people to submit, discuss and vote for ideas electronically. See. https://idealanchkhuti.ge/ .

In Ozurgeti municipality, it is possible to submit an electronic petition, and there is a register of petitions. In 2021, two petitions have been filed and submitted to the City Hall for a response. In addition, there is an opportunity to submit letters and complaints electronically. The positive dynamics of civic budgeting - "Be a co-manager" is maintained. The program is still distinguished by the citizens` inclusiveness. https://votes. oz.gov.ge/ All the submitted projects can be found on the website, and the criteria for participation are easily explained.

1639000 GEL has been allocated in **the Ozurgeti Municipality** budget to implement social and healthcare programs, and it is distributed to 16 different programs. In addition, the monitoring reveals that the municipal budget includes a gender budget, and 300000 GEL is allocated for civil budgeting.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The monitoring carried out by the CSO Forum can be summarized as follows:

TRANSPARENCY

The publicity and deadlines for announcing the vacancy are maintained in all municipalities. Improvements have been made in Ozurgeti. Access to public information in all municipalities has significantly improved since the first monitoring. There-

fore, CVs and contact information of local government officials have been made public. The new online application "Lanchkhuti Municipality City Council Electronic Manager" in Lanchkhuti Municipality and introducing similar practices in Ambrolauri Municipality are worth mentioning.

The monitoring has revealed that in Bagdati, Khoni and Vani municipalities, the availability of dates, agendas, protocols and various normative acts of City Council and City Hall sessions has increased significantly since the first monitoring. All types of deficiencies in this regard have been improved in following the indicated recommendations.

The lack of anti-corruption documents in the self-government was particularly problematic. However, strengthening this direction with the active participation of working groups needs particular emphasis.

EFFICIENCY

In all municipalities, complaints and letters submitted by citizens are promptly responded to. Besides, in most municipalities, incoming letters and complaints are analyzed.

At the beginning of the project, it was revealed that there was no practice of uploading interim reports in Bagdati Municipality, which was followed by relevant recommendations. With the active cooperation of the working group members, this shortcoming was gradually improved. The same happened in Ambrolauri municipality. **As a result, progress is maintained in both municipalities. Financial reports, approved budget, 3, 6, 9-month budget execution reports, annual reports, procurement plans and reports are systematically published on the website.**

With the "working group" 's active inclusiveness", in the 2021 budget, money was allocated to update the Vani Municipality website. It will fill this gap, and all types of reports will be uploaded.

One of the essential transparency indicators is the anti-corruption plans and anti-corruption regulations, the code of ethics, which the municipalities of Bagdati, Vani and Tsageri did not have during the first monitoring. Today, there is a positive result in all three municipalities. In particular, through the active work of the "working groups", the municipalities have developed and approved a code of ethics and published it on official websites.

INCLUSIVENESS

At this stage of the monitoring, we found out that the Lanchkhuti Information Center has developed and conducted a survey on the population's satisfaction with municipal services. The results were provided to the City Hall. **Also, "Georgian Rural Council", commissioned by the City Hall, conducts a study on the level of population's satisfaction with social programs. It should be noted that this practice was introduced after taking into account the previous monitoring recommendation**.

Besides, as a result of the first monitoring recommendation, exchanging information is introduced in the municipalities` departments and between different municipalities in the region. However, it is mainly done through organizing joint meetings. **Therefore, the project also introduced the practice of sharing experiences between municipalities in different regions.**

Following the recommendation developed after the first monitoring in Bagdati Municipality, the Social Service started a systematic study of the needs of vulnerable groups.

In Khoni municipality, innovations are being introduced in the self-government to improve the social protection of people with disabilities. They adopted a strategic document and an action plan to improve the conditions of persons with disabilities. **The City Hall building has also been adapted, and people with disabilities can use the citizens' reception today.**

Significant progress has been made since the first monitoring. **Work is underway in Bagdati Municipality to improve the website, adding various functional windows.** An online petition field has been added to the **Khoni** website, and by the mayor›s decision, the petition 1% threshold has been reduced to 0.5%. 21 completed, and two ongoing petitions have already been registered. Similar **news is being introduced on Terjola and Vani websites.** There is also **a novelty in Ambrolauri municipality. An electronic manager has been created within the framework of the Fund "Sukhumi" grant. Citizens can directly contact the City Council and the City Hall employees through it**. The "Create a Petition" window has been added to the **Tsageri Municipality** website, and there are also electronic application forms (application and complaint form). The field "Your Idea to the Mayor" will be added to the **Bagdati Municipality** website, which will allow citizens to submit ideas reflecting their needs online.

In conclusion, through the active advocacy campaign and efforts of **CSO Forum member organization**s and **working groups**, significant progress has been made in self-government regarding transparency, efficiency and inclusiveness.

However, at the same time, some challenges need to be followed by the work of the working groups set up in the municipalities within the project and to support their activities.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT:

TRANSPARENCY

- To improve the municipality transparency, it is necessary to use the website resources and appoint the persons responsible for monitoring the implementation of the rules of proactive publication of information; timely post all necessary information, analyze the quality and volume of electronic services and hear the report on the website work in the City Hall and the City Council;

- It is desirable to systematically report on the ongoing processes in the municipality and post the relevant reports on the municipality websites;

- It is necessary to introduce a unified electronic case management system, which will improve internal communication, as well as the municipality communication with external actors;

- It is necessary to mobilize more resources (financial and human) to improve the website functioning and share successful practices;

- It is essential to popularize the e-petition and motivate citizens for local initiatives;

- I It is advisable to continue sharing experiences between internal structures and different municipalities started within the project.

EFFICIENCY

- It is desirable to introduce a flexible system for assessing the population`s satisfaction and to improve municipal services based on the survey results;

- It is desirable to continue working on gender budgeting in each municipality;

- It is essential to continue the practice of participatory budgeting and share existing experiences with other municipalities;

- It is recommended to have a monitoring system in the municipality. It is also essential for the municipality to establish a mechanism for assessing municipal services, which will simplify the process of measuring the effectiveness of municipal activities;

■ It is desirable to increase inclusiveness and introduce/popularize successful practices.

INCLUSIVENESS

■ It is desirable to continue adapting municipal spaces to persons with disabilities;

■ It is essential to intensify the work of the councils established in the municipalities and promote the sharing of their information to share best practices.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT:
TRANSPARENCY

■ It is desirable to develop appropriate standards to increase the transparency of municipalities in the implementation of the decentralization strategy and to provide relevant resources to the municipality, to strengthen the awareness and skills of employees through both material and educational programs;

■ It is advisable to popularize the Transparency Index of municipalities and to evaluate and encourage municipalities through it.

EFFICIENCY

■ It is desirable to set a minimum standard for municipal services and set it by law;

■ It is advisable to introduce the production of local statistics in the municipalities and strengthen the relevant material and human resources;

■ It is desirable to encourage the introduction of municipal service monitoring and assessment systems, develop appropriate training programs, and train municipal public servants.

INCLUSIVENESS

■ It is desirable to prepare training courses on inclusiveness in municipalities and train municipal public servants through them; As well as share relevant material and financial resources with the municipalities;

■ It is advisable to analyze the practice of participatory budgeting, establish experience sharing between municipalities and legislate it.

VANI MUNICIPALITY

THE FOURTH REPORT OF THE
PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION
REFORM (PAR)
ROADMAP MONITORING
AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

➢ INTRODUCTION

The report represents the results of the fourth monitoring carried out within the project "A Common Forum for CSOs from Guria, Imereti and Racha-Lechkhumi for PAR Roadmap Monitoring". The dynamics of the current changes in the e-governance improvement process from the first to the last monitoring in Vani Municipality and the necessary activities to respond to the existing challenges are also represented.

The fourth monitoring in Vani Municipality was conducted in July 2021 by the organizations "Tanadgoma 2020" and Citizens' Activism for Effective Governance and Justice.

MONITORING AIM

To support Public Administration Reform at the local level, Cultural-Humanitarian Fund "Sukhumi", in partnership with Fund of Women Entrepreneurs and the Imereti Scientists' Union Spectri, with the financial support of the European Union, is implementing the "A Common Forum for CSOs from Guria, Imereti and Racha-Lechkhumi for PAR Roadmap Monitoring". The project aims to ensure public control and inclusiveness in the monitoring of Public Administration Reform in 8 municipalities of Imereti, Racha-Lechkhumi and Guria by creating and strengthening the Civil Society Forum of Western Georgia.

We could assess the changes addressing the challenges identified in terms of efficiency, transparency and inclusiveness in the municipality and develop new recommendations to increase the dynamism rate through the fourth monitoring.

MONITORING METHODOLOGY

The monitoring was carried out in 8 municipalities of Georgia, namely in Khoni, Bagdati, Terjola, Vani, Ozurgeti, Lanchkhuti, Tsageri and Ambrolauri municipalities on July 5-12, 2021. In addition, the Civil Society Forum established in October 2019 within the framework of the project was actively involved in the monitoring process, which consolidated 16 public organizations working in different profiles and different thematic areas in the target regions.

The quality of local government efficiency, transparency and inclusiveness was assessed based on a monitoring mechanism and a pre-designed questionnaire devel-

oped by the project partners, combining 29 different evaluation criteria and indicators (see Annex # 1, Questionnaire). The progress of the reform was assessed based on monitoring the official websites of the municipalities, as well as the analysis of public information requested from local government officials and observation of citizens` participation practices on the ground. Additional means of finding and verifying information were telephone communication with municipal officials, personal meetings, and official online sources containing the information necessary to evaluate a particular issue.

ANALYSIS OF THE OBTAINED RESULTS

➢ TRANSPARENCY

An indicator of the municipality's activities transparency is: the transparency of the ongoing processes in the municipality in terms of announcing vacancies; receiving applications; involving citizens; whether the website contains the organizational structure and contact information of public servants; whether there is an online petition or proposal submission mechanism; whether municipal reports, approved budget, financial reports are uploaded and at what intervals? The information collected on these issues highlights the transparency of the municipality work. Eliminating minor shortcomings identified in the monitoring process, which will eventually be reflected in the recommendations, will help strengthen the transparency process in the self-government.

Transparency requires compliance with relevant standards for vacancies posted on the website. According to the previous monitoring materials, no shortcomings were observed in Vani municipality in this regard. It should be noted that all the rules regarding the vacancy deadlines are observed. The relevant indicator confirms it. For more visibility and publicity, the ads are uploaded on the municipality website. The order is also placed on the City Hall information board regarding internal, open, and closed competition.

As for the last monitoring, during the reporting period, a competition was held for three vacancies in the City Hall, namely: senior specialist of the third category of the administrative structure of the primary structural unit and the second structural unit, case management and public relations department; head of children's rights protection and support, child protection inspector. The competition for this vacancy was held for the second time since the first competition was declared cancelled. Besides, there were vacancies for the second category of junior specialist of the Spatial Planning, Infrastructure and Architecture Service, Infrastructure Department, which were announced based on order #20 157 of February 24, 2021, of the Municipality Mayor (https://vani.

gov.ge/brdzanebebi/). On the other hand, there was no vacancy in the City Council and no competition was held.

The municipality's website organizational structure has been thoroughly revised. According to the recommendation, the contact persons` CVs were posted, including their telephone numbers, e-mail addresses, and duties after the first monitoring. At this stage, the website is being modernized - all data is being re-uploaded. The "working group" is actively involved in this process to maintain the existing positive trend. The website modernizing will be completed in the coming days.

The municipality's website is being updated. Previously, due to the old website's inadequate capacity, only the budget was uploaded. The positive trend is evident. With the active inclusiveness of the "working group" in the 2021 budget, money has been invested in updating the website. Consequently, it will fill this gap and perfectly accommodate all types of reports. The page has been upgraded, and procurement plans and procurement reports are currently being uploaded. With the active inclusiveness of the working group, all public information was provided for publication on the website, and in the coming days, the budget, execution reports, procurement plans and reports of City Hall and City Council members will be uploaded according to the deadlines set by law - at the following link https://vani.gov.ge/angarishebi-gatseuli-samushaos-shesakheb/

Advocating for the recommendations of previous monitoring shows progress in setting the open consultation days and hours for citizens. The reception hours were set only for the municipality mayor. As a result of the "working group" activity, today days and hours of reception/consultation are set for all officials. Both the City Hall and the City Council have adopted administrative-legal acts and set the reception hours, which can be seen at the following link https://vani.gov.ge/normatiuli-baza/

One of the essential indicators of transparency is the anti-corruption plans and anti-corruption regulations, the Code of Ethics, which the municipality did not have during the first monitoring. However, as a result of the active work of the "working group", a regulation was developed, and the Code of Ethics for Professional Public Servants of the Municipality Local Self-Government was approved by Decree No. 27 of February 10, 2021. of the Vani Municipality City Council https://vani.gov.ge/normatiuli-baza/. Adoption of this document is a step forward for the municipality in terms of transparency and openness. At this stage, the "working group" continues to work on developing anti-corruption regulations and anti-corruption plan, which is included in the group's working plan.

➤ **EFFICIENCY**

Identifying the effectiveness of the municipality work is one of the main central segments of the monitoring. Therefore, based on the collected information, it is clear what changes are observed in Vani municipality from the first monitoring until today, what positive trends are identified, whether online forms of communication with citizens are available and what needs to be improved.

According to the information obtained through the monitoring, the City Council has developed a working plan for the second quarter of 2021. It has already been approved and uploaded on the municipality website. Thus, progress is visible, as these plans existed but were not uploaded on the appropriate field. Furthermore, annual working plans of the City Council commissions were also approved at the City Council Bureau sitting, and information is uploaded on the website **(https://vani.gov.ge/sakrebulos-samushao-gegma/).**

An adequately set up monitoring system is the effectiveness indicator. However, despite the "working group" active work, it stays a challenge at this stage. They say that it is reasoned by insufficient skills for monitoring and lack of funds to invite specialists. There are forms of monitoring in Vani Municipality at this stage, although this monitoring is not systematic and fragmented. **There is a practice of monitoring the activities of the City Hall services, which is carried out by the City Hall Internal Audit Service promptly.** In addition, the work rendered by each service is reported and analyzed at the City Council sessions. Monitoring is carried out with relevant conclusions, which is done according to the City Council working plan. The assessment of professional public servants in the municipality is carried out following the rule approved by order #20 67 of the Municipality Mayor of February 2, 2021, on the "Approval of the Rule of Assessment of the Professional Public Servant of Vani Municipality". Representatives of partner civil society organizations submitted a proposal to the City Hall and the City Council to develop new forms of monitoring and implement them under modern requirements.

Through the monitoring results, we can see that there is no municipal services or population's satisfaction assessment practice in the municipality. The necessary forms for assessment have not been developed as well. However, work is already underway to conduct an online survey to assess the population's satisfaction with municipal services following the updating of the municipality's website.

At the beginning of the project, the number of open consultation days for citizens in the City Hall and City Council was not set. However, it can be considered progress since

the reception days with the mayor, deputy mayors, City Council chairperson, deputy chairperson, and commission chairpersons have been set by administrative-legal acts. Therefore, the number of days for every senior official is one day a week, four days a month.

The monitoring has also revealed that citizens' letters and complaints are answered following the General Administrative Code and set deadlines. **In 2021, 310 letters have been received in the municipality via "e Dokument" and 894 letters through MMS.** It is pretty high compared to the previous figure and indicates an increase in the citizens` activity. As for the response time, it depends on the complexity of the request made in the letter. According to the complexity and the necessary time, the citizens will be sent interim answers that an investigation is underway. The positive change is that after the "working group" reference, the letters are analyzed according to the requirements. Then, the case management department prepares the statistics of the complaints and the reports.

The issue of professional training of staff is a direct duty of the self-government. The monitoring has revealed that the municipal employee development plan is based on the employee assessment results. However, unfortunately, due to the pandemic, money for trainings was not provided for and invested in the municipality 2021 budget. Therefore, the partner local organizations suggested to the Municipality City Hall Financial-Budget Service that the 2022 budget must include the amount prescribed by law for the trainings.

As for the professional trainings for the self-government representatives, from the beginning of 2021 till today, 11 public servants of the City Hall and five public servants of the City Council have attended online trainings.

The percentage of local self-government representatives participating in the trainings before this period was 30%. **Thus, the rate is growing, which indicates positive dynamics.**

The monitoring confirms that the practice of reporting and exchanging information between the various departments, established after the lobbying of the second monitoring recommendations, remains a priority for the municipality.

