





# Civic Engagement in Local Governance (CELoG) Program

**Quarterly Progress Report** 

Reporting period: 1 Janury-31 March 2016

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### LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AJC -	Asparez	Journalists'	Club

CRRC - Caucasus Research Resource Centers-Armenia

CELoG - Civic Engagement in Local Governance

CSO - Civil Society Organization

CFOA - Communities Finance Officers' Association

EPF - Eurasia Partnership Foundation

FoI – Freedom of Information

GOAM - Government of Armenia

ISTDC - Information Systems Development and Training Center

LG - Local Government

LSG - Local Self-government

MAB - Management Advisory Board

MICE - Media for Informed Civic Engagement

MIC - Media Initiatives Center

MMIS - Municipal Management Information System

MTAD- Ministry of Territorial Administration and Development

NA - National Assembly

NGO - Non-Governmental Organization

OAS - Organizational Activity Seminar

TARA - Territorial-Administrative Reform in Armenia

TIAC - Transparency International Anti-corruption Center

YPC - Yerevan Press Club

### **POLITICAL CONTEXT**

On February 14<sup>th</sup>, 2016 local elections were held in three newly formed communities of Tatev, Dilijan and Tumanyan. This was an important new phase for the system of local governance since these were the first elections in consolidated communities.

One of the major developments that took place during the reporting period was the political agreement reached between the ruling Republican Party and ARF Dashnaktsutyun. This agreement resulted in forming a coalition government withseveral new ministerial appointments and structural changes. Namely on February 24<sup>th</sup> the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Emergency Situations which was formed in 2015 was again restructured to Ministry of Territorial Administration and Development (MTAD) and Ministry of Emergency Situations. ARF Dashnaktsutyun representative David Loqyan, was appointed as the new Minster of MTAD.

Another important process launched by the Armenian authorities in the reporting period was the introduction of the draft electoral code that was aimed at adjustment of the electoral legislative framework to the needs of the parliamentary system.

The process of introduction and discussion of the draft Electoral code was perceived quite negatively by the political opposition and the big part of the civil society. One of the major reasons was the process of development and introduction of the draft. The initial draft was developed without any consultation with either civil society or other political parties. The first introduction and discussion of the draft was initiated by OSCE Armenian office in early March though the draft was made public and already submitted to the Venice commission in February.

### **SUMMARY OF CONDUCTED ACTIVITIES**

Objective 1:To sustain and improve civil society's ability to engage citizens and articulate their interests in local self-government and in the process of the implementation of the decentralization reform;

## Activity1.4 Development of methodological materials to be used in the trainings and monitoring (CFOA)

CFOA finished the development of the training methodology for the advisory bodies in 35 target communities. The methodology set the training's goals and objectives, target audience, the topics, deductive materials, training methods and tools, as well as the evaluation tools. The methodology contains 9 topics which are covering issues on LG in general, public participation, budgeting, monitoring and etc. Each topic has relevant supporting materials that will be handed out to training participants.

The draft version of the methodology has been sent to USAID for feedback and has been revised based on received comments and suggestions.

## Activity1.5 Trainings for the target community activists on data utilization and citizen journalism (Cons.)

CRRC-Armenia started communications with consortium members to launch the data utilization trainings for interested parties. The aim of the training is to introduce the tools to use and analyses the data and to apply it while making any kind of policy recommendations within the sphere of activities.

CRRC-Armenia also joined CFOA in their initiative for community training scheme and presented the findings of the household survey to Ashtarak and Oshakan communities. The event was well attended and the participants were engaged in the discussions following the presentation. Those two communities seemed well equipped for public consultations and intensively used modern tools and techniques to engage citizens in their decision making processes. CRRC-Armenia expressed readiness to share any additional info or provide any

extract from the survey in case they need some more details to better strategize their activities.

Besides, CRRC-Armenia will closely cooperate with CFOA to further conduct public presentations at their series of training for communities throughout the regions.

