Civic Engagement in Local Governance (CELoG) Program

Quarterly Progress Report

Reporting period: 1 April-30 June 2017

Cooperative Agreement No. AID-111-A-14-00004

Contents

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AJC - Asparez Journalists' Club

CRRC - Caucasus Research Resource Centers-Armenia

CELoG - Civic Engagement in Local Governance

CoP – Chief of Party

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

There were several important developments that took place during the reporting period and affected the country in general and the LG sector in particular.

The beginning of the reporting period coincided with the Parliamentary elections that took place on April 2nd and resulted in Republican Party winning the majority of seats. These elections were the first after the change of the governance system in Armenia from semi-presidential to parliamentary, and thus were in the center of attention of both civil society and international community. It is worth mentioning that the major international donor organizations (USAID, EU and others) have allocated significant financial assistance for Armenia to ensure transparent, free and fair elections and implementation of all agreements that were reached during the so called 4+4+4 discussions that have involved the authorities, the parliamentary opposition and the civil society. The elections have illustrated several significant issues related to both electoral fraud and technical organization. Among these issues the massive vote-buying registered by opposition and observing organizations, ineffectiveness of so called rating (regional) candidate lists and unsynchronized electronic registries of voters are worth mentioning. Overall it should be mentioned that the lack of trust towards electoral processes in Armenia among the general public was hardly reduced.

According to the OECD/ODHIR election monitoring report "The campaign was tainted by credible and widespread allegations of vote-buying, pressure on public servants including in schools and hospitals, and of intimidation of voters to vote for certain parties. This contributed to an overall lack of public confidence in the electoral process and raised concerns about voters' ability to cast their votes free of fear of retribution, as required by OSCE commitments."

The Parliamentary elections were followed by local government elections in Yerevan that took place on May 14 and due to short break after the previous elections took place in a more indifferent atmosphere. Many political forces have decided not to participate in the elections due to lack of resources and as result only 3 political forces the ruling Republican Party, "Yelq" alliance and newly established "Apricot Country" party took part in the elections. As it was predicted after the parliamentary elections here again the ruling party received the majority of votes.

Both elections resulted in some changes in the arrangement of political forces in of the country.

Armenian National Congress, Armenian Renaissance (former Rule of Law) Party and Heritage Party have left the Parliament and the new Parliament instead of previous 6 parties currently consists of only 4.

In accordance with the requirements of the Constitution after the Parliamentary elections the Government resigned and the new Government was formed and proposed its program for 2017-2022. Obviously the activities planned by the Government in the LG sector were of particular interest for the project.

In the area of territorial administration and local self-government the Program particularly states that the consolidation of communities will continue and it is expected to finalize the process by 2019. The Government Program also envisions continuation of decentralization process through gradual delegation of disaster prevention, phytosanitary, primary healthcare, veterinary and other services to local authorities[1]. It should be noted though that the program does not clearly formulate the implementation of these activities and does not indicate the fiscal decentralization as a precondition for effective decentralization of the above mentioned services. The Program also declares that further steps will be implemented to promote inter-community cooperation particularly through inter-community unions, however it is not clear how these steps will be implemented and which areas of inter-community cooperation will be targeted.

The last but not least development that took place during the reporting period was the decision to conduct a large scale community consolidation involving 325 communities that resulted in forming of 34 community clusters. This decision was lacking transparency as compared to previous waves of consolidation since there were no discussions with neither communities themselves, nor with the civil society and expert community during the design of the clusters subject to consolidation. The clusters were designed solely by the MTAD, the discussion of the process at the NA took place with no proper request for opinion of communities, subject for consolidation. As a result the population of the communities have learnt about the process only post factum.

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[1] RA Government Program 2017-2022, pp. 12-15, available at http://www.gov.am/files/docs/2207.pdf,

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;

Activity1.3 Organizational Activity Seminar on strategies of public involvement in LSG (EPF)

After announcing and receipt of proposals for conducting an Organizational Activity Seminar EPF has formed an evaluation committee and selected the team of experts to implement the activity. After the package of documents was submitted to CFOA for approval additional documents were requested by the lead organization. This process caused some delay in organization of the event and due to the vacation season the event was postponed to early September 2017. Currently EPF in communication with CFOA other consortium members and the team of experts is making necessary preparations such as development of the scenario of the OAS, selection of participants and logistical arrangements.