Regarding the practice of sharing experiences with other municipalities, it was found out that separate meetings are not planned *to improve the quality of activities and deepen knowledge*. It mainly happens during meetings in the governor's office and has been held only twice this year. There is a need to introduce similar practices at the municipal level, facilitating the sharing of best practices between municipalities.

➢ INCLUSIVENESS

This block includes information on *how well inclusiveness is observed in the municipality*, whether there are ramps in City Hall/City Council buildings, and the percentage of women employed in local self-government positions.

The *issue of ramps* is only partially solved in Vani Municipality. The ramp is arranged only at the entrance of the City Hall/City Council building. Due to the building reconstruction, movement is problematic. Therefore, there are no changes in this direction.

The monitoring reveals that public officials in Vani Municipality are aware of inclusiveness and act following the legislation adopted by the state. There is a Council of Persons with Disabilities, approved by the Mayor's order #20 800 of July 21, 2020.

During the monitoring, we observed whether the municipality vacancy announcements uploaded on the website https://vani.gov.ge/ are non-discriminatory. However, there are no discriminatory restrictions when assessing the text.

Is maintaining gender balance a priority for the municipality? What is the percentage of women employed in local self-government? Meetings with a human resources department representative were used to get information on this issue. Based on the received information, it is confirmed that the number of women employed in self-government is 33%.

Progress compared to previous monitoring is minimal. For example, the number of women employed in local self-government was 31%, indicating no rules have been introduced to identify the number of women employed in local self-government. Gender statistics will be available after the website modernization is completed.

Regarding the percentage of women in leadership positions in local self-government, through the monitoring, we received the following data: the percentage of women in leadership positions in the City Hall is 18.2% - 2 (11), and in the City Council, they comprise 11.7% - 2 (17). Unfortunately, statistics are not available at this time due to the website update process.

According to the monitoring results, the situation has not changed regarding *the maintenance of adapted infrastructure* for people with disabilities, particularly the arrangement of ramps. This issue is only partially resolved in Vani Municipality, which means that a ramp is located at the City Hall/City Council building entrance. As for the persons responsible for communication with vulnerable groups (women, socially

vulnerable, persons with disabilities), there is no specific person in the municipality. However, the Gender Equality Council and the Council of Persons with Disabilities have been established in the municipality. There are persons responsible for gender and social issues in the City Hall and the City Council.

Therefore, the problems of specific vulnerable groups are responded through this mechanism. However, the study of the needs of specific vulnerable groups is not carried out in the municipality. Therefore, no progress has been made regarding this issue.

Through the monitoring, we found out that the existing electronic services are being improved to ensure the citizens` participation and inclusiveness. Namely, after the website modernization, citizens will be able to sign petitions online. The page will also have an online Q&A mode. A novelty is introduced. The website will have a window "Plan a budget", through which the population will be able to vote for the desired programs during the budget drafting. The changes have already started and, consequently, the results on the service usage statistics will be available next year.

During the monitoring, we found that there is no need for an interpreter service in the municipality, as people of other nationalities, ethnic groups do not live there.

The monitoring results confirm that there was a Gender Equality Council in the municipality during the first monitoring. Besides, under the Vani Municipality Mayor order #20 800 of July 21, 2020, a council working on the issues of persons with disabilities was established. Recent monitoring shows that positive dynamics are progressive. During the last monitoring, the City Hall deliberative body, the Civil Advisory Council, was established under Order #20 556. Thus, there is a "working group" in the municipality **whose action plan is approved by the City Council. The format of its work today guarantees effective, transparent and inclusive governance of the municipality.**

According to the fourth monitoring, **Vani Municipality nor does it have a gender budget and a participatory (civil) budget**. Therefore, there is no percentage of these budgets. However, the municipality has a social budget, which comprises 9.2% of the total budget. Therefore, it is essential to take appropriate steps in this regard. ***Positive changes are observed in this direction.*** The "working group" is working to eliminate this shortcoming. Specifically, the Group Action Plan lists exchange meetings in the municipalities that have implemented these budgets.

Existing monitoring has shown that, ***although inclusiveness is a priority for the***

municipality, there is no normative act that would formally confirm the possibility of involving vulnerable groups in the decision-making process at the local level. As a result of the "working group" activity in the municipality, the process of modernizing the website envisages adding the function of online broadcasting the City Council and commissions` meetings, which will be the best mechanism in this regard. In addition, the "working group" has actively worked with the Mayor's representatives to ensure that vulnerable groups are included in their administrative units in the process of identifying priorities in ongoing rural support programs. The monitoring reveals that a contact person has been appointed in the municipality to deal with civil society organizations and working groups: Sophiko Gvinianidze from the City Council (Senior Specialist of Human Resources Management and Case Management of the first category third rank of Vani Municipality City Council) and Kristina Putkaradze from the City Hall (a person employed under a labour contract, a PR assistant).

➢ CONCLUSION

The monitoring conducted by the target civil society organizations in Vani Municipality under the leadership of the Fund "Sukhumi" revealed the progress achieved in implementing PAR.

During the monitoring period, some progress was made in ensuring the transparency, efficiency and inclusiveness of self-government activities, largely the result of the systematic work of the "working group" established in the municipality and is based on cooperation and coordination with self-government representatives.

Many of the shortcomings on the website have been improved following the previous monitoring recommendations. However, the most important achievement for Vani Municipality is developing a code of ethics, which the City Council approved during the monitoring period. In addition, the allocation of funds in the budget for the municipality website modernization should also be considered an achievement.

To address the existing shortcomings, new recommendations have been developed for the municipality, including setting up a monitoring system, introducing gender and participatory budgeting, and establishing other components for the formation of effective municipal governance.

➢ RECOMMENDATIONS

■ *To reflect the population's needs in the budget, the municipality should develop the necessary assessment forms, which will reveal the level of population's satisfaction with municipal services;*

■ *It is advisable to introduce a monitoring system, develop an appropriate form of monitoring the activities of City Hall services, which will increase the level of accountability and transparency;*

■ *The issue of staff professional training should be reconsidered, which is a direct duty of the self-government. The 2022 budget must include funds for training prescribed by law;*

■ *The municipality should develop an anti-corruption plan to improve the level of transparency and openness;*

■ *It is advisable to train public servants and raise their qualification regarding gender budgeting, which will contribute changes in this direction;*

■ *It is desirable to prepare the ground for introducing civil budgeting, which should include cooperation with the civil sector and equipping staff with relevant skills.*

TERJOLA MUNICIPALITY

THE FOURTH REPORT OF THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REFORM (PAR) ROADMAP MONITORING AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

➢ INTRODUCTION

Within the framework of the project "A Common Forum for CSOs from Guria, Imereti and Racha-Lechkhumi for PAR Roadmap Monitoring", under the leadership of women's NGO - Cultural-Humanitarian Fund "Sukhumi", the fourth interim monitoring was conducted in Terjola Municipality.

The monitoring results are represented in the document. Its materials are evidence-based, obtained by local civil society organizations - the Union for the Protection of Children's Rights and Civic Education "Children for the Future of Georgia" and "Women for the Future of Georgia".

Up to this stage, three monitorings have been conducted within the project. Their results with relevant recommendations have been submitted to the local self-government for the response.

AIM OF MONITORING

The present monitoring phase aims to assess the progress made in the municipality after the previous monitoring according to separate indicators; identify the achieved results, positive trends and, at the same time, the existing challenges; and prepare relevant recommendations for further response.

MONITORING METHODOLOGY - traditionally**,** a monitoring plan was developed before the monitoring, and a monitoring tool was agreed on between the partners.

Monitoring was planned in the same areas: transparency, efficiency and inclusiveness.

METHODS OF MONITORING: Within the monitoring framework, the official municipality website was surveyed; legislation, normative acts and regulations, ordinances regulating the municipality activities were analyzed; public information was requested, and test e-mails were sent. We had communication and meetings with representatives of the municipality relevant services to verify and fill in the information (considering the pandemic, part of the activities were carried out online).

A previous monitoring report was considered during the data processing period, and to clarify several issues, communication was held with the relevant officials of the municipality.

Preconditions and Restriction: The monitoring was conducted in July 2021. The monitoring process was as transparent as possible, which led to high awareness of monitoring objectives, methods, tools.

Covid-19 restrictions did not have a significant impact on the monitoring process. There was business communication with the municipality representatives and timely response and cooperation to all questions or requests.

ANALYSIS OF THE OBTAINED RESULTS

➢   TRANSPARENCY

Terjola Municipality has introduced online announcements of vacancies under the legislation following the deadlines. In the case of vacancies, access and openness are maintained. No new vacancy has been announced in the City Council since the third monitoring, and, consequently, no announcement has been uploaded on the website. As for the City Hall, a vacancy for the head of the tourism department position was announced from 28.06 to 08.07.

According to the monitoring conducted in the municipality, the operation of the website http://terjola.gov.ge/ has been officially suspended since June 17. Instead, a new website https://terjolanews.ge/ was made with the Fund "Sukhumi" funding and the City Hall participation. According to the provided information, work is underway to activate the website in test mode, and all public information will be uploaded in stages.

According to the responsible persons, soon, the new website will be fully maintained and loaded with the organizational structure, indicating the CVs of officials, their rights and responsibilities, and contact information (at this stage, no information can be found on the page).

The website shortcomings make it difficult for citizens to communicate with self-governing structures. However, according to the received information, at this stage, the

citizen can contact the contact person with the help of the mayor's representatives or in person and via the City Council Facebook page.

There are delays in uploading financial reports, approved budget, 3, 6, and 9-month budget implementation reports, annual reports, procurement plans, and reports on the municipality e-platforms in the conditions of a non-functioning website. However, an alternative means is sought in the municipality: essential documents, the approved budget are uploaded on the Legislative Herald.

The primary source of information on local processes is the newspaper "Terjola", which constantly provides citizens with information on current events through print and electronic platforms. At the same time, the society receives information from the City Council Facebook page and information boards. In addition, citizens can contact the mayor's representatives in communities and villages from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Due to the non-functioning website, citizens do not have access to the mandatory public information: **the City Council sessions dates, announcements on the sessions agenda, protocols, etc**.

Unlike the previous period, normative acts, resolutions, etc., adopted by the City Council are unavailable, which is a sign of regression in this direction. Minutes of City Council sittings and adopted ordinances are kept in the City Council; all normative acts, resolutions are published in the Legislative Herald, but citizens do not use this platform much.

After each new monitoring, progress was made in Terjola to the extent that citizen reception/open consultation hours were formally set for more local decision-makers, and information was available on the website.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, communication with citizens depends on existing restrictions. Persons from self-governing bodies receive citizens every working day, during working hours, according to their needs.

During the previous monitoring, it was mentioned that **the municipality was working at a slow pace regarding anti-corruption measures and regulations. Therefore, this issue has been the subject of active discussion. As a result, an e-Services Development Action Plan 2020-2021 has been developed to facilitate the Public Administration Reform Action Plan implementation.**

No tangible, practical steps have been taken in this regard, although active dialogue on the issue continues and stays on the local political agenda. The issue also dominates in the e-Services Development Action Plan 2020-2021. It was discussed at working group meetings in May and June. It was also the subject of a roundtable discussion in July. Once again, a proposal was made to plan and conduct information meetings by local lawyers for public officials and citizens and carry out planned training by invited specialists.

As for the ethical conduct provision, this document has been adopted and is posted on information boards.

➢   EFFICIENCY

According to the selected indicators, Terjola Municipality activity efficiency was assessed through monitoring. As a result, the progress made and the existing gaps have been identified through them.

The City Council working plan covers the necessary standard issues, and the regulations set the number of City Council sessions (once a month). However, extraordinary sessions are held periodically. Six sessions have been held in the City Council since the third monitoring. Four of them are planned sessions, and two are extraordinary ones. Information on the sessions` agenda is placed on the City Council information board.

In Terjola municipality, there is a practice of monitoring the City Hall services` activities. The monitoring terms and relevant forms are identified.

The monitoring shows that the municipality has not yet developed a particular form for assessing the population's satisfaction. Information is received at periodical meetings in the local government. The activities carried out in the municipality are discussed. The population expresses satisfaction or dissatisfaction at these meetings.

Previous monitoring has shown that after evaluating the services provided to the citizens and identifying the needs, new programs tailored to the needs of the most vulnerable groups of citizens were introduced in the local budget. However, no monitoring was conducted during the given period. There is a dialogue on the need for the social program constant monitoring to increase citizens` inclusiveness and improve the service quality.

The monitoring shows that **the number of days during the month is allocated for meetings at the City Hall and City Council**. Due to pandemic force majeure conditions, it is impossible to maintain the standard mode of communication. The number of citizens' appeals has increased. Citizens contact City Council any employee in different ways - by phone, mail, or on the ground. Consequently, it is impossible to register them.

The study of the quality of response to citizens' letters, complaints and feedback showed that the response to the citizen's application, complaint and letter takes place within the timeframe set by law (under the General Administrative Code, the deadline takes from 10 days to three months) and is always observed.

According to the information obtained from the City Hall, all letters or complaints were duly registered during the monitoring period. Nevertheless, incoming letters are not analyzed, and reports are not prepared. Therefore, statistics of citizens' letters and complaints are not produced. According to the Chancellery, three complaints have been submitted to the City Hall after the third monitoring. Nobody applied due to complaints to the City Council. 11 applications were received. They were timely responded.

Through the monitoring, we could find out whether the municipality has a staff development plan. The City Hall has an evaluation methodology provided by the Civil Service Bureau, which identifies staff qualifications and existing challenges. Accordingly, the qualification of the employees is improved according to the needs and profiles. The Human Management Service assesses the officials once a year. The evaluation is done by giving scores. In case of a high score, the officer is assigned a class. But he goes through training in case of a low score. 1% of the total budget is allocated for this issue. There was a training plan last year, but in 2021 it has not been updated. Based on the conducted research, a dialogue is going on to create a list of the necessary training and advanced training courses and a staff development plan according to separate departments and services.

Several trainings conducted for the representatives of the local self-governments: The number of trainings conducted for the local self-governments representatives after the previous monitoring is as follows: City Hall - 4; City Council - 6. Topics: Prevention of Violence and Assistance to Victims of Violence; Public Administration Reform (PAR) and Gender Budget (Fund "Sukhumi"); Strengthening

Local Municipalities in Project Preparation (Imereti Development Center); Program Budgeting (Association of Local Self-Government Financiers); Covid-19 Pandemic Psychoanalytic Anthropology; Research Presentation and discussion on "Alternatives to Dispute Resolution in Public Service"; Digital and Remote Control - Modern Challenges; HR Forum.

No trainings were held for officials in the last year. However, 4500 GEL (1% of the total budget) has been allocated from the municipal budget for employees' professional development. Therefore, 320 GEL has been spent. The percentage of local self-government representatives participating in training during the last year is City Council - 45% and City Hall - 91.2%.

Do local governments use any tools or techniques for quality or knowledge management? According to the responsible persons involved in the monitoring, the introduction of new electronic system modules helped improve the work quality. New modules have been added to the e-HRMS system: 1. Assessment module; 2. Professional development module; 3. Report Constructor Module. Interim assessments of professional public servants are reflected in the e-HRMS system.

To exchange information with local governments, share best practices/experiences, the mayor participated in 6 online meetings organized by the regional administration after the third monitoring, which is the best way to share their experiences and positive practices.

➢ INCLUSIVENESS

One of the essential issues regarding the participation of inclusive groups of citizens in self-government is to create an equal and adapted environment for people with disabilities. No progress has been made since previous monitoring. There have been no positive changes regarding building the ramps in administrative buildings. There is talk about arranging a particular room on the ground floor, where wheelchair users can communicate electronically with local government officials.

As the monitoring shows, according to the municipal staff, the officials represented in the City Hall various services are aware of the legislation adopted by the state on inclusiveness. However, there are no levers to check it at this stage. The existence of 5 social programs for the protection of persons with disabilities and the increase of the social package

is considered an expression of a sensitive attitude towards the issue. It is noteworthy that it is planned to approve the staff working specifically on these issues.

Are the municipality vacancy applications non-discriminatory? - The text of the submitted vacancy does not contain any signs of discrimination.

The percentage of women employed in local self-government shows that the number of women decision-makers has decreased after the resignation of the City Council chairperson.

As for the City Hall, 143 public servants are employed here. 46 of them are women - 32%, and 97 men - 68%. The percentage of women civil servants has been reduced by 3% since the previous monitoring.

Due to an inactive website, gender data is inaccessible. The promise was often made that the City Hall website would soon be launched in test mode and that information about it, including gender statistics, would be posted gradually.