#### Activity 1.7 Journalists briefing on LSG (YPC)

During the reporting period, Yerevan Press Club in partnership with Media Initiative Center, prepared and organized a briefing entitled "International practice in LSG system reforms: decentralization consolidation", which was mostly concentrated on the international practice of LSG reforms. The briefing held at the premisesof Media Initiative Center on 10:30am. February 19, **CFOA** at president



VahanMovsisyan moderated the briefing. Invited speakers were PavelSwianiewicz, Head of the Department of Local Development and Policy, Faculty of Geography and Regional Studies, University of Warsaw, EU expert on financial and regional issues and Anthony Levitas, Senior Fellow, Watson Institute for International Studies, Brown University, expert on urban management and decentralization policy. Both speakers presented international practice of public participation and distribution of financial means and programs in the context of decentralization and consolidation of communities. In addition, speakers and moderator talked about local government elections in Tatev, Tumanyan and Dilijan on February 14, 2016, conducted for the first time after community consolidation.

The following media outlets participated in the briefing: <u>Civilnet</u>, <u>A1+ TV</u>, Media.am, Arminfo news agency, Media Initiative Center, Yerkir Media TV, etc.

## Activity 1.9 Ensuring the quality and user-friendliness of texts, media materials and web materials (EPF)

During the reporting period EPF assisted CFOA staff in development of the call for proposals and terms of reference for small grants competition to be announced by CFOA in April. EPF provided CFOA with its sample documents based on which CFOA experts developed the

RFA for the upcoming competition. EPF also assisted CFOA staff in developing the content of these documents. Namely the recommendations on possible directions, spheres and types of activities developed during EPF's Organizational Activity Seminar during the first program year were widely reflected in the RFA.

EPF also consulted AJC on redesign and revision of the quarterly newsletter. EPF staff held several consultations with AJC team and discussed possible improvements that may make the quarterly newsletter more user-friendly and dynamic. The new concept was introduced to CFOA and USAID and approved. In April 2016 the re-branded newsletter will be issued.

## Activity1.10. Cooperation with other development actors and other consortia (CFOA, EPF, AJC)

The Consortium continued its cooperation with other USAID funded consortia and other actors working in sphere of LG reform. Several cases of cooperation were registered during the reporting period.

During the strategic consultation organized by EPF for its InfoTun network, representatives of other USAID funded consortia were invited to introduce their Programs. Moreover, since InfoTun network is actively involved in both CELoG and MICE Programs, the process of the development of the strategy reflected a combination of objectives of the two Programs.

Another case of cooperation between CELoG and MICE Programs took place during the local elections in Tatev, Dilijan and Tumanyan communities. Both Programs were involved in monitoring the process each in its own capacity. This involvement created a natural ground for cooperation, particularly in cases where there were suspects about the possibility of violations. In such casesrepresentatives of the CELoG monitoring group alerted colleagues from the MICE.

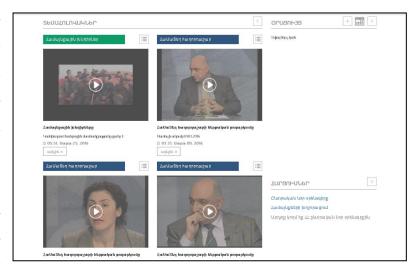
CELoG continued cooperation with MICE Program during the visit of international experts invited by CFOA. The two Programs have jointly organized a press conference for representatives of media outlets taking part in CELoG trainings and briefings and MICE Program's target media outlets (More details available in description of the Activity 1.7 above).

Cooperation with other partners also took place during the reporting period. CELoG was

invited to take part in the annual meeting of organizations involved in the implementation of LG reform in Armenia held by GIZ. CELoG team introduced Program activities and major outcomes of the first Program year. The meeting was followed by an agreement to involve CELoG consortium in the network facilitated by GIZ on regular basis.

### Activity 1.13 Development of the Consortium web portal and other IT tools of the Program(ISDTC)

During the reporting period **ISDTC** finalized has the development of the celog.am web portal and launched the process of filling the portal with information. Namely the portal consists of various sections, such news. Program description, about the consortium, etc. that is being filled. In parallel with that



Screenshot of the videos section of the portal

ISDTC has developed a manual for consortium member organizations so that every member organization can post information on the portal. During next reporting period consortium member organizations will receive training on administration of the portal and will start intensive posting of information which will be followed by the official launch of the portal. More detailed information about the structure of the portal can be found in Annex 2.

ISDTC also continued moderation of the Facebook page of the Program. ISDTC and other partner organizations were posting information related to the Program and to LG sector in general.