Activity 1.5 Trainings for the target community activists on data utilization and citizen journalism (EPF/CRRC)

As a continuation of the training series on data utilization CRRC has conducted two additional trainings in Vanadzor and Ijevan respectively. Trainings are delivered by Naira Vardanyan, the CRRC-Armenia Program Manager and managed by Mariam Arakelyan, the CRRC-Armenia Program/Research Assistant. Trainings were hosted by Vanadzor and Ijevan InfoTuns involving InfoTun beneficiaries and local CSO representatives (21 in total).

Post evaluation forms have shown that the vast majority of participants gave the maximum score of usefulness to the training and were satisfied with the quality of training. At the same time while emphasizing the need and importance of trainings on data utilization software knowledge, as well as Local Governance related data extraction/commenting, participants expressed their wish to participate in a new – prolonged and more advanced, trainings with heavier practical part in order to strengthen the skills and be able to practice it in their everyday work more confidently. The consortium will discuss the possibilities of having additional trainings during the planning of the next project year activities.

Additional training on "Questionnaire design and data analysis" was requested by the Gyumri InfoTun in order to complete the already started research on public transportation in Mush 2 quarter of the city. Training was delivered on June 2nd in Gyumri by Naira Vardanyan, CRRC-Armenia's Program Manager for Data Initiative. This training was demand driven and addressed areas of particular interest for the participants.

1.7 Seminars and briefings for journalists on LSG (YPC)

On June 10-11, 2017 Yerevan Press Club has organized a seminar in Aghveran on the "Amendments to the RA Law "On Administrative-Territorial Division of the Republic of Armenia" and the Coverage by the Media". The participants (23 in numbers) listed representatives of Armenian state agencies, NGOs and media. Following issues discussed during the seminar: amendments to the RA Law "On Administrative-Territorial Division of the Republic of Armenia", coverage of LSG bodies' activities as a means of raising civil society awareness, experience of cooperation between LSG bodies and media, "Press Club" TV program cycle, aired in the framework of the project (review of the previous TV season), second stage of community enlargement – advantages and disadvantages, coverage of the community enlargement process by the media (See Annex 1 for the agenda).

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

During the reporting period the consortium team has continued its efforts for more effective external communication of project outcomes. Namely all contacts collected throughout the implementation of the project were gathered and classified in one contacts database that will be used for distribution of various products of the project.

EPF has also assisted CFOA in designing the manual of petition initiatives. Both print and electronic versions of the manual are ready and during the next reporting period CFOA experts will use the manuals during trainings in InfoTuns (See Annex 2 for the electronic version of the manual).

In communication with InfoTuns and ISDTC EPF has arranged some admin functions for InfoTun coordinators so that all events held in InfoTuns are posted on celog.am portal calendar in a timely manner.

Activity 1.10. Cooperation with other development actors and other consortia (CFOA, EPF, AJC)

During the reporting period Mardamej Social Innovation Camp was the major case of cooperation between CELoG and MICE projects. The event took place on April 28-30 in Aghveran and gathered around 60 young people with innovative ideas recruited by InfoTuns. (See Annex 3 for the event agenda.)

During the event participants have received lectures on local government, human rights, social sector and anti-corruption reforms, brainstormed on innovative ideas and selected 6 major project ideas for further development. During the 3-day event the 6 working groups developed their projects and presented them to the jury that has selected 3 winning proposals. One of the projects that was selected by jury, was an online-offline game called "TIM Pulse" which is based on the evaluation and rating of community council members. The project engages beneficiaries from Gyumri, Vanadzor and Martuni InfoTuns and regions. The first meeting of initiative group of TIM Pulse was held in Gyumri InfoTun. During the meeting further steps of project, time table, team members and deadlines were discussed and assigned. FB working group was created to coordinate the activities of team members and discuss project related issues. (See Annex 4 for more detailed description of the event).

1.12 Identification and localization of IT tools for decentralization existing in other countries (ISDTC)

During the reporting period ISDTC has continued the process of improvement of the MMIS system based on locally collected feedback and the studied international experience. Namely ISDTC has started to add new functions in MMIS to bring the system in compliance with the requirements of the amended LG law, as well as improving the system in terms of user-friendliness and adding information about new services provided by the LGs. (See Annex 5 for more information about improvements).

In parallel with work on MMIS system the series of discussions and presentations of community websites were continued during the reporting period. Presentations were held in

Lori, Vayots Dzor, Tavush, Aragatsotn and Shirak regions with involvement of 313 participants representing LGs, civil society, marzpetarans and media.