We tried to find out whether there is a person in charge of communication with vulnerable groups in the municipality (women, socially vulnerable, internally displaced persons (IDPs), people with disabilities (hearing, sight, mobility) and whether the specific needs of vulnerable groups are being studied; or needs study reports are available. The monitoring reveals that the lists of vulnerable groups are updated once a year - in November, before adopting a new budget. At the initiative of three MPs (Gvankiti, Gogni, Siktarva), the specific needs of vulnerable groups in their villages were studied, and statistics were produced. However, reports are not available.

The most effective means of citizens` participation is the existence of electronic services. Due to the suspension of the website, electronic services ensuring citizens` participation are not available (submission of letters, petitions, complaints, registration for the meeting, response via the website). The City Hall hotline is functioning.

After launching the website, it is planned to restore the existing rule and introduce new services, including the practice of electronic petition, where the experience of Khoni municipality will be shared.

As during the previous monitoring, there is no interpreter service for non-Georgian speakers in the municipality. It is explained by the fact that there is no need for it.

Positive dynamics are observed in the Civil Advisory Council, Gender Equality Council, Council of Persons with Disabilities and other councils or working groups.

No meeting of the Gender Council has been held since the third monitoring. After the Chairman leaving, the composition of the Gender Council has changed. The City Council Resolution #13 07/06/2021 has been uploaded in the Legislative Herald.

After the previous monitoring, the activities of the Terjola Municipality Mayor's deliberative body - the Civil Advisory Council (10 members) has been renewed, and its statute has been approved (Order # B 28.282114114). The Council's first meeting was held on 28.05.2021 (Protocol #1). The mayor initiated the meeting, and NGO "Local Democracy Agency" (LDA GEORGIA) organized it.

There are several working groups in the City Hall: financial, infrastructural and the working group supporting the implementation of Public Administration Reform, which has held three sessions and 1 round table since the third monitoring.

On May 10, 2021, the Terjola Municipality Mayor's order 28.28211309 to establish the Terjola Municipality Civil Budget Council and approve the operation rules was issued.

The council consists of the City Hall qualified employees, which allows the statute requirements, proposals, and initiatives to be assessed professionally and fairly to support the population's most priority proposals and projects. The council's first meeting was held on May 25, 2021. The statute and the amount to be spent (50 000 GEL) was approved. The financial department head was elected as the board chairman.

Information about the councils` meetings and the work of the working groups is systematically posted on the City Hall Facebook page in the form of announcements.

According to previous monitoring materials, there is the apparent progress in the Council of Persons with Disabilities activities. On 16.04.2021 Action Plan was approved (Decree No. 29.29211063).

The practice of drafting the budget according to gender parameters is weak in the municipality. There is no separate gender program.

The participatory budget has already been introduced and amounts to 50 000 GEL, which is 3% of the total budget. The social budget is 1 034 000 GEL, which is 8.3% of

the total budget. The date of the last change in the annual budget of the municipality is 30.06.2021.

Positive dynamics continue in the relationship with civil society organizations/ working groups in local self-government to ensure activities aimed at protecting the citizens` welfare. The dynamics of cooperation with new civil society organizations are also positive, and their importance in the municipality social policy is realized. The Head of the City Council staff provides communication with this segment. As for the City Hall, a representative of the Gender Equality Council and a public relations specialist of the City Hall share this responsibility.

➢ CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSION

The Public Administration Reform monitoring conducted in Terjola Municipality commissioned by Fund "Sukhumi" has shown that the positive dynamics of local political processes are maintained in the municipality. However, there is a severe challenge at this stage since the modernized website has not been launched. As a result, it seriously hinders the provision of electronic services to citizens and creates gaps in transparency, efficiency, and inclusiveness of self-government activities.

The introduction of anti-corruption mechanisms has not yet reached the appropriate scale. The dialogue on raising awareness of anti-corruption strategy issues and sharing the experience of a successful municipality has not been reflected in the specific activities.

There is a needs assessment and programs assessment local practice, which is periodically reflected in new programs. However, for more institutionalization of these processes, it is necessary to introduce a more sound methodology: developing appropriate forms, raising the specialists` qualifications, ensuring access to relevant reports.

Significant progress has been made in maintaining the public servants' evaluation system, although the action plan needs to be duly updated.

Based on the current situation, other recommendations of the previous monitoring need to be adequately addressed. In particular, the proper maintenance of the website, the provision of social infrastructure adapted for people with disabilities, the development of an anti-corruption strategy and action plan.

Significant progress has been made in introducing a visible component of citizens` participation and effective governance - participatory budgeting. In this regard, the consolidation of local civil society organizations and the government and getting acquainted with the practice of other municipalities and its successful adaptation to the local reality is very valuable.

The following recommendations have been developed based on the monitoring results.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For self-government activities and transparency of local processes

■ *It is necessary to launch a modernized website immediately; upload all mandatory information on the website; appoint a person in charge of this component (with a proper job description and introduction of a systematic reporting system);*

■ *It is desirable to popularize e-services on alternative platforms in parallel with the full load of the website; and actively use local media, information boards, the Institute of the Mayor's Representative.*

For the efficiency of self-government activities

■ *To ensure the efficiency of self-government activities, it is important to develop forms for the assessment of municipal services, improve the qualifications of municipal staff and study the impact of programs; identify the level of citizens` satisfaction and their needs for program adjustments or the introduction of new programs. It is desirable to create a reporting system and ensure its accessibility to the general public.*

For self-government activity inclusiveness

■ *It is necessary to continue the dialogue on the introduction of the e-petition and create an appropriate organizational and structural basis to move the issue to the active phase;*

■ *It is essential to develop an anti-corruption strategy and action plan promptly, to introduce effective mechanisms for its implementation;*

■ *It is necessary to introduce a gender budget, update the Gender Equality Strategy and Action Plan, separate the gender program in the budget and ensure its financial provision.*

BAGDATI MUNICIPALITY

THE FOURTH REPORT OF THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REFORM (PAR) ROADMAP MONITORING AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

➢ INTRODUCTION

The report represents the results of the fourth monitoring carried out within the project "A Common Forum for CSOs from Guria, Imereti and Racha-Lechkhumi for PAR Roadmap Monitoring". The report shows the changes from the first to the fourth monitoring regarding improving e-governance practices in Bagdati Municipality and existing challenges.

Two organizations, "Equality Now" and "Civil Spectrum-Equality", conducted the fourth monitoring in Bagdati Municipality in July 2021.

MONITORING AIM

To support Public Administration Reform at the local level, Cultural-Humanitarian Fund "Sukhumi", in partnership with Fund of Women Entrepreneurs and the Imereti Scientists' Union Spectri, with the financial support of the European Union, is implementing "A Common Forum for CSOs from Guria, Imereti and Racha-Lechkhumi for PAR Roadmap Monitoring". The project aims to ensure the public's control and inclusiveness in the monitoring of Public Administration Reform in 8 municipalities of Imereti, Racha-Lechkhumi and Guria by creating and strengthening the Civil Society Forum of Western Georgia.

Through the fourth monitoring, we could assess the changes made to address the challenges identified in terms of efficiency, transparency, and inclusiveness in the municipality and develop new recommendations to increase the dynamism rate.

MONITORING METHODOLOGY

The monitoring was carried out in 8 municipalities of Georgia, namely in Khoni, Bagdati, Terjola, Vani, Ozurgeti, Lanchkhuti, Tsageri and Ambrolauri municipalities on July 5-12, 2021. In addition, the Civil Society Forum established in October 2019 within the framework of the project was actively involved in the monitoring process, which brought together 16 public organizations working in different profiles and different thematic areas in the target regions.

The quality of local government efficiency, transparency and inclusiveness was assessed based on a monitoring mechanism and a pre-designed questionnaire

developed by the project partners, combining 29 different evaluation criteria and in-dicators (see Annex # 1, Questionnaire). The reform progress was assessed based on monitoring the official websites of the municipalities, as well as the analysis of public information requested from local government officials and observation of citizens` participation practices on the ground. Additional means of finding and verifying information were telephone communication with municipal officials, per-sonal meetings, and official online sources containing the information necessary to evaluate a particular issue.

ANALYSIS OF THE OBTAINED RESULTS

➢ TRANSPARENCY

Based on the information received from the monitoring, it is clear that the basic stan-dards in terms of transparency in Bagdati municipality are observed, and the website is being modernized. In addition, the Facebook pages of the City Council and the City Hall are active as well.

How transparent is the municipality activity, and how is it reflected on the web-site; are online vacancy announcements available, and are the vacancy dead-lines met? The municipality website www.baghdati.gov.ge was reviewed to receive information on this issue. After the third monitoring, we found out that two vacancies were uploaded on the website and hr.gov.ge. They have been expired and archived (one can see the available link https://www.baghdati.gov.ge/vakansiebi/).

We have also found out that deadlines set by the legislation are observed in the mu-nicipality: placement, selection, appeal, interview stage, nomination and appointment of a candidate by the commission. All procedures are completed within three months after the vacancy announcement. When announcing the vacancy, following Resolution 215 of the Government of Georgia, based on orders 41 166 (18.02.2021) and 41 469 (25.05.2021), additional qualification requirements for civil servants were identified. The addition of an internal competition type has made the officer career promotion scheme more flexible, which can be considered a step forward.

All organizational structures are posted on the website, and information about all officials can be found. In addition, a citizen can get in touch with the contact per-

son through the CV posted on the website, indicating the contact person's email and phone number.

These shortcomings were eliminated based on the recommendations developed after the first monitoring. **Therefore, this trend is fully maintained, and there is no need to fill in additional information**.

One of the transparency indicators is the extent to which financial reports, approved budget, 3, 6, 9-month budget execution reports, procurement plan, relevant reports are published on the municipality website. At the beginning of the project, it was revealed that there was no practice of uploading interim reports in the municipality, which was followed by relevant recommendations.

With the active cooperation of the working group members, this shortcoming has been gradually corrected. Progress was maintained, including the third monitoring. However, at this stage, only the 2021 budget is searched on the website, which is also available on the site: matsne.gov.ge. In addition, complete information about the budget is represented in the local print media "Chveni Gazeti", a source of information for citizens of a particular category. 3, 6, 9-month reports and annual budget execution of 2020 are posted on the website. However, the procurement plan is not posted on the municipality website.The 3-month report on implementing the current year budget submitted to the municipality at the end of March 2021 cannot be found. However, they say that it is reasoned by the website modernization, which has not been completed yet.

The monitoring has revealed that all shortcomings regarding date, agenda, protocols, and normative acts of the City Council and City Hall sessions and their accessibility for the citizens have been improved according to the indicated recommendations. All kinds of information are posted on the website and are available to citizens. The working group actively cooperates with the self-government to maintain progress. Although the municipality website update has not been completed, this information has already been uploaded to the relevant field.

Do the mayor, deputy mayor, City Council chairman, deputy, City Council deputies have open consultation hours for citizens? Based on the transparency indicator, we have found out that citizens can meet the officials two days a week and 3 hours a day. Besides, except for the officially set time, if the officials are present on the spot, they can receive citizens on any day.

Do the mayor, deputy mayor, City Council chairman, deputy, City Council depu-

ties have open consultation hours for citizens? Based on the transparency indicator, we have found out that citizens can meet the officials two days a week and 3 hours a day. Besides, except for the officially set time, if the officials are present on the spot, they can receive citizens on any day.

Whether transparency is being observed in the municipality regarding anti-corruption measures, whether appropriate measures (anti-corruption plans, regulations, regulations on ethical behaviour) have been taken in the municipality and if they are available on the website? These are the issues that need to be addressed at the local level. In this regard, there is a positive result in the municipality. The "working group" has developed a code of ethics, which was approved by the City Council and published on the official website - https://www.baghdati.gov.ge/baghdathis-munitsipalitetis-sajaro-mosamsakhuretha-ethikis-kodeqsi/

A draft version of the anti-corruption regulation has already been created and will be approved soon. Therefore, it can be said that working on the anti-corruption provision is an important step forward for Bagdati Municipality.

➢ EFFICIENCY

Identifying the effectiveness of the municipality's activities takes a special place in monitoring. The study materials prove that Bagdati municipality has an appropriate working structure, contributing to efficient cooperation with its citizens.

One of the efficiency indicators is whether the municipality has a pre-designed quarterly, semi-annual, annual working plan - the change dynamics in this regard can be considered positive. Although the plans were approved systematically, they were not posted on the website. This gap has been filled after the second monitoring. This approach has been maintained to date, and there is no need for correction.

As in other target municipalities, the lack of a monitoring system remains a shortcoming. **Although after the second monitoring, the municipality was given the relevant recommendation to make changes in this regard, there is no practice of monitoring the activities of the City Hall services**. The monitoring has revealed that the municipality uses the audit report, the forms and deadlines used in this report, and has its working plan and regulations, according to which the monitoring of the City Hall services is envisaged. **Recent monitoring confirms that no progress has been**

made in this regard. The municipality is using the information obtained from the audit at this stage.

Assessing the level of population`s satisfaction is also essential for effectiveness. We can mention that as a result of the recommendations of the first and second monitoring, during the third monitoring, it was revealed that a form to assess the population`s satisfaction with social services had been created. The citizens can fill it. This trend is maintained to date. However, it is desirable to introduce similar practices regarding other services of the municipality.

Interviews with City Hall and City Council officials and information from face-to-face meetings reveal that the number of open consultation days per month at City Hall, according to the City Council meeting plan, is set (two days a week, which is eight days a month). However, it also turns out that citizens can meet with any official during working days.

Another indicator of efficiency is related to the letters received from citizens. The monitoring shows that statistics of citizens` letters and complaints are kept and submitted to the City Council as an annual report. In addition, unanswered and overdue correspondence is also analysed. This practice was introduced after recommendations provided after the second monitoring. Besides, a relevant field was added during the municipality website modernisation, where the statistics of requesting and issuing public information are recorded - https://www.baghdati.gov.ge/sajaro-inphormatsiis-mothkhovnis-gatsemis-statistika/. At this link, one can see the statistics of January-June 2021. It is also the best indicator of efficiency and transparency.

The following factor can be considered an effectiveness indicator: whether the municipality has developed a policy that aims to increase the professionalism of public servants. ***Does Bagdati Municipality have a staff development plan? -*** during the monitoring of this direction, it was revealed that the professional development plan was approved by order # 41 549. At the current stage, compulsory basic training provided by the professional development program has been procured for seven municipal officials. Officers begin to study the mandatory management program.

Two employees of the City Hall have been promoted. In addition, progress is made regarding electronic structuring; when a public servant receives the final annual assessment, a particular field is placed in as an assessment protocol, which is filled in directly by the supervisor and the officer. When filling out, they focus on the direction necessary to develop (i.e., preferred topics, vocational training method, required re-

sources, deadline, and expected results). The existence of these approaches is already a sign of serious progress.

In terms of current situation, the monitoring has shown that the obligation to invest 1% of the salary fund in training has sharply increased the number of trainings for self-government representatives. After the previous monitoring, 23 trainings have been conducted in the municipality for City Hall and City Council employees. Thus, 17% of the total officials have been trained.

To improve the quality of public servants' qualifications, the municipality actively uses the resources of various non-governmental organizations as trainings offered by them. Information exchange is introduced between different departments. It is mainly done by organizing joint meetings. The municipality has recently introduced a new teaching practice called Mentoring. Its essence is as follows: the new staff entering the institution will start working with an experienced staff responsible for raising the level of his/her qualification.

As for the number of meetings held last year to exchange information with other local governments and share best practices or experiences, we can see that no such meeting was held in the municipality to share the practice. However, the practice of previous monitoring is maintained. Furthermore, they constantly share experiences during the working process through telephone conversations or online. In this regard, the municipality must develop an appropriate strategy.

➢ INCLUSIVENESS

The monitoring is focused on an essential element such as inclusiveness as well. Therefore, this block contains information that highlights the priority of this issue. However, there are still many challenges in this direction.

No changes have been made regarding the adapted environment. City Hall/City Council building has an external ramp, which should be improved. Changes for the reporting period did not address this issue.

The extent to which the municipality is aware of inclusiveness under the legislation adopted by the state - it should be noted that there is a council of persons with disabilities in the municipality approved by the relevant regulations. The council ensures raising the municipality representatives awareness of the issue of inclusiveness. No other change is observed in this direction.

No discrimination signs (discrimination regarding the applicants` gender, status or other indicators) are observed while assessing the vacancy advertisement. It was observed during the previous monitoring, and this trend was also maintained during the last monitoring. However, it should be noted that no incentive statements were published for women or people with disabilities.