Current statistical data of the page is the following:

- Likes- 3001.
- Number of countries- 45 (1627- Armenia, 257- USA, 143- Israel, 143- Italy, 117-Germany, 84- Russia, 81- India, etc.,
- Female users-47, 8%, Male users-51,2%,
- Dominant age group- 25-34 years old (16%) of total number of users.

Objective 2: To strengthen civil society's capacity to monitor the central and local government institutions and officials, and the implementation of the decentralization reform

### Activity2.1.c Monitoring of local elections in three consolidated communities (CFOA, EPF, YPC, AJC)

Despite the fact that the second year work plan of the Program did not include electoral monitoring activity, the possibility of holding a monitoring mission in three pilot communities during local elections to be held on February 14, 2016 was discussed inside the Consortium. It was decided to make some revisions in work plan and Program budget and conduct monitoring mission in all three communities. Revised work plan was approved by USAID.

Ninety-two people were involved in the monitoring process (44 in Dilijan, 24 in Tatev, 21 in Tumanyan, 3 in Yerevan). CELoG consortium has recruited and trained monitoring participants from both CELoG consortium member organizations and EPF's InfoTun network.

More details about the monitoring mission are available in Annex 1.

# Activity2.3 Collection, classification and placement of materials related to municipal budgets, policy and legal changes and amendments, suggestions on reform improvement on www.publicdata.am (AJC)

AJC continued the process of collection of materials related to municipal budgets, policy papers and legal drafts, reform improvement recommendations, regulations and particular cases forthe publicdata.am website. Information request were submitted to 551 local municipalities in Shirak, Lori, Tavush, Aragatsotn, Kotayk and Gegharkunik regions.

In parallel with that AJC has launched the process of redesign of the website in order to fill in the received information in modernized version of the website. All responses are thoroughly analyzed not only in terms of their content but also in terms of their compliance to the legal requirements, in case of necessity of additional information follow up requests will be submitted and other follow up activities will be undertaken.

AJC has also developed the preliminary structure of the reports that will be developed based on the collected information. The received information will be grouped on regional principle and will be introduced in regional centers during next reporting period.

## Activity2.7. Development and advocacy of recommendations on improvement of the reform process CFOA)

In the scope of this activity CFOA hosted two international experts to ensure that international experience and best practices are taken into account during the reform implementation in Armenia. PavelSwianiewicz, Head of the Department of Local Development and Policy, Faculty of Geography and Regional Studies, University of Warsaw, EU expert on financial and regional issues and Anthony Levitas, Senior Fellow, Watson Institute for International Studies, Brown University, have visited Armenia to consult CFOA experts on local self-government related provisions in the newly adopted constitution, newelectoral code, as well as organization of local self-government in multi-settlement communities.

One of the two experts was focused on issues of local fiscal government, financial equalization; methodologies of financial management of multi-settlement and single settlement communities, financial accountability and public monitoring tools, mechanisms for proportional distribution of resources for multi-community settlements, as well as design of designing predictable, adequate, equitable and accountable transfer systems on local level and participatory investment planning and financial reporting. The second expert was focused on issues of decentralization, public participation mechanisms, transparency and accountability of the decision making process on local level, mechanisms of organization of local government for multi-settlement communities, participatory processes for large single-settlement communities.

During the visits the experts had several meetings with the state officials, USAID representatives, Consortium members, students of American University of Armenia and Public Administration Academy of the RA.

The experts have prepared Policy brief, which will be developed and corrected and submitted to the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Development and Parliament (Annex 4).

Objective 3: To increase citizens' access to independent and reliable information on the

decentralization reform

Activity3.1a Introduction of legal, policy and participatory aspects of decentralization in

35 larger communities, Trainings for local Advisory Bodies (CFOA)

CFOA started its training for advisory bodies in target communities. First training took place

in Vedi on March 16-18, 2016 for the representatives of Vedi and Vosketap municipalities

and the second was in Ashtarak from March 31 to April 2, 2016 for Ashtarak and Oshakan

municipalities. Overall approximately 50 participants representing Advisory bodies and

municipality staff members took part in trainings.

Activity3.2. Small grants to target communities, Infotun and Youth Bank networks for

monitoring (CFOA, EPF)

Since January 2016, Youth Bank committees started to hold regular meetings once or twice a

week. The members, who have participated to the 3-days workshop in Yerevan, were sharing

their experience and knowledge with the others.