Region	Male	Female	Total
Aragatsotn	30	36	66
Lori	18	35	53
Shirak	30	58	88
Vayots Dzor	26	25	51
Tavush	16	39	55
Total	120	193	313

The event consisted of series of presentations introducing results of the monitoring of the community websites implemented by ISDTC, presentation of current state of community websites in major cities of the region, as well as presentation of celog.am web portal. (See Annexes 6, 7 and 8 for detailed reports on each event).

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

During the reporting period the web portal has been updated on a periodic basis by consortium member organizations. All pages of the portal were updated and new materials were posted. The Table below illustrates the disbursement of materials by sections of the portal (See Annex 9 more details).

N	Page title	Number of posts for the previous reporting period	Number of posts as of 01.07.2017
1.	News	121	163
2.	Announcements	29	35
3.	Calendar	30	40
4.	Reforms	13	13
5.	Surveys	3	4
6.	Documents	7	7
7.	Library	13	13
8.	Reports	7	8
9.	Videos	55	60
10.	Pictures	10	10
11.	Legislation	21	21
12.	Official newspaper	14	17
13.	FAQ	15	14

14.	Registered Users	50	58
15.	# of visitors	10841	18021

The Facebook page of the project was also intensively updated during the reporting period. Materials related to the project and LG reform were placed by the consortium members, events for all public activities of the project were created. There is a tendency of increasing share of posts form celog.am portal which increases the overall effectiveness of project external communication.

The number of Facebook page likes has increased to 3071 (3039 during the past reporting period). (See more detailed information in Annex 10).

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

2.1a Monitoring of implementation of decentralization and LSG reform (CFOA, CRRC)

During the reporting period CFOA Experts have started drafting the 2016 Report on the Local Self-Government in Armenia. Monitoring was implemented in accordance to the methodology used during the development of previous reports. It has 7 Chapters covering different aspect of LSG, such as Administrative-Territorial Division, Finance, Democracy, and Public Services and so on. Currently the Armenian version of the report is ready and it is being translated into the English.

Along with the development of the Report CFOA and CRRC experts have continued to work on LSG Index. The international experience of indexation in the field of LSG was studied and a text was prepared and incorporated with the methodology document. The index was calculated in five spheres of LSG in Armenia, 20 functions of LSG were assessed based on pre-defined 52 indicators and assessment criteria. One most important challenge for the group of experts was definition of the assessment criteria (on 0-10 scale) per indicator which was successfully done.

The Report and the Index will be presented to the public in the next reporting period when the book will be published.

2017 CELoG Fellowship: The second cycle of CELoG Fellowships announced by CRRC-Armenia was managed while taking into account some lessons learned from the first cycle. Particularly the duration of fellowships was extended to four months, and the amount of awards was increased. A mentor was identified among the CRRC-Armenia staff (Dr. Tigran Matosyan) to train and consult fellows upon progress of their research and based on the needs of each fellow. Five young researchers selected in close cooperation with the CFOA experts to participate in the CRRC-Armenia's "CELoG" fellowship program are currently engaged on the following themes (attractive topics to be identified yet):

1. Factors of public awareness of local governance in Yerevan, Artur Babayan;

2. Application of Dahl&Tufts' dilemma to Armenian local governance, Arman Gasparyan;

3. Factors of voters' participation in LSGB elections in Armenia, Lena Mamikonyan;

4. Cluster analyzes of public awareness of and participation in local governance in Armenia, Sonya Msryan;

5. Respect for informal community authorities ("*taghayin heghinakutyunner*") and participation in local governance in Armenia, Ofelia Grigoryan.

During the fellowship program, fellows received systematic guidance from CRRC staff in order to accomplish successfully their research. Brief information on the content of the expected papers is made available on CRRC-Armenia website.