What is the percentage of women employed in local self-government? Are gender statistics available (on the website)? - it is confirmed that 68% of the employees in the City Council are men, while in the City Hall, this figure reaches 60%. Therefore, the rate of employed women remains low. However, as a result of the third monitoring recommendation, the statistics have been developed, and they will be posted on the municipality website after modernization.

The percentage of women in leadership positions in local self-government is distributed as follows: 31% of the City Hall female employees work in the leading positions (Service Head, Department Head). The mayor, the deputy, the chairman of the council - all are men. The percentage of women in leadership positions in the City Council is 33.33%. **Unfortunately, these statistics are not available electronically, but gender statistics will be uploaded on the updated website.**

Unlike the previous monitoring, no changes have been made regarding the person in charge of communication with vulnerable groups. Public officials provided for in the municipal staff list, and persons employed under special contracts who communicate with specific groups within their responsibilities are in charge of communicating with vulnerable groups in the municipality.

Periodically, only social service carries out needs study of vulnerable groups in the municipality. A needs survey report is available at the relevant municipal office. The responsible persons submit needs study reports to the municipal council. **Progress in this direction is visible. The municipality conducts a study of socially vulnerable people's needs.** This practice should be introduced by other services as well.

During the monitoring, it was revealed that due to the active cooperation of the "working group" created in the municipality, *work is underway to increase the flexibility of the website design and add various functionality*. News, as well as the schedules of Sakrebulo sessions and public information, were actively published. Submitting letters and petition columns will be available after updating the website. The corresponding field "Submit your idea to the mayor" will be added, which will allow citizens to submit ideas in an online format reflecting their needs. The self-government should

launch an active information campaign to initiate the practical use of these services. It turns out that citizens prefer receiving e-services by communicating via the municipality's Facebook page.

The need for translator services for non-Georgian speakers has not been identified so far, and no changes are planned in this direction.

The first monitoring results showed that the existence of a Civil Advisory Council, a Gender Council, a Council of Persons with Disabilities in the City Hall, and the City Council raises the level of inclusiveness in the municipality's activities. Recent monitoring has revealed that a Youth Advisory Council has been added to these councils. In addition, the City Hall has just staffed a Civil Advisory Council's new composition.

The existence of gender and participatory budget is another indicator of inclusiveness in the municipality. According to the monitoring, there is no gender budget in the municipality. However, some gender costs are broken down into different subprograms. Therefore, people are unaware of gender budgeting. Also, the municipality does not have a civil budget. No changes have been made in this regard yet. The share of the social budget in the total budget in 2021 comprises 7.3%.

Regarding the inclusiveness of vulnerable groups in the decision-making process, we have found out that only the relevant act of the Council of Persons with Disabilities regulates it. The Gender Equality Council controls the issue established in the municipality, strengthening vulnerable groups in this area. The website modernization process also envisages the addition of City Council and Commission meetings online streaming function, which would be the best mechanism in this regard.

In Bagdati Municipality, the mayor's advisor deals with civil society organizations/working groups and is responsible for the effective management of cooperation with civil society organizations. Practice in this direction has already been introduced, and the cooperation process is ongoing.

➢ CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, it can be clearly stated that a significant part of the recommendations developed for Bagdati Municipality has been taken into account, and the shortcomings have been eliminated. It is vital that the issue of page modernization is actively underway, which will have several improved features. It should be considered as progress

that the Code of Ethics for Public Servants has already been developed and approved in the municipality, anti-corruption regulations are being drafted.

However, despite the positive changes, there are still challenges that are reflected in the relevant recommendations. Nevertheless, implementing these recommendations will help the Bagdati Municipality to create an effective, transparent and inclusive governance model.

RECOMMENDATIONS

■ *To identify the effectiveness of the municipality's activities, it is essential to have a monitoring system in the municipality, for which it is desirable to establish a mechanism of assessing municipal services;*

■ *The form of population's satisfaction survey with social services should be implemented in municipality's other services as well;*

■ *It is desirable to post incentive statements to attract women and people with disabilities when announcing vacancies. It will help increase the number of employees from these groups;*

■ *It is recommended that the municipality develop a strategy for sharing experiences between internal structures, which will increase the accountable individuals` responsibility to report information;*

■ *To increase the level of transparency, efficiency and inclusiveness in the municipality activities, it is recommended to introduce a civil budgeting system;*

■ *It is essential to increase the competence of public servants on gender budgeting, and it is possible through internal resources. Specialized trainings on the issue will increase the motivation, competence of the authorized persons and will create a precondition for the introduction of a gender budget;*

■ *The municipality must launch an information campaign so that citizens actively submit online letters, use the petition system and develop proposals through the relevant field of the website "Submit your idea to the mayor".*

KHONI MUNICIPALITY

THE FOURTH REPORT OF THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REFORM (PAR) ROADMAP MONITORING AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

➢ INTRODUCTION

The report represents the results of the fourth monitoring carried out within the project "A Common Forum for CSOs from Guria, Imereti and Racha-Lechkhumi for PAR Roadmap Monitoring". The report highlights the dynamics of ongoing changes in Khoni Municipality in improving e-governance practices from the first to the last monitoring and emphasizes the planning of necessary activities to neutralize the existing challenges. The fourth monitoring in Khoni Municipality was conducted in July 2021 by local civil society organizations - IDP Initiative Group and Khoni Education and Development Center "Edelweiss" - commissioned by the women's non-governmental organization Cultural-Humanitarian Fund "Sukhumi".

Up to this stage, three monitorings have been conducted within the project. Their results with relevant recommendations have been submitted to the municipality for the response.

THE AIM OF MONITORING

To support Public Administration Reform at the local level, Cultural-Humanitarian Fund "Sukhumi", in partnership with Fund of Women Entrepreneurs and the Imereti Scientists' Union "Spectri", with the financial support of the European Union, is implementing "A Common Forum for CSOs from Guria, Imereti and Racha-Lechkhumi for PAR Roadmap Monitoring". The project aims to ensure public control and inclusiveness in the monitoring of Public Administration Reform in 8 municipalities of Imereti, Racha-Lechkhumi and Guria by creating and strengthening the Civil Society Forum of Western Georgia.

Through the fourth monitoring, we could assess the changes to address the challenges identified in terms of efficiency, transparency, and inclusiveness in the municipality and develop new recommendations to increase the dynamism rate.

MONITORING METHODOLOGY

The monitoring was carried out in 8 municipalities of Georgia, namely in Khoni, Bagdati, Terjola, Vani, Ozurgeti, Lanchkhuti, Tsageri and Ambrolauri municipalities on July 5-12,

2021. The Civil Society Forum established in October 2019 within the framework of the project was actively involved in the monitoring process, which brought together 16 public organizations working in different profiles and different thematic areas in the target regions.

The quality of local government efficiency, transparency and inclusiveness was assessed based on a monitoring mechanism and a pre-designed questionnaire developed by the project partners, combining 29 different evaluation criteria and indicators (see Annex # 1, Questionnaire). The progress of the reform was assessed based on monitoring the official websites of the municipalities, as well as the analysis of public information requested from local government officials and observation of citizens` participation practices on the ground. Additional means of finding and verifying information were telephone communication with municipal officials, personal meetings, and official online sources containing the information necessary to evaluate a particular issue.

ANALYSIS OF THE OBTAINED RESULTS

➢ **TRANSPARENCY**

An indicator of the municipality's activities transparency is: the transparency of the ongoing processes in the municipality in terms of announcing vacancies; receiving applications; involving citizens; whether the website contains the organizational structure and contact information of public servants; whether there is an online petition or proposal submission mechanism; whether municipal reports, approved budget, financial reports are uploaded and at what intervals? Eliminating the small gaps identified in the monitoring process, which will eventually be reflected in the recommendations, will help strengthen the transparency process in the self-government.

One of the indicators of transparency in the municipality activities is announcing vacancies in the City Hall and City Council, access to information about them and vacancy terms. The monitoring has revealed that there is no public information about vacancies on the website and Facebook pages at this stage. Moreover, as the heads of the administrative services of the City Hall and the City Council explained, they do not have any vacancies this year.

The monitoring has revealed that the website has been launched. The municipality has a rule for proactively posting information. Still, at this stage, no public informa-

tion about vacancies is posted on the website and Facebook pages, as they do not have vacancies in the current period. The rule of publishing public information applies to *the vacancy announcing terms* and, if necessary, the procedures established by law will be operated, which is regulated by the resolution # 61 of Khoni Municipality Sakrebulo of March 28, 2018, and by order of the Mayor of Khoni No. 391412 of 12/11/2018.

The monitoring has revealed that the City Hall officials and heads of services are represented in detail on the website. As for the City Council, the mentioned information is not fully displayed. It should be noted that the positive dynamics regarding uploading the organizational structure, CVs of officials, duties and contact information, other mandatory information related to the reorganization of the website has slowed down. The promise of the administrative service head to correct shortcomings observed during the previous monitoring after the website modernization has not been fulfilled yet.

The online financial reports, 3, 6, and 9-month budget execution reports, annual reports, and procurement plans have not been uploaded on the municipality website. As the City Hall financial service head explained, the publication of the 3, 6 and 9-month budget implementation reports is carried out following the law from April 1. Accordingly, in due time, the quarterly report will be sent to the City Council and at the same time will become public and available and will be posted on the website. Conducting active monitoring is essential in this regard.

The website contains limited public information - **the City Council sitting date, the agenda, normative acts adopted by the City Council, resolutions, and reports on the activities carried out by various City Council/City Hall** departments. Only the minutes of the City Council sessions can be found on the website. No meeting time and plan has been announced. The section "Legal Acts Regulating the Activities of the Municipality" is empty. During the interview, the heads of the administrative services of the City Hall and the City Council explained that the process started and all the information on the new site would be posted gradually.

Citizen reception/open consultation hours are regulated in Khoni Municipality (especially at the City Hall). As a result of the monitoring, information on citizen reception/open consultation hours is published on the municipality's website.

As for the City Council, the mentioned information has not been published. However, according to its [City Council] staff, a draft order has been prepared. Control visits con-

firmed that on the days of admission to the City Hall, the municipality mayor and his deputies meet with the citizens and listen to their needs. It is also confirmed by the list (document) created during the week at the City Hall and data of the citizens wishing to meet. Since the City Council does not set specific days for receiving citizens, it is difficult to identify to what extent citizens' rights are protected and whether they can hear answers to questions directly from City Council members. However, the City Council members noted they are ready to receive a citizen every. Therefore, the recommendation developed during the previous monitoring has not been implemented (setting the procedures and time for admission of citizens to the City Council).

As a result of the monitoring, we have revealed that the municipality has not taken its anti-corruption measures, plans and regulations. Nor does it have financial regulations, and there is no provision of ethical conduct. The municipality is governed by the anti-corruption measures and legislation in the country and financial regulations. However, there is a positive dynamic: the commitment made by the municipality at the initiative of the project working group and included in one of the crucial points in the action plan is the development of an anti-corruption plan. According to the received explanation, the issue should be initiated and politically supported this year.

➢ EFFICIENCY

Indicators of the efficiency of the municipality's activities allow us to measure the current progress.

The municipal council did not have a quarterly/semi-annual/annual working plan according to previous monitoring. The monitoring has revealed that nothing has changed. The administrative service says that work on the issue will start the year.

The practice of monitoring the activities of the City Hall services - audit assessment and control is carried out according to the plan. Relevant conclusions and recommendations are made. The process is regulated by the Audit working plan and Khoni Municipality Internal Control Service for 2019 (Khoni Municipality Mayor's Order # 39 1640, 28/12/2018). Under the statute of the Internal Audit and Control Service of Khoni Municipality (Resolution # 55 of Khoni Municipality City Council, February 28, 2018).

The assessment of public satisfaction with the municipal services and the introduction of the necessary forms for evaluation are set in the Strategy for Increasing Transparency and Good Faith of Khoni Municipality for 2019-2022, where the monitoring and evaluation mechanisms and forms are clearly described. However, progress has not been made compared to the previous monitoring. The implementation of the document's central part remains at the same level. The citizens' reception was organized, the website was modernized, and a hotline was introduced, but part of the monitoring and evaluation is not carried out in practice.

Eight days a month are allocated for meetings at City Hall. The meeting days in the City Council have not been officially identified yet. The monitoring has revealed that the days of receiving citizens at the City Hall have not been reduced. However, in the conditions of the pandemic, visits of citizens to public institutions was restricted. Due to urgency, citizens are received by both the mayor and the deputy mayors two days a week. In pandemic conditions, the apparatus mainly works online.

The monitoring has revealed significant progress in the municipality in terms of communication with citizens, which is reflected in the smooth operation of the website and the launch of the hotline. Incoming and outgoing correspondence is sorted, statistics are counted in gender dimension. Letters, complaints and responses can be received electronically via City Hall e-mail: khonismeria@yahoo.com. The website has also been updated, and citizens can submit their proposals online. In addition, a hotline has been launched in the municipality. On weekdays, from 09:00 to 18:00, trained employees answer citizens' questions and give qualified advice. A petition window has been added to the website, where 21 completed and two ongoing petitions have already been uploaded. During the monitoring, we were informed that the City Hall had received more than 800 correspondences (384 women, 420 men), and 694 letters had been sent. Twenty citizens (9 women, 11 men) called the hotline, which shows that the proceedings are orderly and systematic.

As for the staff development plan for the municipalities, this strategic document exists, but the monitoring has revealed that the situation has not changed. There is a plan, but the municipality has not implemented any specific activities to promote staff development. They say that it is affected by restrictions imposed by the Covid pandemic. Consequently, the number of trainings conducted for local self-government representatives has been significantly reduced.

Up to 15 trainings (mostly online) were conducted for the City Hall and the City Council leaders and employees during the monitoring period.

From January 2021 until today, the City Hall and the City Council up to 20 employees (28%) have participated in the trainings. However, the monitoring has revealed that the number of training participants during the Covid Pandemic was significantly reduced.

The monitoring has shown that the tools for sharing information and experience during the Covid Pandemic were significantly reduced. The number of weekly workshops introduced at the City Hall was also reduced. **Traditional coordination meetings are held in the governor's office to exchange information between the self-governments and share best practices/experiences. The existing situation during the third monitoring has not changed - no news has been introduced in this direction.**

➢ INCLUSIVENESS

Progress is being made in self-government in improving the social protection of persons with disabilities. In particular, after the third monitoring, a strategic document and an action plan for improving the conditions of persons with disabilities have been adopted, outlining several measures. As a result, the City Hall building has been adapted, and today people with disabilities are free to physically apply to the citizens' reception. This positive change was achieved through an action plan drawn up by the working group set up under the project. It was submitted to the City Council and was subsequently reflected in the Municipality Action Plan of 2021. However, a ramp has not been installed at the City Council building at this stage. Therefore, access to the building is not available for people with disabilities.

Is the municipality (City Hall, City Council) aware of the legislation adopted by the state on inclusiveness? In response to this question, a team of lawyers works in the Khoni Municipality, and there is a special department where competencies are distributed. In addition, there is also a specialist in the City Council whose experience and qualifications are relevant to the statutory requirements.

The public information requested through the monitoring did not contain any signs of discrimination. However, no incentive or motivational signs to attract persons with disabilities or women were observed.

As for the percentage of women employed in local self-government, the situation has not changed since the previous monitoring. The municipality Gender Council periodically updates the gender statistics and database. According to statistics, 902 people are employed in the municipality, including 566 women. Thus, 63% of the employees in the public sector of Khoni municipality are women.

232 people are employed in the leading position in the public sector, 120 of them are women. Thus, 52% of the employees in the public sector are women. Thus, the gender picture of the self-government staff has not changed substantially. Unfortunately, gender statistics are not available on the website.

The monitoring shows that an official has been appointed in the City Council and the City Hall to deal with vulnerable groups. In addition, there is a space in the City Hall, a citizens' reception, where vulnerable groups are interviewed and consulted by a person with appropriate competence.

Positive dynamics have been revealed through the monitoring in terms of using electronic resources to ensure citizens` inclusiveness. It refers to an online petition. Under the municipality mayor's decision, the 1% threshold was lowered to 0.5%. A petition window has been added to the website, where 21 completed and two ongoing petitions have already been uploaded.

Previous monitoring revealed no official translation service in the municipality since there is no need for it. Therefore, attitudes towards the issue have not changed at this stage.

There is a Civil Advisory Council, a Gender Council, and a Social Advisory Council in the municipality. The Council of Persons with Disabilities statute has been updated, and the process of selecting persons for the Council is underway. The working group created within the project is active.