Example: Armavir Youth bank Committee meeting

During January – February, YB committees have conducted local surveys to understand the

problems and possible motivations of youth participation. During the community meetings

they have summarized the results to use them as guideline for further actions.

Example: Ijevan Youth bank discussion of community survey results

During mid-February and beginning of March, Youth banks announced the small grant

competition call for youth-led community initiatives. The YB members have conducted

outreach events to present the funding opportunity to larger groups of young people. Some

Youth banks held orientation sessions in order to encourage and help younger people to apply

for funding. During the application collection process Youth banks were using all the

opportunities to present CELoG program and the funding opportunity, carry out consultations

and answer the questions related to the program.

Examples: Dilijan Youth bank Call for youth-led community initiatives, Martuni Youth bank

#### Outreach event at a high-school

During the next reporting period, it is planned to carry out the evaluation of received ideas based on Youth bank methodology that enables YB members to be involved in decision making process. Afterwards YB members will provide funding and assist in the implementation of small-scale initiatives.

YB members will cooperate with local governments to find out cross-cutting opportunities to integrate the contribution of young people with the local governments' longer-term strategies.



On 2-3 February, 2016, EPF has organized the first meeting of its InfoTun network within the framework of CELoG Program. The meeting aimed at identifying a joint strategy and plan of activities to be implemented during the second Program year. The event was also aimed at introducing major aspects of the Program as well as to train

newly selected Ararat and Vayk partner organizations on how to set up InfoTuns.

The event was organized in cooperation with MICE Program and resulted in forming of a joint vision among all network members. After the event all network members submitted activity plans for the second Program year. Based on these activity plans and the joint strategy developed, grant agreements were developed by EPF and signed.

## Activity3.4. Development of media and IT products for dissemination of information on LSG (ISDTC, EPF, CFOA, AJC)

EPF has finalized the development of two cartoon/info-graphs dedicated to basic introduction of the LG system. The series is entitled «Մարդու տեղը» (Where the Citizen Stands)the <u>first</u> cartoon introduces the general structure of the LG system and the <u>second</u> one illustrates how the system of local self-government bodies work. EPF plans to disseminate these

cartoons via its network as well as to share it with consortium partners and spread via

internet.

Activity3.6a.Production of talk shows on decentralization and broadcast via national

TV channel (YPC)

6 TV talk shows were produced and broadcast during the reporting period. All TV program

links were shared on CELoG Facebook page and uploaded on YouTube channel of YPC.

#11 "MamuliAkumb-HaMaTegh" TV talk show

The talk show was filmed on January 25 and broadcast via Yerkir Media on Tuesday, January

26 at 18:40 and was rebroadcast on Wednesday January 27 at 11:40. Duration of the program

was 40 minutes. Topic of the program was "LSG election year: Tasks and issues of media

and NGOs".

Program host: Boris Navasardian, YPC President

Invited speakers:

• Mikayel Hovhannisyan, Program Manager at Eurasia Partnership Foundation

• ArevhatGrigoryan, Editor of "Hamaynk-HaMaTegh" monthly newspaper

• Levon Barseghyan, President of Asparez Journalists' Club, member of Gyumri city

Council of Elders

• ArmenGrigoryan, Elections' Program coordinator, TIAC

#12 "MamuliAkumb-HaMaTegh" TV talk show

The talk show was filmed on January 28 and broadcast via Yerkir Media on Tuesday,

February 2 at 18:40 and was rebroadcast on February 3 at 11:40. Duration of the program

was 40 minutes. Topic of the program was "The role of public information in LSG reforms".

Program host: Boris Navasardian, YPC President

Invited speakers:

• Sara Petrosyan, Journalist at Hetq.am online newspaper

GrishaKhachatryan, President of Information System Development and Training

Center

• VoskanSargsyan, Editor of "Tesankyun" newspaper in Tavush region

• Heriknaz Harutyunyan, YPC editor

#13 "MamuliAkumb-HaMaTegh" TV talk show

The talk show was filmed on February 2 and broadcast via Yerkir Media on Tuesday,

February 9 at 18:40 and was rebroadcast on February 10 at 11:40. Duration of the program

was 40 minutes. Topic of the program was "The role of InfoCenter in LSG elections".