2.2 Annual media awards (YPC)

During the reporting period, YPC project team continued reviewing of media materials dedicated to the local self-governance to prepare suggestions to the Annual Award-2017 jury as well as provided consultations to the publication of "Hamainq-Hamategh" monthly. By the end of month of June, YPC team has submitted names of several candidates to the Award jury for consideration. On June 30, a joint meeting of the Annual award jury and YPC Council members took place in YPC office with the following composition:
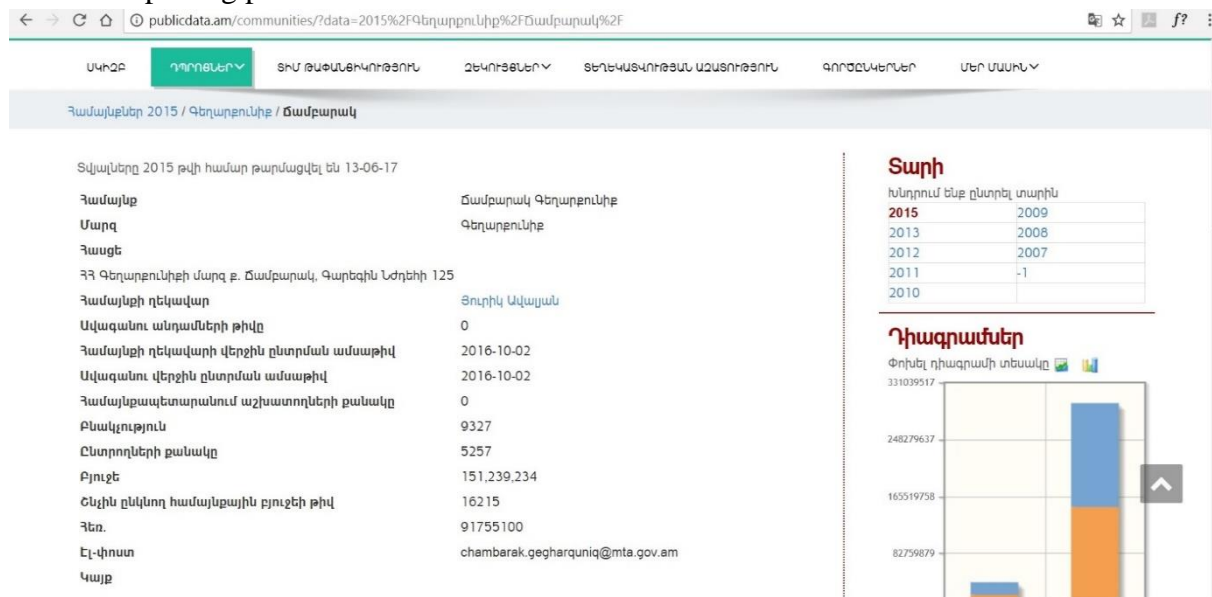
Boris Navasardian, YPC President (member of the Board and Council), Avet Demuryan, YPC Vice-President (member of the Board and Council), Mikhail Diloyan, YPC Executive Director (member of the Board and Council), Elina Poghosbekian, Editor of the YPC Weekly Newsletter (member of the Board and Council), Astghik Gevorgyan, Chairwoman of the Journalists Union of Armenia (member of the Board and Council), Mesrop Harutyunyan, Writer, Journalist, Media Expert (member of the Board and Council), Vigen Sargsyan, External Affairs Officer of the World Bank Mission in Armenia (member of the Board and Council), Gayaneh Markosyan, PR manager of the Synopsys-Armenia (member of the Board and Council), *Monitoring media experts:* Armine Sukiasyan, Ashot Gazazyan and Haykak Arshamyan.

As a result, the joint meeting shortlisted several candidates for the Award, which will be discussed with Consortium partners and the final decision will be made by mid-July, 2017.

Activity 2.3 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)

During the reporting period AJC has continued to upload information received from municipalities on www.publicdata.am website. Information about 13 communities from 3 regions of Armenia is already uploaded on the website. Each section contains detailed information about the community including population, budget, development plan, incomes and expenses, etc. AJC will continue uploading received information on the website during the next reporting periods as well.

In addition to the above mentioned JCA has drafted the preliminary version of the 2016-2017 LG transparency and Freedom of Information report and submitted to CFOA for comments and approval (See Annex).

2.7 Development and advocacy of recommendations on improvement of the reform process (CFOA, all partners)

In May 2017 the Government of Armenia proposed the consolidation scheme for the next 325 communities to form 34 new clusters. Amendments to the Law on Administrative Territorial Division were developed by the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Development.

These amendments were analyzed by CFOA experts and recommendations mainly referring to the design of the clusters were developed. It should be noted that the analysis have shown that the justification of the design of new clusters was poor and lacked analysis of economic and

administrative consequences of consolidation.

CFOA used several channels to deliver appropriate messages to the decision makers on the necessity to re-design the proposed community clusters. There were number of meetings with the representatives of the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Development, where the CFOA experts were able to address their concerns over the process. Other meetings were held with the Head of the Standing Committee on Territorial Administration, Local Self-Government, Agriculture and Environment, as well as Parliament Members. Moreover one of the Press Club-CELoG TV talk shows with participation of the Minister of TAD was broadcast to discuss the process and publically address all the issues connected with the third wave of community consolidation. CFOA team has also published a separate editorial in "Hamaynq_HaMaTegh" monthly that was dedicated to the issue and introduced major arguments calling for redesign of the clusters. These activities resulted in redesign of 4 most problematic clusters (Nor Yerznka, Ijevan, Jambarak and Yeghegnadzor).