The municipality does not have a gender and participatory budget. As they have explained, it is reasoned by the reduced budget. On the other hand, the social budget is quite large and accounts for 15% of the total budget.

The monitoring has revealed that there is no normative act/regulation on the inclusiveness of vulnerable groups in the decision-making process or the provision of public services to them at the local level. Local government is governed by an organic law - the Local Self-Government Code.

In the field of public relations, the City Hall employs a public relations specialist of the Case Management and Public Relations Department (the City Council Public Relations Specialist) and the relevant staff in the City Council.

➢ CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSION

The monitoring conducted by the target civil society organizations in Khoni Municipality under the leadership of Fund "Sukhumi" has revealed the progress achieved in implementing Public Administration Reform.

According to the results obtained during the monitoring period, some progress has been made in Khoni Municipality regarding transparency, efficiency and inclusiveness of self-government activities. However, the process is very slow, and the result is mainly supported by the activities carried out by the project target organizations. Adding a petition window to the municipality's website and promoting it in the local community can be considered progress.

The website is updated at a low pace. As a result, the platform is not used properly, and the municipality obligations to use public information are violated.

Identifying needs and evaluating the programs` effectiveness should be improved. An anti-corruption plan, a code of ethics, has not yet been adopted.

Participatory budgeting remains a challenge in terms of transparency, efficiency and inclusiveness of self-government activities. There is no separate gender budget that outlines the measures and costs necessary for gender policy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations can be submitted based on the monitoring:

- *It is necessary to conduct systematic monitoring and reporting on compliance with the standards of full functioning of the existing website. All necessary information should be timely posted on the website. The quality and volume of electronic delivery and hearing of the report on the work of the website in the City Hall and the City Council should be analyzed periodically;*

■ *It is essential to make a timely decision on setting the procedures and time for the citizen reception in the City Council;*

■ *It is necessary to introduce an assessment of municipal services. Appropriate forms should be developed, and the practice of needs and citizens` satisfaction assessment through them should be introduced. Besides, staff training should be implemented for this purpose;*

■ *The municipality should have a Code of Ethics and anti-corruption provision;*

■ *It is desirable to find a resource for initiating a civil budgeting program and facilitate cooperation with civil society organizations and relevant municipalities in this process.*

AMBROLAURI MUNICIPALITY

THE FOURTH REPORT OF THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REFORM (PAR) ROADMAP MONITORING AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

➢ INTRODUCTION

Public administration is a mechanism for ensuring the established order and its main feature is the ability to make and execute collective decisions. It should be noted that the political system includes both governance mechanisms and state institutions, as well as the structures and processes through which the state interacts with public.

The public and political administration defines all spheres of public life, the content of administration, its character, purpose, and form. The process of public and political administration involves the whole of society, public relations in general. In order for the public and political administration to be effective and successful in the end, its planning must take into account a high standard of efficiency, transparency, and inclusiveness assessment. These were the goals of the project, as part of which the monitoring has been carried out in Ambrolauri Municipality.

The fourth monitoring was conducted in Ambrolauri Municipality to study the degree of the progress of efficiency, transparency, and inclusiveness.

THE AIM OF MONITORING

The purpose of the monitoring was to assess the progress in implementing the identified shortcomings and recommendations based on the **monitoring carried out four times** and developing positive trends, also, identifying existing challenges to continue to develop municipal activities in terms of public administration reform.

The monitoring process was conducted **in July 2021 by the Racha-Lechkhumi and Kvemo Svaneti Self-Government Resource Center (N. Sokhadze) and Racha-Lechkhumi and Kvemo Svaneti regional Hub - "Abkhazintercont" (K. Museridze),** under the supervision of the Fund of Women Entrepreneurs.

The outcomes of the four-time monitoring carried out at different times observing transparency principle allow us to observe and evaluate the dynamics of the change in the state of public administration reform for the better, from the first monitoring to the final one.

MONITORING METHODOLOGY

Monitoring Methodology - The monitors were guided by a pre-designed special questionnaire, which included **evaluation indicators along with questions**. Electronic and Facebook pages of the City Council and the City Hall of Ambrolauri Municipality were studied to collect information. To obtain additional information, telephone and direct communications were made with representatives of various departments - both in the executive and the legislative systems.

The monitoring team thanks the representatives of Ambrolauri Municipality City Council and City Hall for their cooperation.

ANALYSIS OF THE OBTAINED RESULTS

➢ TRANSPARENCY

The municipality is accountable for providing information to citizens remotely on all current developments or programs, thus ensuring the transparency process.

It should be noted that the monitoring process revealed the fact that the work of the municipality website has improved in terms of transparency compared to the previous period, deficiencies have been eliminated, the vacancy field has been added, the Facebook page still actively works, where all the current developments in Ambrolauri Municipality are disseminated on a continuous basis, the deadlines for posting vacancies are observed in accordance with the law, which is confirmed by the relevant indicator http://ambrolauri.gov.ge; (https://www.hr.gov.ge/

In the monitoring processes carried out after the first monitoring, **the organizational structure on the municipality's website with contact persons, indicating their telephone numbers, e-mails and defined duties** is becoming more and more improved and well-functional. During the fourth monitoring, positive dynamics is observed and the information is relatively more detailed, which is actively observed by the members of the working group.

The study of the http://ambrolauri.gov.ge/sajaro_info.php?id=1 revealed that the budget **approved by the self-governing body; 3-, 6-, 9-month budget execution reports, annual report; procurement plan and report are available for search with**

the 05. 31. 21 date. It should be noted that after the monitoring, all interim reports are intensively uploaded, which can be viewed by any interested visitor to the website.

The monitoring reveals that the basic mandatory public information is posted on the website http://ambrolauri.gov.ge/page_t.php?id=63, it contains biographies of officials; meeting agendas; normative acts adopted by the City Council; resolutions and all other mentioned documents. Information on the reports of officials is also being actively posted. However, the date of the sittings are still not announced 10 days in advance; The situation remains unchanged during the fourth monitoring, citizen reception times are not posted electronically on the website. **Citizen reception / open consultation hours for the Mayor; Deputy Mayor; The Chairman of the Council; Deputy Chairman of the City Council; Members of the Council; Deputy Members of City Council** can receive citizens any day, if the officials are physically present.

The working group actively cooperated with the representatives of the municipality in order to determine the days of a specific visit to meet with the citizens, which turned out to be ineffective. The reason turned out to be the refusal of the representatives of the municipality in this regard, as they believe that constant communication with the citizens is one of the important indicators of transparency and if they are in place, they declare their readiness to meet the citizens at any time. This violates the citizen's right to receive the necessary assistance in a timely manner and/or to communicate on the issue he/she needs (for example, one of the factors delaying the response may be a long official business trip of an official, etc.).

Anti-corruption policies at the local level are a key feature of transparent administration. According to the monitoring, the current situation in the municipality is being assessed in this regard as well. Since the first monitoring to present, the anti-corruption plan and code of ethics still cannot not been searched on the website; however, there is a step forward made in this regard; the anti-corruption council was established by the partner organization "Racha-Lechkhumi and Kvemo Svaneti Regional Hub -"Abkhazintercont" within the framework of the project, a small grant **"Development and Implementation of Additional Self-government Regulation Documents in Ambrolauri Municipality"** (**Phase 2**), and an anti-corruption plan has been prepared, which has already been submitted to the representatives of the relevant services of Ambrolauri Municipality for

consideration and implementation. Until now, the municipality has been using the document of the Government Resolution on Ethical Conduct; however, a working version of the document on Ethical Behavior has already been developed by the members of the working group, which has also been delivered to the Municipality. Consultations are underway for its consideration and approval by the City Council, which will be an important step forward in improving the quality of transparency for Ambrolauri Municipality.

➢ EFFICIENCY

What are the positive changes in terms of efficiency in Ambrolauri Municipality, is there more progress or regression?

The fourth monitoring allows us to see clearly the current picture with its development stages.

The quarterly plans are published on the website in the form of ordinances following the City Council's regulations, which are available at the following link: http://ambrolauri.gov.ge/sajaro_info.php?id=2. According to the monitoring group, there is still a positive trend maintained in this regard. However, it should be noted that due to the small capacity of the website, documents are often deleted.

Is there a practice of monitoring the activities of the City Hall services, have the deadlines and the corresponding form of monitoring been determined? - An interview conducted by the monitoring team confirms that staff appraisals take place in June, an interim, and at the end of the year. As for the heads of services, the assessments of their activities are made by the Mayor, which is regulated by the forms developed by the Civil Service Bureau and carried out by an ordinance of the City Council. At this point, due to the condition caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the assessment takes place at the end of the year. There is a recommendation from the working group to develop special anonymous forms to assess the satisfaction of the population; however, the answer was that the population uses the comments field of the Facebook platform of the municipality for feedback.

Despite numerous recommendations of the "working group", no specific day(s) for receiving citizens have been set; reception takes place on a daily basis. However, due to the Covid pandemic, the municipality, for the most part, operates remotely.

Within the framework of small grants (funded by the Fund "Sukhumi") by the local organization "Racha-Lechkhumi and Kvemo Svaneti Self-Government Resource Center" involved in the project, was developed a project: "**Increasing the degree of accountability and transparency of Ambrolauri Municipality City Hall and City Council using modern technologies**", as a result of which, the population will be able to receive public information from the City Council and the City Hall at any time, in a simple way and from any place, sign up for events online, ask questions to the local officials and get answers to important issues within the set the deadline.

The incoming complaints are answered within the deadline established by law. Information on the number of questions could not be provided as the self-government during the monitoring was switched to online mode due to the situation created by the Covid pandemic. It should be noted that the "Request Information" window on the municipality's website is active as of now, where citizens and interested parties can receive any kind of public information about municipal programs (this was created within the framework of a project implemented by N(N)LE LDA Georgia).

Ambrolauri Municipality has developed a staff development plan. Needs were requested in writing from the primary structural units, according to which a plan was prepared, which was approved by the City Council. It is worth mentioning that due to the condition caused by the **COVID-19** pandemic, the number of trainings held and the attendance rates have significantly decreased compared to those during previous monitoring.

At the given stage of the monitoring, no new tools or techniques were used for the quality management of the activities, except for the exchange of information by word of mouth in a remote format.

In order to exchange information with local self-governments, to share best practices/experiences, debates were held within the framework of this project, on the topic: **"Outcomes achieved in Ambrolauri Municipality, Sharing Success Stories from other (friend) Municipalities"** - where the representatives of Ambrolauri Municipality were given the opportunity to get acquainted with the practice of Khoni Municipality in drafting the petition, as well as the example of Tsageri Municipality in adopting the Code of Ethics.

➢ INCLUSIVENESS

As a result of the fourth monitoring component in Ambrolauri Municipality, the focus was again made on the inclusion.

Observations on the building confirm that the issue has been resolved in Ambrolauri self-government. However, moving around inside the building has not been adapted.

The authorized persons at the Ambrolauri Municipality (at the City Hall, at the City Council) are currently informed about the normative acts regarding the inclusiveness. In this regard, there is a resolution N12, which persons with disabilities aged 0-18 are guided by, receiving a one-time amount of 300 GEL, monthly 100 GEL - bedridden persons with severe disabilities, persons paralyzed with 4 extremities - 200 GEL, persons with vision impairments - GEL 100 monthly, there is a functional daycare center for the disabled, which received 150 sq. m. of space by the City Hall. A multifunctional rehabilitation center for people with disabilities has been opened in the village of Sadmeli. A total of about 50 people with disabilities are registered in the municipality.

No information about vacancies has been posted on the website during the monitoring process, due to which the vacancy indicator was still not assessed in terms of discrimination.

The percentage of women employed in the local self-government is not available on the website, gender statistics were assessed only by telephone conversations with the relevant service. As a result, it becomes clear that at this time, the participation of women is defined at **40%**, work is underway to identify gender statistics to be displayed on the website. **The percentage of women in leading positions in the local self-government (mayor, deputy mayor, chairperson of the City Council, deputy chairperson, chairperson of the commission) is unenviable, leading positions mainly employ men, although it should be noted that there are women employed as the City Council members, and the chairperson of the commission is also a woman.**

The fourth monitoring also reveals that there is no specific staff to communicate with vulnerable groups; however, the head of the administration service receives these

individuals and forwards them to the relevant agencies. Basically, the Social Affairs Service has assumed responsibility in this regard.

So far there is no practice of conducting needs assessment in Ambrolauri Municipality.

In order to ensure the involvement of citizens, an electronic service platform has been created in Ambrolauri Municipality in terms of the use of electronic resources: there is a "Request Information" window on the website, and people can use electronic services through My.gov.ge. The mentioned website is linked to the website of the municipality; however, it should be noted that most of the citizens do not have information about it. It is planned to work in this direction. Also, under the small grant program, an electronic manager has been created, which is also linked to the website, and the service will be activated from next month.

The previous monitoring also revealed that there is no official translation service in the municipality and there is no need for this service either. The approach to the issue remains unchanged during the fourth monitoring as well.

The monitoring results show that the Citizens' Advisory Council, Gender Council, the Council of Persons with Disabilities were joined by a non-governmental initiative created during the fourth monitoring - the Youth Council working with the Mayor, which consists of 10 members, 5 of which are members of the Youth Assembly of Racha, and one is a representative of the working group.

A "Working Group" established within the CSO Forum also meets once a month, and twice if needed.

Within the framework of this project, an Anti-Corruption Council was established by the Fund "Abkhazintercont" (AIC).

The municipality does not have a gender and participatory budget. The process of elaborating a gender budget worked on together with the National Association of Local Authorities of Georgia (NALAG). On the website of the municipality there is a window called "Plan your Budget" where citizens can voice their initiatives. The social budget with its programs is broken down in the united budget; however, in this regard the municipality is still facing challenges which will be overcome in the shortest time.

Does the municipality have an effective regulation/normative act on the involvement of vulnerable groups in the local decision-making process or in the provision of public services to them?

As a result of the fourth monitoring, after the conversations with the representatives of the municipality and a study of the website, it became clear that this issue has not been properly resolved in the municipality, but rather has a façade nature. In this direction, active work is underway to actively involve vulnerable groups in support programs, in the process of setting priorities.

The Public Relations Service of the City Hall is responsible for relations with civil society organizations. The meetings are mainly organized at the initiative of local civil society organizations.

➢ CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

MONITORING FINDINGS:

The outcomes of the fourth monitoring in **Ambrolauri Municipality** demonstrate that major positive changes have been made as a result of the work carried out within the framework of this project. According to the data available at this time, the website's shortcomings have been eliminated, the "Request Information" button has been activated, and the "Plan your Budget" field is functioning, an electronic communicator has been created within the framework of the project, which will make the robust communication between the population and government officials simpler, save time and transport expenses. An anti-corruption plan has been prepared as part of the small grants, which has been submitted to the relevant service for consideration and implementation. Also, as a result of the work of the "working group", a draft version of the Code of Ethics was prepared, which has also been submitted to the relevant service for consideration.

CHALLENGES TO BE OVERCOME

Currently, new recommendations have been developed for the municipality to address these gaps, including the collection of gender-disaggregated data, the website does not reflect gender statistics. An internal monitoring system should be put

in place, gender aspects, participatory budgeting should be introduced and other components should be established for the formation of an effective municipal administration.

RECOMMENDATIONS DEVELOPED BASED ON THE OUTCOMES OF THE FOURTH MONITORING CARRIED OUT IN AMBROLAURI MUNICIPALITY.

■ *It is recommended that the days and hours of receiving and consulting citizens by the public officials of the City Hall and the City Council be officially established and posted electronically for the population;*

■ *It is advisable for the municipality to take concrete steps on gender and civic budgeting, to train, and to upgrade the qualifications of public servants;*

■ *It is desirable that the local self-government takes the initiative and organizes periodic meetings with the civil society organizations operating in the region, which will facilitate cross-sectoral cooperation;*

■ *It is important that the development of programs is preceded by the assessment of needs of persons with disabilities in order to create programs tailored to their needs.*

TSAGERI MUNICIPALITY

THE FOURTH REPORT OF THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REFORM (PAR) ROADMAP MONITORING AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

➢ INTRODUCTION

This report reflects the results of the fourth monitoring in terms of development of efficiency, transparency, and inclusiveness in Tsageri Municipality.

THE AIM OF MONITORING

The purpose of the monitoring: - Analysis of the elimination of the gaps identified during **the first and the final monitoring** and implementation of the recommendations, and identifying positive trends, as well as identifying challenges to overcome in order to develop new recommendations, to continue the uninterrupted development of the municipality in terms of efficiency, transparency, and inclusiveness.