Program host: Boris Navasardian, YPC President

Invited speakers:

• Susan Shahnazaryan, President of Goris Press Club

• VarsikNerkanyan, IjevanInfoCenter coordinator

• Zara Nikoghosyan, VanadzorInfoCenter coordinator

• YeghiazarDavtyan, Martuni Community Women's Council coordinator

#14 "MamuliAkumb-HaMaTegh" TV talk show

The talk show was filmed on February 15 and broadcast via Yerkir Media on Tuesday,

February 16 at 18:40 and was rebroadcast on February 17 at 11:40. Duration of the program

was 40 minutes. Topic of the program was "LSG elections on February 14: Civil society

monitoring action".

Program host: Boris Navasardian, YPC President

Invited speakers:

• VahanMovsisyan, Chairman of Communities Finance Officers Association

• Narine Safaryan, Educational Programs Director of Media Initiatives Center

• GayaneMkrtchyan, Journalist at ArmeniaNow

HaykakArshamyan, Programs Manager at YPC

#15 "MamuliAkumb-HaMaTegh" TV talk show

The talk show was filmed on February 29 and broadcast via Yerkir Media on Tuesday, March

1 at 18:40 and was rebroadcast on March 2 at 11:40. Duration of the program was 40

minutes. Topic of the program was "Amendments to RA Electoral Code".

Program host: Boris Navasardian, YPC President

Invited speakers:

• VahanMovsisyan, President of Communities Finance Officers Association

• Lusine Hakobyan, Chairman of Europe in Law Association

• ArmenGrigoryan, Elections' Program coordinator, Transparency International Anti-

corruption Center

ArpiMakhsudyan, Journalist at CivilNet

#16 "MamuliAkumb-HaMaTegh" TV talk show

The talk show was filmed March 21 and broadcast via Yerkir Media on Tuesday, March 22 at

18:40 and was rebroadcast on March 23 at 11:40. Duration of the program was 40 minutes.

Topic of the program was "LSG reforms in the context of Amendments to RA Electoral

Code".

Program host: Boris Navasardian, YPC President

Invited speakers:

• Levon Barseghyan, President of Asparez Journalists' Club, member of Gyumri city

Council of Elders

• Irina Vanyan, LSG expert, Ph.D in Economics

• SiranushPapyan, Journalist at 1in.am and Lragir.am online portals

ArevhatGrigoryan, Editor of "Hamaynk-HaMaTegh" monthly newspaper

Objective 4: To improve the civil society enabling environment with a special focus on

decentralization.

Activity4.1.Analysis of Armenian legislative framework and international experience in

terms of improving enabling environment for CSOs on local level. (CFOA, EPF, AJC)

During the reporting period CFOA expert team made a legal analysis of the draft Electoral Code and shared with other consortium members for comments. After finalization of the document these proposals and recommendations were introduced during hearings in National Assembly, shared with MTA and also submitted to Venice commission experts during a separate meeting organized with the support of USAID and Council of Europe office in Armenia.

Recommendations relate to regulations of local elections and local participation, as well as observation missions and monitoring of the electoral process by the civil society and media (see recommendations developed by CELoG in Annex 3). The consortium also circulated a statement on major concerns and proposals related to the draft Electoral code.

### PROGRESS TOWARDS RESULTS

The Program is currently in its active phase and all components are functioning effectively. All partner organizations are very much clear with their activities and have a clear vision of the common Program logic. This becomes even more visible because of the ability of the consortium to react rapidly to any kind of changing situation, such as the adjustment of the work plan to February 14 elections, or joint response to the draft Electoral Code.

In this respect current reporting period can be described as a working period, or a direct implementation period. Thus the consortium will need periodic reflections that will make its members able to see the wider picture and not be focused on narrow programmatic aspects only.

Current reporting period can be also described as the extensive field work period, since there are numerous activities implemented in target communities, which means that the consortium has started utilization of its products.

Objective 1: To sustain and improve civil society's ability to engage citizens and articulate their interests in local self-government and in the process of implementation of decentralization reform.

Significant amount of work implemented during the reporting period falls under this objective. Since the consortium has started to work more actively in target communities all trainings, presentations and introductions implemented for Advisory Bodies, Youth Banks and InfoTuns are mainly aimed at and improve civil society's ability to engage citizens and articulate their interests in local self-government. Presentation of research results conducted by CRRC in Ashtarak, development of joint strategy for InfoTuns, application of training methodologies by CFOA, etc. are gradually improving the capacities of the civil society in target communities in expressing their expectations from their local authorities and exercising communication and cooperation mechanisms between the community and local authorities.