2.8 Analysis of draft legal acts on decentralization and LSG, and development of policy recommendations (CFOA)

As it was mentioned above due to the revision of the Law on Administrative Territorial Division, CFOA team has analyzed the proposed draft amendments and developed recommendations on improvements of the consolidation clusters.

Also taking into account the fact that the Law on Local Self-government was in the process of revision, the new Government program was adopted and the third wave of consolidation process was launched CFOA have decided to invite the international expert and organize expert discussion, consultations and meetings with the consortium partners, the authorities and the USAID.

Major issues to be addressed during the visit are:
- Commenting on the new Law Local Self-Government, which came into force on 01.01.17
- Discussion of the Methodology on calculation LSG index
- Discussion of the third wave of consolidation and finalizing the methodology of assessment of the effect of consolidation process.

The visit is planned in July, 2017.

2.10 Shadow report and an alternative roadmap (EPF)

Upon receiving CFOA approval, the call to develop a shadow report on management of municipal property in consolidated communities Tatev, Dilijan and Tumanyan was announced on May 5, 2017. In general 8 applications were received. In order to have comprehensive picture of the applications and select the most relevant and feasible one, EPF formed a selection committee from CELoG consortium organizations. The evaluation of proposals resulted in selection of team of experts led by Marina Gasparyan. During the next reporting period the team of experts will start the study and development of the report.

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

Activity 3.2. Small grants to target communities, Infotun and Youth Bank networks for monitoring (CFOA, EPF)

CFOA Small grants

During the reporting period CFOA announced the second call for the small grant applications. The announcement was made via the CFOA's web page, CELoG's portal, Facebook, as well as "Hamaynq-HaMaTegh" monthly newspaper.

On 05.05.2017 CFOA has organized orientation seminar for the interested applicants at EPF premises. During the seminar CFOA staff and experts presented procedures and requirements of the call, answered to the participants' questions. CFOA has received 42 applications from which 7 were disqualified due to incomplete application packages. For the rest 35 applications the selecting committee was formed. The committee evaluated the applications according to the preliminarily approved criteria which resulted in selection of top 7 applications. CFOA has organized a meeting with the pre-selected candidates to receive clarifications on each project, as well as to discuss budgets.

It is planned to implement administrative and financial check of selected applicants to make sure that the organizations have enough capacities to implement the project successfully during the coming reporting period. It is expected that the projects will launch in August-September.

InfoTun Network

In the period of April 2017- June 2017, 8 InfoTuns have organized 36 events with total number of 391 participants (277 female and 112 male).

Activities implemented by InfoTuns were based on the planning sessions conducted by EPF in each InfoTun during the previous reporting period. Below are the highlights of InfoTun Network activities for the reporting period. (See Annex 4 for detailed description of each activity).

Ararat InfoTun has focused on three major issues: the inter-community road connecting Ararat village and Ararat city, the issue of community library in Ararat city and the issue of football field in Ararat village. InfoTun citizen journalists have developed and widely disseminated articles on each issue through Facebook that have resulted in certain progress in solving all three issues. In case of inter-community road, the post on Facebook was widely shared, it had 169 likes, 11 444 views, 113 shares, 18 comments. After posting the photos, many FB users and Ararat InfoTun FB followers started to make their own videos covering the road conditions. After 2 months, the renovation processes of roads connecting Ararat city to Ararat village started and now is in process. This was covered on Ararat InfoTun Facebook page as well.

The other issue, community library of Ararat achieved progress as well. InfoTun activists had a meeting with the library administration of Yerevan State University of Economics. The administration agreed to cooperate and donate books to Ararat community library. According to initial agreement, the book transfer to the library will be organized during September, as currently the library is being renovated. InfoTun beneficiaries are also engaged in renovation activities.

Another initiative by Ararat InfoTun beneficiaries was also successful who raised the issue of absence of appropriate fence in the football yard of Ararat village. Due to the absence of protecting fence, the ball broke windows of nearby houses and caused other problems both for players and people living in neighborhood. The group of young people posted an article with photos on Ararat InfoTun blog and FB page covering this issue. As a result, in a short period of time some part of the fence was installed by Ararat village municipality and volunteers of Ararat InfoTun which was posted on Facebook.