MONITORING METHODOLOGY

The monitoring was conducted in July 2021 by a local partner, the **Tsageri Women's Rights and Equality Centre (M. Svanidze)** and the **Active Citizen - Accountable Government** (**M. Liparteliani**) under the auspices of the **Fund of Women Entrepreneurs**.

Methodology - The monitors were guided by a pre-designed special questionnaire, which included evaluation indicators. Electronic and Facebook pages of Tsageri Municipality City Hall and City Council were studied to collect information. For more information, telephone and direct communications were made with representatives of various departments - both in the executive and in the legislative systems.

The monitoring team thanks the representatives of Tsageri Municipality City Council and City Hall for their cooperation.

The monitoring was carried out in the same following three directions:

1. Transparency;

2. Efficiency;

3. Inclusiveness.

ANALYSIS OF THE OBTAINED RESULTS

➢ TRANSPARENCY

The fourth monitoring revealed that online applications for vacancies are available in Tsageri Municipality, and it was determined that only 2 vacancies were announced during the year. In this regard, the municipality is guided by the document "Resolution on the Rules of Competition."

Based on the information obtained from the website (**tsageri.gov.ge**), the organizational structure, contact information of the officials, their telephone numbers, email, and defined duties are satisfactory.

It should be noted that during the fourth monitoring of the site of the municipality (**www.tsageri.gov.ge**), little progress was observed; the procurement plan and reports of the deputies of the City Council and the City Hall were published. Information about the work of the City Hall and the City Council, implemented events, projects, various programs, events is also published daily on the Facebook page of Tsageri Municipality, accompanied by photos or a video coverage.

The website of the municipality includes: biographies of officials, minutes of the meetings, ordinances. The resolutions are published in the Legislative Herald within 5 days after signing. The agenda of the City Council is published on the information board. There is a window on the website of the municipality where a citizen can register and receive any public information of interest to him/her automatically, in the form of an SMS message sent to their phone number. However, not all information is included in the website for its perfection. The reason for this is the small capacity of the website. On this issue active consultations are still going on in the municipality.

The conditions for receiving and consulting citizens in the municipality are still limited due to the current situation. There are no reception hours for citizens posted on the website, however, during the previous monitoring, the days of receptions and consultations with the chairperson, deputies, and the head of the City Council staff, as a result of the work of the "working group", were determined a follows: Daily - from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. The above information is posted at the entrances of the cabinets, as for the deputies, meetings are organized in their deputy communities.

An anti-corruption plan for the municipality (work on which is in progress) and the development of financial rules and a code of ethics increase transparency. It should be

noted that Tsageri Municipality did not have these documents during the third monitoring. As a result of intensive work of the Working Group, a Code of Ethics was developed, after passing the relevant procedures; the document Decree # 37 - **"On Approval of the Code of Ethics of the Tsageri Municipality City Council Member and the Oath of the City Council Member"** was adopted.

The Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI) is working on strategic documents at the local level to increase transparency and good faith. Corruption risk assessments are currently underway, involving members of the monitoring team and local partner organizations in a focus group format. Tsageri City Hall is actively cooperating with the organization and an anti-corruption plan will be prepared in the nearest future.

➤ EFFICIENCY

Public Administration Reform, to a certain extent, is based on determining the degree of efficiency in the municipality.

The quarterly/semi-annual/annual work plans of the City Council were not searchable on the website during the monitoring, as a result of the interview with the employee of the City Council it is determined that the municipality does have the work plan for the 1st quarter of 2021 - Ordinance # 71; Ordinance # 74 - 2nd quarter work plan; Ordinance # 36 - plan of the 3rd quarter, but for the given time they are not uploaded to the website, which can be considered as a regression in this regard.

The main challenge in the activities of the municipality is the lack of a monitoring system and the necessary forms for assessing the satisfaction of the population. In this regard, meetings of the "working group" with the competent persons are planned in order to raise the issue, develop the mentioned forms, and adopt them in a timely manner. It is important for the municipality to increase the level of public confidence, which is why they want this issue to be resolved as soon as possible, the prolongation of the issue is due to the spread of the Covid pandemic.

The City Council has a newly created electronic case administration page where citizens can register; the meetings with citizens are held in the City Council 4 hours a day. According to the monitoring data, up to 40 meetings with the mayor and up to 30 deputies were registered.

According to the registration of the City Center Citizens' Public Center, 95 letters have been submitted to the City Council, to which replies were made within 10 days. The City Hall has received 47 letters and correspondence, the electronic registration of them has not been carried out (although the self-government plans electronic systematization of the incoming correspondence), the incoming correspondence is addressed to the relevant addressees for the response.

Professional retraining of staff is a direct duty of the self-government, monitoring has shown that no significant progress has been made in this regard. An article has been included in the budget for the retraining and qualification rising of employees in the amount of 1% of the salary, which, in the monetary denomination amounts to GEL 7000.

The monitoring reveals that public servants were trained (online, in strict compliance with Covid -regulation) on the following issues: access to e-services, agricultural programs and conditions for participation, participatory budgeting. A total of 10 trainings have been conducted.

The data of the previous monitoring remain unchanged, from persons participating in trainings, the representatives of local self-government 30% are from the City Council, 35-40% - the City Hall.

Local self-governments hold regular meetings for the quality management of their activities, which is reflected in the relevant protocols, although today they are not posted on the Internet.

To share best practice/experience, Tsageri Municipality participated in a meeting where successful examples from the practice of Tbilisi City Council were presented. The result of the fourth monitoring is important - the official delegation of the City Hall and the City Council of Tsageri Municipality visited Estonia to exchange experience on local governments, strategic planning, development of public services and best practices, where partner organizations implementing the mentioned (PAR) project in Tsageri also participated. Within the framework of the project, discussions were also held on the topic: "**Achieved results in Tsageri municipality, exchange of success stories from other (friendly) municipalities",** where representatives of Tsageri Municipality were given the opportunity to get acquainted with the practice of Khoni municipality in drawing up a petition, as well as an example of Tskaltubo municipality in relation to civil budgeting.

➢ INCLUSIVENESS

After the previous monitoring, there have been no positive changes regarding the construction of a ramp at the administrative building; the old structure of the building does not easily allow building a ramp, therefore additional funding must be attracted to resolve the issue positively.

As a result of interviews with representatives of City Hall and the City Council, it became clear that by the order of the mayor (January 2019, order N45), a commission was set up to work with people with disabilities. Accordingly, knowledge of the law on their part is ensured.

As a result of the monitoring, the text form of the vacancy announcement template was evaluated, in which restrictive, discriminatory phrases were not found.

A review of the website (www.tsageri.gov.ge) shows that gender statistics are available on the website, **namely**: City Hall employees by category and by gender, of which 40% are fixed: 6 women and 25 men.

Gender statistics are available on the website (**www.tsageri.gov.ge**), during the fourth monitoring the rate did not change in City Council -10%, and in the City Hall - 11%.

As a result of the monitoring, it was established that City Council has a Commission on Health and Social Affairs, the head of which was trained to study the specific needs of vulnerable groups. City Hall has identified social workers who have also been trained to address the specific needs of vulnerable groups. **It should be noted that the Needs Survey reports are not currently available on the Website.**

On the website of the municipality, in the main window there is a visible "Create Petition" report, there are also different forms: application form, complaint form. The registration of those wishing to attend the City Council sessions is not made electronically, although the interview showed that there have been applications made. On the website, in the main window, there is a visible "Request Information", there are no statistics on the use of these services by citizens.

A previous monitoring also revealed that there is no official translation service in the municipality and there is no need for this service. The approach to the issue remains unchanged during the fourth monitoring as well.

There is a Gender Council functioning at City Council, Citizens' Advisory Coun-

cil at the City Hall, which meets once a year. There is a practice of setting up temporary councils.

A participatory budget is not specifically spelled out, although there is a social budget that Tsageri Municipality has identified as a priority for 2020. The partner organization "Active Citizen - Accountable Government" within the framework of this project is implementing a small project on participation and gender budgeting, in which representatives of the municipality and relevant services actively interact. Trainings were held, boxes were placed in public places, where citizens have the opportunity to participate, put forward the idea of developing their city/village. There is an opinion and interest to include these components in the budget for 2022.

 According to Decree No. 25 of the Social Service, the Culture and Sports Service has special programs for people with disabilities, in April there will be sports competitions with the participation of people with disabilities. There are 2 meal centers functioning for the elderly, the disabled, and the helpless.

The contact person for relations with civil society organizations/working groups in the City Council is Eka Bendeliani - an employee of the City Council Staff Office, in the City Hall - Vasil Saghinadze.

➤ CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

MONITORING FINDINGS:

During the fourth monitoring, in Tsageri Municipality, a significant change was revealed as a result of the work of the "working groups" regarding the approval of the Code of Ethics. In conclusion, Tsageri Municipality successfully cooperates with local partner organizations, as evidenced by a visit to Estonia, where they had the opportunity to learn about the electronic system, in the framework of a joint exchange of experiences and sharing of successful practices of the municipalities. Work is also underway to introduce a participatory and gender budget within small grants programs.

Along with the positive changes, there are still challenges to overcome, which will be reflected again in the list of recommendations. Tsageri Municipality is moving forward with the implementation of the recommendations, which contributes to the improvement of an effective, transparent, and inclusive model.

RECOMMENDATIONS DEVELOPED BASED ON THE OUTCOMES OF THE FOURTH MONITORING CARRIED OUT IN TSAGERI MUNICIPALITY.

- *Make the days and hours of reception of and consultations with citizens by the City Hall and the City Council public officials available to the population electronically on the website of the municipality;*

- *Develop the necessary forms for the evaluation of municipal services;*

- *Clearly define anti-corruption measures and plans in the municipality, which should be made available to all interested persons;*

- *It is necessary for administrative buildings to be adapted to the needs of people with disabilities;*

- *It is advisable for the municipality to introduce a civic budgeting model in a timely manner;*

- *The municipality should develop and spell out an employee development plan.*

LANCHKHUTI MUNICIPALITY

THE FOURTH REPORT OF THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REFORM (PAR) ROADMAP MONITORING AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

➢ INTRODUCTION

For the successful implementation of the commitments undertaken for the Public Administration Reform (PAR) Roadmap in Georgia at the local level, it is very important to monitor the progress made in the implementation of the reform and the relevant political dialogue with the involvement of local civil society organizations.

In Lanchkhuti Municipality, the Fund "Sukhumi" and the partner organizations (Fund of Women Entrepreneurs and the Imereti Scientists' Union "Spectri") carried out the fourth interim monitoring of the "A Common Forum for CSOs from Imereti, Guria and Racha-Lechkhumi for Public Administration Reform Roadmap Monitoring".

Recommendations obtained on the basis of the three monitoring conducted so far were submitted to the local authorities for appropriate response and were advocated to be included in the local action plans by the working group set up under the project. Part of them have already been reflected in the municipal budget, policy documents, local politics.

This document is the fourth monitoring report in Lanchkhuti Municipality. The monitoring was conducted in July 2021 by Lanchkhuti civil society organizations - "Georgian Rural Council", "Lanchkhuti Information Center", under the leadership of the curator organization, the Imereti Scientists' Union "Spectri".

The activities carried out at this stage of the monitoring review various aspects of the provision of services to citizens by the municipality, especially in terms of e-services, and include local self-government activities in terms of transparency, efficiency, and inclusiveness/engagement.

THE AIM OF MONITORING

The purpose of this monitoring stage is to reflect the results achieved and the positive trends taking place in Lanchkhuti Municipality after the previous monitoring, to measure the progress achieved; identify existing challenges; develop relevant recommendations for the successful implementation of public administration reform at the local level.

MONITORING METHODOLOGY

Research Methodology - an appropriate plan was developed for monitoring; at the present stage, the same research tool was used as in previous monitoring and contained indicators to demonstrate the transparency, efficiency, and inclusiveness of self-government activities.

The following methods were used for monitoring: review of the official website of the municipality and other electronic resources: review of legislation, normative acts, regulations, ordinances regulating the activities of the municipality, requesting public information; communication with representatives of the relevant services of the municipality (mainly in online format, due to the limitations of the Covid 19 pandemic); comparison of data with previous monitoring results.

ANALYSIS OF THE OBTAINED RESULTS

Monitoring indicators were discussed according to three main elements: transparency, efficiency and inclusiveness.

➢ TRANSPARENCY

1) According to the monitoring materials, it is possible **to receive information about vacancies in Lanchkhuti Municipality electronically**; however, vacancies have not been announced since 2020.

2) Observations on the previous period show that **vacancies in the municipality are published within the timeframes provided by the Law on Public Service**.

3) The situation with the **indication of the information on the organizational structure, officials, their biographies, powers and responsibilities, as well as contact information (phone numbers, e-mail)** on the website of the municipality remains satisfactory. The innovative portal www.lcman.ge, created and introduced by the effort of the local community organizations in the municipality, also works smoothly and can also be accessed from the official website of the municipality (www.lanchkhuti.gov.ge).

It is worth noting that the application has been expanded and through it, in addition to members of the city council, you can already contact the mayor, deputy mayor, heads of services and departments, representatives of the City Hall and get answers from them. The platform shows how many emails were received, who received them, how many emails were unread, and by whom.

The www.lcman.ge portal promotes smooth and open communication between citizens and local governments and contributes significantly to the transparency of the municipality's activities.

4) In Lanchkhuti Municipality, positive dynamics continue in the sense that **financial reports, approved budget, budget execution reports for 3, 6, 9 months, annual report, procurement plan and reports are regularly published on the website** (last report date: 22.05.2021). All public information is published in accordance with the norms and terms established by law.

5) **The website** and the application www.lcman.ge **of the municipality include all important publicly available information, including:** biographies of officials, **date of meetings of the City Council/City Hall, agendas, minutes of meetings; normative acts adopted by City Council**; the practice of posting draft regulations and other documents on the site has been established, and those who wish can familiarize themselves with these documents in advance.

6) **Do local officials have reception hours/open consultations for citizens and is this data published on the municipality's website? -** At the given stage of monitoring, the reception time by the mayor on Fridays is 4 hours; Deputy Mayor - daily; Chairman of City Council - on Mondays - 4 hours; Deputy Chairman of the City Council - daily; Deputies - daily; Deputy Heads of Departments - daily. The progress lies in the fact that the partial lifting of restrictions on the pandemic has led to an improvement in the situation in terms of direct communication with citizens.

7) According to the materials of the previous monitoring, there were no **anti-corruption documents** in the municipality. There is a certain progress in the development of the anti-corruption regulations of the mayor's office, which should be approved in the near future (the period for preparing monitoring materials is July 2021).

➢ EFFICIENCY

1) According to the monitoring, the existing practice in the municipality continues and City Council **has a quarterly/annual work plan. The sessions are held in accordance with the regulations. Annual work plans are available on the website.**

2) With regard to the subject matter - **is there a practice of monitoring the activities of the City Hall services, have the terms and conditions of monitoring and the corresponding form been determined** - it became clear that the municipality has introduced the following practice: internal audit monitors the activities of the mayor's

services in accordance with the order of the mayor.

3) Based on the results of the previous monitoring, **the assessment of the population's satisfaction with municipal services in Lanchkhuti Municipality** has not been carried out. At this stage, there is a visible progress in this regard: at this stage of monitoring, it is obvious that "Lanchkhuti Information Center" has developed and conducted a study of the level of satisfaction of the population with municipal services. The results were presented to the mayor's office. In addition, the "Georgian Rural Council", commissioned by the City Hall, conducts a survey of the degree of satisfaction of the population with social programs.

It should be noted that this practice took into account the recommendation of the previous monitoring - *"Using the resources of civil society organizations, individuals, professional groups in the municipality to collect evidence-based data"*. The municipality has started to conduct surveys on the side, which is an important step forward.

4) The monitoring identified the **number of days per month for meetings in the City Hall, City Council**. According to the information received, the situation has improved: after the removal of the pandemic restrictions, the following number of days are allocated per month for communication with citizens: With the mayor - 4; With the Deputy Mayor - 21; With the Heads of Services and Departments - 21; With the Chairman of the City Council- 21; With the Deputy Chairman of City Council - 21; With City Council members - 21.