Objective 2: To strengthen civil society's capacity for monitoring the central and local government institutions and officials, and the implementation of decentralization reform.

For the first time in the life of the Program the monitoring was organized with significant involvement of local civil society. The monitoring of local elections in three target communities was important not only because of the necessity to have public control over electoral processes, but also in terms of evaluation of local civil society's monitoring capacities. It is worth mentioning that the conclusion of the Organizational Activity Seminar stating that the local resources are underestimated was proved on practice during these local elections. The monitoring mission conducted by CELoG has revealed that there are many capable young people in communities that can take much more responsibility for local development than they are given currently.

The results of monitoring the reform at a central level at a later stage will allow local initiatives to conduct local monitoring, having the general picture of compliance of proclaimed reforms with the real processes in mind.

### Objective 3: To increase citizens' access to independent and reliable information on decentralization reform.

The arsenal of communication tools of the Program continues to fulfill with new and more diverse mechanisms. The portal, which will be launched officially during next reporting period, cartoons developed by EPF, redesigned quarterly newsletter, YPC's Talk shows, CFOA newspaper are filling the information gap on LG issues that existed for long time. The progress registered under this objective during the reporting period is connected with further diversification of the instruments of dissemination of information. Activities planned for the next reporting period, such as Mardamej social innovation camps, civic journalism on LG issues promoted via InfoTuns will continue the above mentioned diversification. This flow of targeted information should be followed by increase of the number of local initiatives and more active involvement of citizen in LG issues vie existing participatory mechanisms.

### Objective 4: To improve the civil society enabling environment with a special focus ondecentralization

During the reporting period the process of improvement of the civil society enabling environment with a local focus, was targeted on an extremely important issue which is the elections as the most direct way of participation of citizen in government process. In this respect the consortium is mainly focused of fighting against attempts to make elections of

community heads indirect, limitation of the role of civil society and media in participation in electoral processes, as well as promoting the civil society with an opportunity to take part in local government without entering the party system. In this respect the consortium will continue to promote the idea of importance of direct local elections and to raise public awareness about the importance of local elections in general and to advocate for forming the most optimal system of local elections.

### **DATA ON INDICATORS**

Data on all indicators are established in the Activity M&E Plan for the award activities. Data should be disaggregated by gender where relevant.

- ✓ 92 monitoring mission participants in 3 local elections;
- ✓ 551 information requests sent to communities;
- ✓ 10 Recommendations on Electoral Code developed and submitted
- ✓ Public discussions of community budgets organized in 19 communities;
- ✓ 2 issues of Hamaynk-HaMaTegh newspaper published and disseminated 3000 copies each;
- ✓ 6 Talk shows developed and broadcast on Yerkir Media TV station;
- ✓ Web portal developed
- ✓ 2 trainings for advisory bodies of 4 target communities with 25 total participants conducted
- ✓ 2 cartoon/info-graphs developed
- ✓ Grant agreements with 8 InfoTunsdeveloped;
- ✓ 3001 CELoG Facebook page followers.

### PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED

There were no major problems encountered during the Program implementation process. All activities planned within the framework of the Program are being implemented in due time. Consortium members are in periodic communication with each other and the Consortium management team plans to develop internal communication tools further.

## A COMPARISON OF ACTUAL EXPENDITURES WITH BUDGET ESTIMATES

Actual budget expenditures were mostly in line with the budget estimates.

## PRIORITIES FOR PROGRAMMING DURING THE NEXT REPORTING PERIOD

There are several priorities for the next reporting period.

- To continue intensive work in target communities,
- To promote development of local initiatives,
- To respond rapidly to any significant change in Armenia that could affect LG sector,
- To advocate for positive solutions in the electoral legislation

All these priorities are strongly connected with Program objectives and current logic of its development. Thus the consortium should think about undertaking additional steps in making local resource more active since the level of involvement of local target groups conditions the effectiveness of all programmatic activities.

In this respect announcement, dissemination and the selection process of small grants, active work of Youth Bank and InfoTun networks, educational, advisory and training activities implemented in target communities will be the major focus of the coming reporting period.

D. Tumanyan CoP of CELoG Program 29.04.2016