Ijevan InfoTun continued the monitoring of the official municipal website. The monitoring report was developed based on the preliminarily designed checklist and presented to local authorities, CSOs and activists. As a result of this activity, most of the comments/suggestions

indicated by InfoTun were addressed by municipality. Almost all decisions taken by head of community and community council are already available on the webpage, the dates of decisions were indicated and corrected as well. Community Council members section of the webpage was also updated and now necessary information is available on the webpage. The table developed by Ijevan InfoTun (Annex 13) contains the detailed description of problems identified and activities implemented by the municipality in response. It is worth mentioning that this activity apart from being a participatory exercise was also educational experience for InfoTun activists. Also it was the first systemic communication with the Municipality. Ijevan InfoTun will continue monitoring the website and communicating with the municipality.

Gyumri InfoTun continued to work on the issue of the extension of timeframe of public transportation to Mush 2 district mainly bus route number 25. The initiative group developed list of questions to conduct a survey in the district and introduced preliminary results to EPF. During the presentation it was decided to involve experts from CRRC in training InfoTun beneficiaries on questionnaire development. After the training, with the support of CRRC experts a new questionnaire was developed to collect additional information. Currently, InfoTun beneficiaries are in a process of data collection, which will be followed by data analysis and presentation to wider public including LG representatives, civil society etc. During the working meeting re Mush 2 district in Gyumri InfoTun, it was also discussed to study and develop the bicycle and riding culture in Gyumri, to create bicycle stops as an alternative transportation mean. However, this initiative will be discussed and developed with its timeframe and activities after the Mush 2 initiative results will be presented.

Martuni InfoTun has focused on two major issues identified during the planning. Through the efforts of InfoTun the initiative of the municipality to provide the community library with a new building was revitalized. Curranty the handover of the old building of the Martuni Sanitary Service from the Government to Municipality is in process. This building will be used for the community library.

Another initiative that was launched by the InfoTun was dedicated to the cleanup of public beach of Martuni. Despite the efforts of the InfoTun the municipality did not take the lead in this initiative which made InfoTun to consolidate community members and as a result, the area is cleaned from the garbage.

Two major initiatives were supported by **Armavir InfoTun** during the reporting period. The

process of promotion of Armavir Community Theater was launched by InfoTun. Several meetings and discussions with theater staff resulted in developing a list of joint activities aimed at promoting the theatre. InfoTun is currently acting as an information platform for the theater and there are already invitations from neighboring communities.

The issue of waste management in Aragatsavan community was raised by InfoTun activist Julietta Gasparyan who has launched an information campaign in the community, collected signatures and submitted a petition to discuss the issue in Community Council.

Vayk InfoTun has initiated the decoration of the central park of the city. In cooperation with the municipality InfoTun activists have planted flowers and decorated the city park.

Another initiative of the InfoTun was aimed at involving youth in community life through establishment of bicycle club that will unite community youth to come up with various community initiatives. Since this initiative has a lot in common with the idea of Gyumri InfoTun on developing a bicycle route from Mush 2 district, EPF will make sure that the two initiatives are connected to each other.

Finally during the reporting period the InfoTun has conducted and presented the results to the community members and LG representatives' official municipal website monitoring which resulted in several improvements made by the LG staff.

Activities of **Syunik InfoTun** were mainly focused on the consolidated communities of the region. InfoTun activists have held several meetings in settlements of consolidated Tatev and Tegh communities and have discussed the process of consolidation with both LG representatives and the population. During the meeting with the head of Tatev community, he mentioned that the municipality conducts different activities in the community, however the staff (about 12 people whose age varies between 28-45) does not have the capacity to widely disseminate information about their activities, for instance taking photos, making videos and sharing through social media. Taking into account that the staff of Syunik InfoTun has training capacities on media literacy and civic journalism, as well as developing LG related communication materials the head of Tatev municipality suggested Syunik InfoTun to launch series of trainings for LG staff on computer and internet literacy.

Other activities of Syunik InfoTun include monitoring of consolidation process, awareness

raising activities, establishment of Alternative Youth Community Council in Tatev community.

3.3a Supporting petitions to *avaganis* through collection of signatures in communities (CFOA/EPF)

During the reporting period CFOA jointly with the EPF has finalized the development of the manual for the organization of the petitions in municipalities. The manual will be a guiding document for the CSO's and initiative groups at local level. The final design of the manual was delayed when the Government presented a draft law on collective and individual petitions. This law made CFOA team to make some terminological revisions in the text. Both print and electronic versions of the manual will be ready during the coming reporting period and a series of trainings will be launched with application of the manual.