5) The positive practice revealed by the latest monitoring continues **in terms of responding to citizens' letters and complaints, data registration** (average number of days, degree of response, feedback): Statistics of citizens' letters/complaints at the City Council are carried out automatically through the City Council program www.lc-man.ge. 68 letters have been sent as of now; no unanswered letters from the members of City Council (for the monitoring period) have been registered. Although the platform is newly introduced in the City Hall, 4 letters were sent to the Mayor/Deputy Mayors in 3 days, 18 letters to the heads of services, 8 letters to the heads of departments and 1 letter to the representatives of the Mayor.

Observations show that the City Hall responds to the request of public information in a maximum of 10 days (actually 4-5 days). On personal letter or complaint, on average - within 3 days. In 2021, 71 letters were received.

6) The monitoring showed that Lanchkhuti **Municipality, as in the previous period, has a personnel development plan in place**. It is compiled annually based on a survey of professional needs conducted by the HR department using the employee ap-

praisal system. Staff training needs are identified through questionnaires and surveys. Information on training programs and the needs required to improve their qualifications is based on an annual survey of staff. The questions identified in them define the topics on which the curricula are based.

7) **The number of trainings conducted for local self-government representatives,** according to the monitoring, in 2021 was 7. Among them, three trainings were conducted for officials. In all three cases the topic was "training in managerial skills". The training was delivered by the Audit Institute. It was funded from the municipal budget. In Lanchkhuti Municipality, 1% of the salary fund provided by the budget is spent on professional development, which is defined by law. In this regard, compared to the previous monitoring, when this amount was not used, there is a noticeable progress.

8) The percentage of local self-government representatives participating in the trainings is 22%. The number of training participants has increased compared to the previous monitoring.

9) **The situation in terms of using tools or equipment in a quality way by the local self-government** has not changed: for example, in the field of knowledge management, the exchange of information between different departments and services is put into practice.

10) According to the officials of the municipality, **during the last year there have been no meetings to exchange information, to exchange best practices/experiences** with other local self-governments. The reason named is the limitations because of the current pandemic.

➢ INCLUSIVENESS

1) In ensuring citizen participation and equal conditions, special attention is paid **to creating adequate environment for persons with disabilities**. **The issue of arranging ramps in administrative buildings is on the agenda in the first place**. In this respect, the municipality has seen some minor positive changes. Access to the service center, located on the ground floor, has become accessible for persons with disabilities.

2) Monitoring shows that there is certain knowledge about the **legislation adopted by the state on inclusiveness in the municipality (City Hall, City Council).** This is evidenced by programs aimed at helping children with disabilities, children with special needs and orphans under the age of 18; Transport program for children's rehabilitation.

3) Based on the study of the text of vacancies and the criteria in the municipality, it can be said that the **advertised vacancies do not contain signs of discriminatio**n, although there are no incentives for women, persons with disabilities, and other groups.

4) According to the monitoring data, the **share of women employed** in the local self-government bodies has not changed: 54% in the City Hall, 78% in the City Council; the City Council staff: men - 5, women - 17, members of the City Council: men - 28, women - 4.

5) The **share of women in managerial positions in the local self-government bodies** has not changed either: City Hall - 54%; City Council - 20%. It should be noted that, despite the well-functioning of the registration system in the municipality, the practice of producing gender-disaggregated data has not been introduced.

6) As in the previous monitoring, it turned out that **there is a person in the municipality responsible for communication with vulnerable groups:** in the City Council - the issue is supervised by the chairman of the Gender Council; At the City Hall - a social service specialist.

According to the monitoring materials, the Social Service conducts a study of the specific needs of beneficiaries from vulnerable groups. Social programs are aimed at meeting the needs of this group of people. This report has already mentioned good practices implemented in the municipality in terms of needs assessment, but it should be noted that the assessment reports are not available on the website.

7) Various forms of e-services have been introduced in Lanchkhuti Municipality to ensure citizen participation. The picture of the use of specific services by citizens is as follows: received letters in 2021 - 308; Petitions - 0, Complaints - 0; 34 citizens received answers to their questions on the websites www.lanchkhuti.gov.ge, www.lcman.ge.

Progress has been achieved in comparison with the previous monitoring: this is the introduction of the www.lcman.ge program in the City Hall to receive full feedback from the responsible persons.

8) The monitoring showed that the municipality does not have a **translation/interpreting service for non-Georgian speakers**. Judging by the materials received, this is not necessary at this stage.

9) Public Advisory Council at the City Hall, the Gender Equality Council, and several working groups operate in the municipality. The minutes of the meetings are published on the site in fragments. Compared to the previous monitoring, there is progress - a council of youth advisers has been created in the City Council.

10) Lanchkhuti Municipality has social, participatory, gender budgets. The share of the gender budget in relation to the total budget is 0.049% (5000 GEL), participatory budgeting - 0.569% (69,900 GEL), social programs - 5.49% (625,500 GEL). Progress lies in the fact that the Gender Equality Program is reflected in the budget as an independent program.

The implementation of the participatory budgeting program is going upward. This is confirmed by the increase in its financing (the initial amount in the budget - 69,900 GEL. At the time of monitoring - 100,000 GEL). The highly flexible participatory budgeting portal system allows you to submit, discuss, and vote for the ideas electronically. See. https://idealanchkhuti.ge/.

It is important that citizens are not limited in submitting projects and can put forward a variety of innovative initiatives in a wide variety of areas.

11) The municipality still **does not have a valid regulation/decree on the involvement of vulnerable groups in the decision-making process at the local level or the provision of public services to them.** Initiative - online survey "What would you like to be done at your place of residence?" It continues, which is a measure to encourage the participation of citizens, but no great activity of citizens in this regard has been observed.

12) According to the monitoring materials, the local self-government has a contact person, **both at the City Council and the City Hall for relations with public organizations/working groups**. Certain progress has been made in expanding collaboration with civil society organizations. Proof of this is the outsourcing of the needs assessment.

➢ CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSION

The fourth monitoring of the implementation of the public administration reform in Lanchkhuti Municipality revealed the situation in the self-government in terms of reform progress, which showed that there is a noticeable progress and appropriate measures have been taken to address the problems identified during the previous monitoring. It should be noted that most of the recommendations developed as a result of monitoring have been implemented in the municipality.

The expansion of the www.lcman.ge portal has had a significant impact on the prog-

ress in the transparency of the municipality's activities. The City Hall component was added to the Complaints and Letters program, which ensured the integration of the City Hall into this innovative system of communication with citizens.

Significant progress is made in the implementation of anti-corruption measures: an anti-corruption charter of the City Hall has been developed.

It should be noted that the municipality has a well-functioning record system for replies to letters and complaints received from citizens, although there is a problem with entering gender-disaggregated data and the availability of gender-related information on the website.

Significant progress has been made in studying the needs of citizens, studying satisfaction with municipal services, and identifying the effects of social programs. In Lanchkhuti Municipality, this service was outsourced from local civil society organizations. It should be noted that the data obtained has not been introduced to the general public.

To ensure the efficiency of the service, the introduction of methods for researching professional needs and identifying training needs based on them is encouraged. There is a positive point that, in contrast to the previous period, the municipality uses the amount provided by the law (1% of the budget) to improve the professional qualifications of its officials.

It should be noted that the resources of e-services in the municipality are quite well-functional, electronic platforms for citizen participation are provided, innovative and complex forms of participation in budgeting are involved (as a positive result, the possibility of increasing funding should be considered), although other forms of participation are less commonly used: there have been no petitions filed from citizens; there is an inactive participation in the online survey - "What would you like to be done at your place of residence?"

There are various councils and working groups functioning in the municipality. Recently, a Youth Advisory Council was added to the City Hall. The separate reflection of the gender program in the budget can be seen as a positive result. However, it should be noted that only fragmentary information on the activities of local mechanisms of interaction with citizens is available on the website.

According to the monitoring materials, there was no significant breakthrough in the municipality in terms of creating equal conditions for people with disabilities, and the issue of introducing appropriate social infrastructure and specific programs is of particular importance to them.

RECOMMENDATIONS

TO LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT - TO ENSURE TRANSPARENCY, EFFICIENCY, AND INCLUSIVENESS OF SERVICES:

■ *It is necessary to use the resources of the website to inform citizens about local programs and current political processes. Periodically update the mandatory public information and introduce the accountability of the units responsible for the administration of the website to the relevant structures of the self-government, and to the general public;*

■ *It is necessary to continue the successful practice in the municipality in terms of registration and systematization of statistical databases. Of particular importance are the creation of gender-segregated databases and the introduction of information on the web site;*

■ *It is important to further institutionalize the practice of needs assessment, municipal service satisfaction assessment. It is desirable to ensure that study results are made available to local stakeholders. Use the information obtained as a result of the research to introduce new programs, refine the scope and criteria of existing programs;*

■ *It is important to more widely inform the public about the activities of the councils and various working groups in the municipality, to facilitate the circulation of information and interactive communication between citizens and the given groups, so that they can act as mediators between citizens and the self-government. It is advisable to post more comprehensible information about their activities on the website (composition of the council members, contact information, action plans; minutes of meetings, etc.);*

■ *It is necessary for the self-government to promote the use of local forms of participation by citizens provided by law; raise awareness of e-petitions, online surveys, and civic initiatives; take encouraging measures; use the resources of civil society organizations to make citizens more active;*

■ *It is important to continue the successful practice of procuring services and using the outsourcing method in the municipality. Work closely with qualified local civil society organizations to procure needed services;*

■ *It is necessary to introduce measures to ensure an equal environment for people with disabilities. The issue of introducing appropriate social infrastructure and specific programs becomes of special importance for them.*

OZURGETI MUNICIPALITY

THE FOURTH REPORT OF THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REFORM (PAR) ROADMAP MONITORING AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

➢ INTRODUCTION

For the successful implementation of the commitments undertaken for the Public Administration Reform (PAR) Roadmap in Georgia at the local level, it is very important to monitor the progress made in the implementation of the reform and the relevant political dialogue with the involvement of local civil society organizations to ensure the success of the reform.

The fourth interim monitoring was conducted in Ozurgeti Municipality within the framework of the project - "A Common Forum for CSOs from Imereti, Guria and Racha-Lechkhumi for Public Administration Reform Roadmap Monitoring" - commissioned by the Imereti Scientists' Union "Spectri".

This document presents the monitoring results. The materials contained in the report are based on evidence obtained by local civil society organizations - the Center for Education and Equality and the Young Teachers' Union.

Prior to this stage, three monitoring sessions had been conducted within the framework of the project. The resulting recommendations were presented to local authorities for appropriate actions and they were advocated by a working group established under the project to be incorporated into local action plans. Some of them have already been reflected in the municipal budget, policy documents, local politics.

The activities carried out at this stage of monitoring include various aspects of the provision of services by the municipality, especially from the point of view of e-services, and include the activities of self-government bodies in terms of transparency, efficiency, inclusiveness/engagement.

THE AIM OF MONITORING

The purpose of this monitoring phase is to reflect the results achieved and the positive trends after the previous monitoring in Ozurgeti Municipality, to measure the progress achieved; identify existing challenges; develop relevant recommendations for the successful implementation of public administration reform at the local level.

MONITORING METHODOLOGY

Research Methodology - an appropriate plan was developed to conduct the monitoring; at the present stage, the same research tool was used as in previous monitoring and it contained indicators to demonstrate the transparency, efficiency, and inclusiveness of the self-government activities.

The following methods were used for monitoring: review of the official website of the municipality and other electronic resources; review of legislation, normative acts, regulations, ordinances regulating the activities of the municipality, request for public information; communication with the representatives of the relevant services of the municipality (mainly in online format, due to the limitations of the Covid 19 pandemic); comparison of data with previous monitoring results.

Preconditions and limitations of the monitoring: the monitoring was carried out in July 2021. The process of action was as transparent as possible, resulting in proper acceptance on the part of the information issuers; high awareness of the goals, methods, and monitoring tools. Representatives of various structures of the municipality answered all questions in a timely manner.

ANALYSIS OF THE OBTAINED RESULTS

Monitoring indicators were discussed according to three main elements: transparency, efficiency and inclusiveness.

➢ **TRANSPARENCY**

1) Access to online vacancies was used as one of the indicators for identifying the transparency in the activities of the local self-government in Ozurgeti. At this stage, only a vacancy dated January 21, 2021 has been posted on the municipality's website. Vacant position: the 1st category Junior Specialist of the 4th rank Public Institution.

2) Likewise the previous period, **vacancies in the municipality are published within the timeframes provided by the Law on Public Service**.

3) At this stage of the monitoring, **a study was also carried out on the organizational structure, biographies of officials, their powers and responsibilities, as well as contact information posted on the website**. The situation remained unchanged between the third and the fourth monitoring; however, there is a certain progress – an

updated organizational structure is posted on the municipality's website, implying a graphic chart, where one can acquaint himself/herself with the individual structural units. The works in this regard were begun during the previous monitoring period.

4) The review of the website of the municipality shows that the financial reports are published on it, the 2021 budget of the self-governing unit, the quarterly budget fulfillment reports of Ozurgeti Municipality, the annual report on the budget fulfillment of N(N)Les are searchable. Certain progress is noticeable in this regard.

It should be noted that the "visual budget", which is one of the tools of transparency, was still working poorly on the website during the third monitoring period, but at this stage, the data is being clarified, the trial information is placed in the database and the function is working smoothly.

Text versions of budgets are also posted on the municipality's website, although citizens often find it difficult to read the budget. They are especially interested in the field of the website - "Where does our money go?" It allows the website user to get acquainted with the dynamics of spending the budget for 2016-2020 through easy-to-understand diagrams.

5) **Mandatory public information is posted** on the website of the municipality, as in the previous period. Any citizen can get acquainted with the agenda, protocols, normative acts, resolutions, reports, of the City Council sittings. There is a separate field for normative acts on the website, where information is constantly updated.

Announcements of the City Council/City Hall sessions (date, agenda, and protocols) are posted on the website of the municipality. Resolutions and ordinances adopted by the City Council are also posted on the website.

6) The outcomes of the monitoring conducted at different times show that the Municipality's City Council approves the **schedule of receiving and meeting citizens** by the members of the City Council, which is published on the website of the Municipality (see the link) http://ozurgeti.mun.gov.ge/?p=3035

In a pandemic situation, remote communication is also taking place, for example, a live broadcast of the City Council member's reports, which allows him/her to communicate with their electorate. The recordings are placed in the video-archive of the "Press Center" functional.

It is possible to see the reception hours of citizens by the municipal officials on the

website of the municipality. In contrast to the data available at the third monitoring stage, citizen reception/open consultations were resumed during the fourth monitoring period. The Chairman of the City Council, Deputy Chairman, Deputies receive citizens on a daily basis (see link http://ozurgeti.mun.gov.ge/?p=3035 http://ozurgeti.mun.gov.ge/?p=3040)

Reception of citizens is taking place at Ozurgeti Municipality City Hall every Wednesday, from 10:00 am. According to the representatives of the relevant services of the City Hall and the City Council, the Mayor together with the Deputy Curators and the Heads of the Services discusses the needs of the citizens and gives the assignments to timely respond to them.

7) Ozurgeti is one of the first municipalities to have a guiding anti-corruption document: "Strategy and Action Plan of the Municipality of Ozurgeti for Ensuring Integrity and Transparency". A strategy monitoring framework and evaluation methodology have been developed in collaboration with international organizations. The working meeting of the members of the Anti-Corruption Council is broadcast online and citizens have the opportunity to monitor their activities. Progress in this regard is visible.

➢ EFFICIENCY

1) The monitoring revealed whether **the City Council has a quarterly, semi-annual, annual work plans and whether they have been made available to the citizens**. It became clear from the materials obtained that, as in the reporting period of the previous monitoring, at this stage the citizens have the opportunity to get information about the 2021 work plan of the City Council through the website.

2) **What the practice of monitoring the activities of the City Hall services is lik**e – was also identified; whether the deadlines for monitoring and the appropriate form have been determined: the study of the issue shows that the activities of the City Hall are controlled by the City Hall's Audit Service within the limits stipulated by law. There is a special form for this and the corresponding deadlines are determined by the anti-corruption strategy.

3) **Assessment of the satisfaction of the population with services and the forms required for assessment** are introduced in the municipality. This service was launched as part of the Open Government Partnership Action Plan and continues the successful

practice of the previous monitoring period. (Information - on the link: https://www.open-govpartnership.org/members/georgia/commitments/GE0088/?fbclid=IwAR1AFHe-X9i08JIER_fFDVPI-Qcd7KM4c2YxJ3zMkpbDa0ZqNO_rYnRB7_o).