Activity 3.4. Development of media and IT products for dissemination of information on LSG (ISDTC, EPF, CFOA, AJC)

During the reporting period first versions of the two cartoons were developed. These drafts were discussed with CFOA experts and necessary changes were proposed to the team of animators. The cartoons will be finalized by the beginning of next reporting period.

EPF has also recorded three online lecture-interviews on LG structure, decentralization and community consolidation with participation of CFOA president Vahan Movsisyan. The links of the recording were sent to InfoTuns for further dissemination. InfoTuns will organize screening of these videos for their beneficiaries that will be followed by discussions. It is planned to continue recording of lectures on other aspects of LG system during the next reporting period as well.

CFOA has developed three issues of Hamaynq-Hamategh newspaper for April, May and June 2017. The issues contain materials on LG, CELoG activities, interviews with CELoG experts, etc. (729 to LGs, 2 copies to each of marzpetarans, 5 to the MTAD, 70 to consortium member organizations, around 400 to CSOs and International organizations).

AJC has disseminated 9th (see Annex 12) and developed 10th quarterly newsletter that was circulated among EPF, CFOA and USAID and after making the necessary changes, it was disseminated by AJC.

Activity 3.6a. Production of talk shows on decentralization and broadcast via national TV channel (YPC)

3 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.

#31 "Mamuli Akumb-HaMaTegh" TV talk show

The talk show was filmed on April 22 and broadcast via Yerkir Media on Tuesday, April 25 at 17:40 and was rebroadcast on April 28 at 16:30. Duration of the program was 40 minutes. Topic of the program was "LSG financial sources".

Program host: Boris Navasardian, YPC President

Invited speakers:

- Vahan Movsisyan, Chairman of Communities Finance Officers Association
- Ruzanna Ghazaryan, President of "Work and Homeland" NGO, Vayk
- Hakob Balasyan - Mayor of Byureghavan

#32 "Mamuli Akumb-HaMaTegh" TV talk show

The talk show was filmed on May 6 and broadcast via Yerkir Media on Tuesday, May 16 at 17:40 and was rebroadcast on May 19 at 16:30. Duration of the program was 40 minutes. Topic of the program was "Current stage of LSG reforms".

Program host: Boris Navasardian, YPC President

Invited speakers:

- Ashot Giloyan - Head of the Local Self-Government Department of the RA Ministry of Territorial Administration and Development
- Armine Tukhikyan – Programs Director, Urban Foundation

#33 "Mamuli Akumb-HaMaTegh" TV talk show

The talk show was filmed on May 30 and broadcast via Yerkir Media on the same day at 17:40 and was rebroadcast on June 2 at 16:30. Duration of the program was 40 minutes. Topic of the program was "RA territorial policy: development perspectives".

Program host: Boris Navasardian, YPC President

Invited speakers:

- David Lokyan - RA Minister of Territorial Administration and Development
- Vahan Movsisyan, Chairman of Communities Finance Officers Association

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

Activity 4.1. Analysis of Armenian legislative framework and international experience in terms of improving enabling environment for CSOs on local level. (CFOA, EPF, AJC)

The feedback received from CFOA experts was incorporated in the study paper (See Annex 14 for draft report). EPF has held internal discussion on further use of the results of the study. It is planned to hold series of presentations and discussions through InfoTun network aimed at identifying most applicable mechanisms of CSO-LG cooperation. The second part of activities will be organized jointly with CFOA and will be aimed at institutionalizing these mechanisms on central level. These activities will be implemented after the final editing of the text and submission to USIAD for final approval.

PROGRESS TOWARDS RESULTS

Major developments in LG sector, as well as major political developments in the country that took place during the reporting period form a stronger need for lobbying and advocacy to ensure the needs and expectations of the society are properly addressed. Unfortunately the third wave of consolidation was lacking communication with broader public in general and civil society in particular. The citizens of affected communities were not expecting such a massive scale of consolidation and were not informed on how exactly their communities are going to be consolidated. Taking into account the generally low level of trust towards authorities this immediate decision on consolidation without proper awareness raising and public campaign caused concerns and negligence among the public. There were even street protests in some of the communities particularly in Gegharkunik region. In this respect it should be mentioned that the CELoG consortium has used its information channels to address these concerns to the authorities and to deliver expert recommendations on how to improve the proposed consolidation process. The consortium also used its external communication tools (Hamaynq monthly, Talk Shows, quarterly newsletter, etc.) to disseminate information about the process as wide as possible.

The work on local level implemented through several components of the projects continues to form effective precedents of cooperation between the LGs and civil society. There are already cases of using institutional mechanisms of cooperation applied by project beneficiaries. Namely the case of petition initiated in Aragatsavan community can be perceived as a small but yet important success. This case differs from others due to the fact that the process was initiated by the beneficiaries themselves based on the capacity building activities implemented by the consortium in the earlier stages of the project.

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.

The process of capacity building on local level continued during the current reporting period as well. The trainings organized by CRRC on data utilization and additional training on questionnaire development are offering practical tools to local activists to illustrate more professional approach in articulating their needs. Projects selected for as Mardamej winners and the whole mentoring process going on with the TimPulse team implemented by EPF

willallow communities to observe their community problems and mechanisms of their solutions beyond the traditional paths of addressing them.

The cooperation inside the consortium and with other USAID funded projects is also continuing to bring their effects. The expertise of CRRC in the process of development of LG Index and in providing additional methodological support to InfoTuns, cooperation between CFOA and YPC on timely addressing issues related to consolidation through Talk Shows, cooperation between EPF and ISDTC in making community websites more instrumental and transparent, as well as organization of Mardamej camp jointly with MICE project are some of the examples of such cooperation. All these cases illustrate that the consortium is effectively capitalizing its expertise and outcomes.

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

The process of institutionalization of project positive results is continuing, the Index methodology is almost final and the next annual report on the state of local government in Armenia will already have numeric evaluation; shadow report development process is launching and the first study of consolidation effects based on locally collected data will be conducted; 5 fellowships to study the LG sector are in process; all necessary information for media awards is collected. All these activities are illustrating that the project is methodologically equipped and activities of the consortium are making the public discourse on LG more efficient, comprehensive and professional. Further project activities will foster this approach and ensure that effectively probated tools, products and mechanisms are institutionalized by the parties involved.

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

Activities implemented under this objective are strongly connected with the dynamics of the reporting period. Namely the TV Talk Shows produced by YPC reflect issues actualized for a particular period of time, initiatives of InfoTuns, information disseminated via AJC quarterly and Hamaynq–Hamategh, are reflecting the developments and needs of particular periods. A new component was added during the reporting period. The short video lectures will allow InfoTun beneficiaries to better understand the essence of local government. Moreover, since

the consolidated contact database is ready, all major products will be disseminated to around 3000 recipients on a periodic basis. As it was reported during the previous period activities implemented and progress registered under this objective promote outcomes of activities implemented under other objectives and supply the latter with feedback.

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

Practical mechanisms for ensuring effective cooperation between the civil society and LGs are identified and the process of internal discussions is finalized. This means that during the next reporting period the discussion of these mechanisms on local level will be launched. It is important to ensure that local authorities and community activists absorb the proposed information properly and define the most applicable mechanisms for themselves. The consortium is now ready to launch two simultaneous processed on local and central levels to inform and advocate for improvements in terms of institutionalizing the mechanisms of cooperation between the local authorities and civil society.

DATA ON PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

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

- ✓ 2 trainings on SPSS application and data utilization conducted
- ✓ 1 training on survey questionnaire development
- ✓ 5 fellowships awarded
- ✓ 5 presentations of municipal websites made in 5 regions with 313 participants (120 male, 193 female)
- ✓ 3 issues of Hamaynk-HaMaTegh newspaper published and disseminated - 2000 copies each;
- ✓ 1 issue of quarterly newsletter developed and disseminated
- ✓ 3 talk shows developed and broadcast on Yerkir Media TV station;
- ✓ 2 cartoon/info-graphs drafted
- ✓ 8 Infotuns have conducted 36 activities with participation of 391: 277 female and 112 male
- ✓ 18021 visits to celog.am web portal

PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED

There were no major problems encountered during the Program implementation process. All issues are being communicated with both the lead organization and USAID. The issue of more effective communication of project products with beneficiaries is identified and activities to boost this communication are being implemented.

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 effectively use the visit of international expert for both professional consultations and advocacy activities,
- To hold series of trainings on local initiatives for InfoTuns,
- To continue registering positive precedents via local initiatives, particularly due to the small grants pool announcement,
- To work on the institutionalization of registered success,
- To continue supporting local initiatives, monitoring activities, in target communities,
- To successfully organize the OAS and develop scenarios and recommendations for future activities,
- To evaluate the existing outcomes and plan next year activities.

All these priorities are strongly connected with Program objectives and current logic of its development.

V. Movsisyan

CoP of CELoG Program

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