The Center of Innovation and Civic Development (CICD) in cooperation with the Ozurgeti City Hall, assessed the satisfaction of the population with municipal services last year. The results of the study were discussed in previous monitoring materials. In response to the identified problems, certain measures were planned in the municipality, such as the provision of waste containers to the communities; improvement of local roads in villages. Despite the certain efforts made, the monitoring materials show that a large number of stray dogs are still a serious problem in the municipality (the problem was also discussed in the local media).

4) The monitoring materials make it obvious that the current practice of online communication with citizens continues. Live broadcast of sessions, introduction of reports allows for interactive communication. Citizens have the opportunity to ask questions in live format during the live broadcast of the City Council session and receive answers (see the link http://ozurgeti.mun.gov.ge/?page_id=5167). In addition, citizens can view the recording of an event of interest to them through the video archive of the website.

5) Through the monitoring **the average number of days to respond to citizens' letters and complaints (degree of response, feedback)** were revealed; as well as statistics on citizens' letters and complaints are produced; whether incoming letters from citizens are analyzed and reports are prepared: according to the information received, the letters sent by the citizen are answered within the framework of the General Administrative Code, the letters are registered in an electronic format.

It should be noted that the City Council of Ozurgeti Municipality does not register complaints. According to the information received, in case there are applications, it is planned to create a register. The situation in this regard has not changed.

6) The City Council of Ozurgeti Municipality has **developed an annual plan based on the evaluation of a public servant**. However, the information mentioned on the website is not searchable.

7) Compared to the previous monitoring, the picture has changed significantly in terms of measures to improve the qualifications of the self-government personnel. The number of trainings provided for by the order for City Council members is 10. For the City Council staff - 5. More than 30 online meetings and trainings have been held.

8) The monitoring could not determine the percentage of the local self-government representatives participating in the trainings (**for the existing monitoring period** and during the last year).

9) According to the information obtained, workshops and trainings are held **in terms of knowledge management of self-government staff for quality management of activities**. The head of the staff, as a trainer, conducts workshops, and the heads of departments - coaching. These educational activities are especially important for more efficient use of e-service modules put in place in the municipality.

10) **Various activities were held to exchange information and to share best practices/experiences with other local self-governments**. Sharing international best practices continues within the framework of the Open Government Partnership local program. Furthermore, exchange meetings with various self-governments of Georgia are held at the initiative of international and local non-governmental organizations, the central government, or the municipalities themselves. Representatives of Ozurgeti Municipality themselves acquaint with the successful practices of other municipalities and, at the same time, share their experience with them. The practice of the participatory budgeting model of Ozurgeti Municipality - "Be a co-ruler" - was shared by different municipalities.

➢ INCLUSIVENESS

At this stage of monitoring, the situation with the participation of citizens in the municipality of Ozurgeti was studied.

1) One of the most notable indicators in this regard is the issue of **providing equal opportunities for various vulnerable groups of citizens, especially people with disabilities**, in particular, the provision of adapted social infrastructure. According to the information received at the previous stages of monitoring, the ramps existed only on the first floor. At the moment, there is progress: by the decision of the City Council, an article was introduced into the budget, which provides for the optimal adaptation of the building for people with disabilities.

2) The monitoring revealed the degree of awareness of the municipality (City Hall, City Council) about the **legislation on inclusiveness adopted by the stat**e. Ozurgeti Municipality City Council is familiar with and envisages the Convention on the Rights of

Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). According to the 2021 budget of Ozurgeti Municipality, there are sub-programs in the article on education, which are aimed at promoting inclusive education.

It also aims to help citizens registered or actually residing in the municipality to address gender-related issues and raise awareness of the issue. The sub-program provides for the one-time financial assistance to victims of violence, registered or residing in the territory of the municipality - in the amount of GEL 500. It also provides funding for various activities in the direction of inclusive education.

The monitoring revealed whether the applications of the municipality **about vacancies are non-discriminatory**: with the help of the materials received, the municipality sticks to the non-discriminatory approach when announcing vacancies. There are no restrictions based on age, gender, status etc.

3) In accordance with the terms of participation in the competition indicated in the announcement published on the website of Ozurgeti Municipality, when advertising vacancies, for example, promotional ads are used to attract women and people with disabilities. See the Link - http://ozurgeti.mun.gov.ge/?cat=86

4) According to the monitoring results, the total share of women employed in local self-government bodies is 83%. The website does not fully present gender statistics.

5) The monitoring revealed that the percentage of women in senior positions in local self-government bodies increased by 5% compared to the previous monitoring. Progress in this regard is evident.

6) The situation has not changed in the sense that there is **a person in the municipality responsible for liaising with vulnerable groups, both in the City Council and in the City Hall**.

Previous monitoring materials showed that the municipality is introducing the practice of studying the needs of vulnerable groups. Nevertheless, no tangible changes in this regard have yet been observed.

7) In the City Council and the City Hall of Ozurgeti Municipality, there is still no regulation on **electronic services to promote citizen participation**. However, various forms of e-services are available, and in this regard, positive dynamics continues in Ozurgeti Municipality. It is possible to submit petitions in electronic form; there is a register of petitions. In 2021, two petitions were filed that were referred to the mayor's office for response. It is possible to send letters and complaints electronically.

The positive dynamics of civic budgeting - "Be a co-ruler" - remains, the program is still distinguished by the involvement of citizens. All submitted projects are searchable on the website https://votes.oz.gov.ge/, the criteria for participation are well explained. Responsible persons of the municipality stated that in response to the increased interest of citizens, it is possible to increase the budget of the program.

8) The monitoring showed that the issue of **translation services for non-Georgian speakers** to provide equal services to citizens, as in the previous monitoring, has not been resolved. When needed, the resources of the regional administration are used.

9) **Citizens' Advisory Council**, **Gender Council, and the Council of Disabled Persons, Electoral Council, Public Council under the City Council, Youth City Council, Youth Gender Council,** and **various working groups operate in the municipality**. The working group to support the implementation of public administration reform is in an active phase of activity. The site searches for information only about the members of the Advisory Council, in the minutes of the Council's meetings - only the data for 2019 are searchable.

10) The budget of Ozurgeti Municipality allocated GEL 1 639 000 for the implementation of social and healthcare programs, which are distributed among 16 different programs. Monitoring shows that the municipal budget includes a gender budget: GEL 30,000 was invested in the development of a gender equality strategy. GEL 20,000 are allocated for various activities to promote gender policy (assistance to victims of violence, arrangement of a women's room). GEL 300 000 were allocated for the civil budgeting.

11) **The municipality still does not have a regulation/decree on the involvement of vulnerable groups in the decision-making process at the local level or the provision of public services to them.** Based on the materials of the previous monitoring, it was planned to implement it; assessment of the needs of vulnerable groups together with donors; involving them in obtaining evidence-based information and in designing budget programs based on it. At this stage of monitoring, activities in this area have not yet entered an active phase.

12) Monitoring shows that in the City Hall and especially in the City Council there is **a person responsible for relations with civil society organizations/working groups**. The positive dynamics of communication with both international and local non-governmental organizations was identified.

➢ CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSION

Monitoring of the results of public administration reform in Ozurgeti Municipality showed that the current situation indicates that the reform processes are irreversible, although there are challenges remaining and close cooperation between the local government and the civil sector is needed to address them.

The situation in the municipality is satisfactory in terms of the transparency of local processes, and in this regard, the contribution of electronic resources is important. Setting up of the website and simplifying the functionality for the users are taking place step by step, but not all the resources of the website are used properly, it is still necessary to fill in certain fields and create a more flexible data retrieval system.

The positive point is that the website administration offers users more active cooperation to place an order, but it is important to correctly popularize this issue, to increase the user's digital literacy. For example, there is no adequate activity of citizens in the "field" of online surveys.

From the point of view of increasing the efficiency of the service, the question of the correct introduction of the methodology for identifying needs remains. The recommendation of the previous monitoring remains on the agenda - the need to reduce the dependence of nongovernmental organizations on qualifications and resources in this area and to improve the qualifications of local officials.

Inclusive policies and adapted infrastructure for people with disabilities have not yet been properly implemented in the municipality.

Despite the various innovative forms of communication with citizens introduced in the municipality, there are still gaps in relation to letters received from citizens, systematization, and analysis of complaints. Audit results are less accessible. There is a need for more dynamics in promoting anti-corruption measures. The deadlines and forms of monitoring the services of the City Hall are not visible on the website of the municipality.

Despite certain positive results, it is desirable to ensure a higher rate of implementation of the anti-corruption strategy in the municipality.

RECOMMENDATIONS

TO LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT - TO ENSURE TRANSPARENCY, EFFICIENCY, AND INCLUSIVENESS OF SERVICES:

■ *It is necessary to make maximum use of the electronic platforms of the municipality, especially web resources, to ensure the transparency of local processes, increase the motivation of website users to better communicate with citizens; ensure appropriate measures to improve their digital literacy;*

■ *It is important to further simplify the website's functionality; Create a flexible search engine that ensure correct loading of the content of various fields and systematic updating of information;*

■ *It is necessary to create and implement a structured methodology for identifying and assessing the needs of citizens, assessing services and other evidence-based information. Allocation of adequate human and financial resources for the qualification of self-government employees in this direction;*

■ *It is important for the municipality to have a clearly defined plan for the timing and forms of monitoring the services of the City Hall, which will be made available on the website along with the relevant reports;*

■ *It is important that the municipality's website to visually present the activities of local engagement mechanisms. Make the activities of various councils, working groups, including the Gender Equality Council; action plans; protocols, accessible to citizens. Provide more interaction with them;*

■ *It is important to make better use of electronic systems to create a register of complaints, a register of referrals, and to ensure flexibility in the registry system;*

■ *It is important to continue the successful practice of participatory budgeting. It is desirable to include a participatory budgeting program as a separate/independent program in the budget, which will help to load the submitted projects with more diverse social content;*

■ *Commitment to provide an adapted social environment for people with disabilities must be adequately fulfilled - through the arranging of appropriate infrastructure, social protection, cultural and educational activities for them.*

A P P E N D I X

THE MONITORING MECHANISM (QUESTIONNAIRE) FOR PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REFORM ROADMAP MONITORING IN 8 TARGET MUNICIPALITIES

Transparency	How will the monitoring be conducted/ what documents have to be analyzed	Indicators/ data of the third monitoring	Basic indicators The forth monitoring results/ indicators	Progress achieved since the third monitoring In case progress is not observed, describe whether any changes are being planned. If yes, please explain
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)		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. 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.	
5. 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	

6. 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?
	Analyzing the municipality website
	
	Calling the municipality hotline
			Yes/No
			
			Frequency:
			
			How many days per week?
			
			How many hours?	

7. 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?	

Effectiveness	How will the monitoring be conducted/ what documents have to be analyzed	Indicators/ data of the third monitoring	Basic indicators The forth monitoring results/ indicators	Progress achieved since the third monitoring In case progress is not observed, describe whether any changes are being planned. If yes, please explain
1. Is there an annual/ monthly plan for conducting Sakrebulo sessions?	Analyzing the information on the municipality website Interviewing a municipality representative		Yes/No	
2. Do the municipalities monitor activities of the departments of Mayor's office? Are the timeframes and monitoring forms determined?	Interviewing the municipality representative		Yes/No	
3. Have the forms for evaluating municipality services been developed?	Interviewing the municipality representative		Yes/No	

4. 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		Actual number of days	
5. Average number of days for answering complaints of citizens	Interviewing the Mayor's Office and/or Sakrebulo representatives Submitting a complaint from a citizen		Actual number of days	
6. Do the municipalities have a professional development plan for the staff?	Analyzing the municipality website Interviewing a representative of the self-government 's Human Resources Management Department		Yes/No	

7. 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	Interviewing a representative of the Self-government's Human Resources Management Department		1.Total number of trainings 2. Number of trainings over the last year	
8. Percentage of the local self-government representatives who have participated in trainings (total and over the past year)	Interviewing a representative of the Self-government's Human Resources Management Department		1.Percentage of training participants in total 2. Percentage of training participants over the last year	
9. Availability of any tools and techniques used by local self-government, such as: trainings, workshops, exchange of information between various departments for ensuring the quality of its activities (for example, for managing competencies)	Interviewing a representative of the Self-government's Human Resources Management Department		Yes/No If yes, which tools and techniques are used: regular meetings, exchange of information between various departments, trainings?	

10. 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	

Inclusiveness	How will the monitoring be conducted/ what documents have to be analyzed	Indicators/ data of the third monitoring	Basic indicators The forth monitoring results/ indicators	Progress achieved since the third monitoring In case progress is not observed, describe whether any changes are being planned. If yes, please explain
1. Are the Mayor's Office/ Sakrebulo buildings equipped with ramps?	Inspection		Yes/No	

2. 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	
3. Are the municipality vacancy announcements non-discriminatory?	Analyzing the vacancy announcements		Number of restrictions for the applicants (for example, by age, sex, status, etc.)	
4.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		Percentage of women employed	

5. What is the percentage of women working in senior positions in local self-govern-ment (Mayors, Deputy Mayors, Sakrebulo Chairpersons, Heads of commissions)	Interviewing a representative of the Self-government's Human Resources Management Department		Percentage of women working in senior positions	
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. Availability of e-services insuring citizen's participation: - submitting letters; - petitions; - complaints; - scheduling meetings, -receiving replies, etc.	Analyzing the municipality website Interviewing the self-government's Public Relations Department representative		List available forms	
8. Is the translation service available for non-Georgian speakers?	Interviewing the Self-government's Public Relations Department representative		Yes/No If not, explain the reason	
9. 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	

10. Do the munici-palities have: −Participatory budget? −Social budget? – Gender budget	Interviewing a representative of the Mayor's Office (Finance Department) Analyzing the municipality website		Yes/No Yes/No Yes/No The date of the last budget	
11. Does the mu-nicipality 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/pro-mote such an ap-proach?	Interviewing a municipality representative		Yes/No If yes, please list of documents and pro-grams	
12. Does the mu-nicipality have a focal point for cooperation with civil society orga-nizations/working groups?	Interviewing the Self-govern-ment's Public Relations De-partment repre-sentative		Yes/No	

MEETING IN VANI MUNICIPALITY

MEETING IN AMBROLAURI MUNICIPALITY

MEETING IN TERJOLA MUNICIPALITY

MEETING IN OZURGETI MUNICIPALITY

MEETING IN BAGDATI MUNICIPALITY

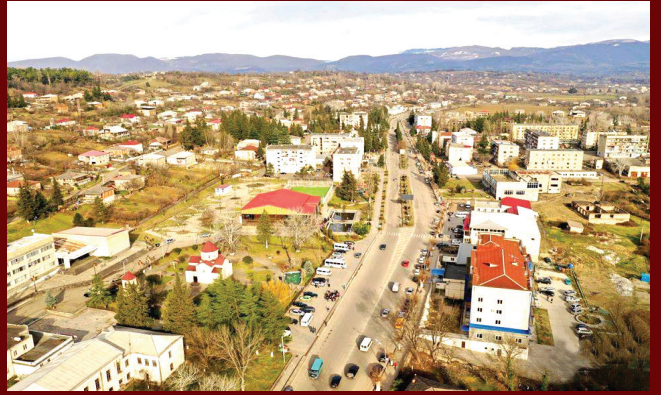**MEETING IN LANCHKHUTI MUNICIPALITY**

MEETING IN TSAGERI MUNICIPALITY

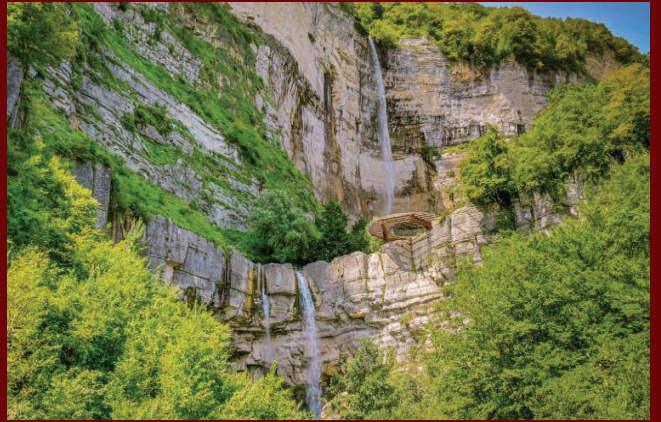**MEETING IN KHONI MUNICIPALITY**

VANI MUNICIPALITY

TERJOLA MUNICIPALITY

BAGDATI MUNICIPALITY

KHONI MUNICIPALITY

TSAGERI MUNICIPALITY

AMBROLAURI MUNICIPALITY

LANCHKHUTI MUNICIPALITY

OZURGETI MUNICIPALITY