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Civic Engagement in Local Governance (CELoG) Program

Quarterly Progress Report

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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
CSO DePo – CSO Development Program
CFOA - Communities Finance Officers' Association
EaP CSF ANP – Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum Armenian National Platform
ECRG - Engaged Citizens for Responsive Governance Project
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
RPA – Republican Party of Armenia
TARA - Territorial-Administrative Reform in Armenia
TIAC - Transparency International Anti-corruption Center
YB-Youth Bank
YPC - Yerevan Press Club

POLITICAL CONTEXT

The major political development in the reporting period was the “Velvet Revolution” that resulted in resignation of Serj Sargsyan and the RPA Government and Election of Nikol Pashinyan as new Prime-Minister of Armenia. The “Velvet Revolution” was followed by a constitutional crisis, due to lack of mechanisms for dismissing the Parliament and holding snap elections. The new Program was presented by the Government to the NA and voted for on June 7th. Due to the fact that the program was perceived as an intermediate one before the snap elections and did not contain a separate section dedicated to the LG sector, the fights against corruption and increasing the level of transparency and accountability on local level was explicitly mentioned.

There are several important aspects related to the LG sector in the light of the political developments in Armenia that need to be mentioned. For the first time in the entire history of independent Armenia there was an institutional involvement of LGs in the protests. There was a number of LGs or Community Councils that have officially announced their support to the peaceful protests. It is also worth mentioning that often such demand was formulated and addressed by community members to their LGs calling them to support the protests.

Due to the decentralized character of the protests there were active protests in communities showing that the local population can express their demands without going to Yerevan and joining demonstrations. In general it should be mentioned that the success of the protests have resulted in a destruction of the atmosphere of fear, apathy and dependency which creates better grounds for promoting participatory processes in Armenia.

The new Government has started an unprecedented anticorruption campaign which has touched the local authorities as well. There were already resignations of community heads in such cities as Yerevan, Hrazdan, Armavir and Ejmiadzin, as well as cases on corruption and abuse of power on local level that the Police, the National Security Service and the Special Investigation Service have discovered and sent these cases to the Prosecutors office.

After the adoption of the Government program by the NA it became clear that TARA will slow down before the snap elections, i.e. spring 2019. This was despite the fact that the newly appointed Minister of Territorial Administration and Development has stated that the new Government is in favor of the consolidation process.

The newly appointed Minister of Territorial Administration and Development Mr. Suren Papikyan had particularly stated that the major problem with the community consolidation process was in how it was implemented by the previous authorities. This issue had been pointed out by the Minister during several [interviews](#) emphasizing that particularly during the last wave of consolidation there were methodological problems and low level of involvement of community members in designing the community clusters. Similarly the Prime-Minister has stated that the consolidation cannot be implemented without taking the opinion of the community population into account.

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;

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

During the reporting period EPF continued to support consortium partners in development of various program related materials. Namely EPF continued the review of the issues of AJC newsletter, provided articles for Hamaynq-Hamategh monthly, developed and posted materials on www.celog.am web portal.



In addition to this EPF has finalized the design and printing of CELoG folders that will be used during consortium events for distribution of project related materials. Other distribution materials (cups, pins, notepads, and badges) were developed jointly with MICE project for Mardamej SIC participants.

1.10 Cooperation with other development actors and other consortia (CFOA/EPF)

The major case of cooperation during the reporting period was joint organization of Mardamej Social Innovation Camp by CELoG and MICE projects. The event has gathered more than 60 young people from around the country to brainstorm and develop innovative projects addressing issues of community importance. The event also involved representative from USAID funded Engaged Citizens for Responsive Governance Project, as well as other CSOs, business entities and international organizations as members of jury. (See Annex 1 for detailed description of the event).

Another important case of cooperation was between CELoG and Armenian Territorial Development Fund (ATDF). CRRC with the request of CFOA has worked on questionnaire development and sampling for the project to be implemented by ATDF. This was followed by a meeting organized by EPF between ATDF representative and InfoTun network members with a request to conduct the survey in target communities. The aim of the survey is to identify the level of awareness of the community members in target consolidated communities about the programs implemented by ATDF through USAID funding after the consolidation. The survey will be conducted during the next reporting period.

1.14a Consortium retreat and annual meetings (CFOA/EPF)

In order to react effectively to the political developments in the country the Consortium members were in active communication with each other during the active phase of protests. On May 15 board meeting was organized to discuss the future activities of CELoG program in the light of the political developments. As a result, it was decided to prepare a package of proposals in the LG sector for submission to MTAD (in progress), to develop a toolkit for gathering mayors' expectations and complaints (in progress), as well as to organize a webinar with InfoTuns. The latter was organized in June at EPF premises. In addition to this on May 23rd the management of the consortium had a meeting with the newly appointed Minister of Territorial Administration and Development Mr. Suren Papikyan to introduce the project and present its major activities and outcomes, as well as to discuss possible ways of cooperation. After the meeting the Alternative road maps on community consolidation developed by the consortium during the past 2 months were shared with the Ministry (See description of the Activity 2.10 for details).

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)

During the reporting period CFOA experts finished the development of Armenian version of the annual monitoring report "Local Self-government in Armenia (2017)" volume 10. The format remains the same as in the previous reports, which enables consistency and having

comparable data for the years monitored. It is planned to complete the English version of the book in July.

2.2 Annual media awards (YPC)

During the reporting period YPC continued coordinating the work of the jury assessing the best media coverage of local self-government sector. It should be noted, that in light of the political developments, as well as the necessity of clarification of the reforms policy in the LG sphere it has been found more convenient to postpone the award ceremony to September 2018.

During the reporting period YPC has also continued the media monitoring on the coverage of local self-government sector by the Armenian media (see Annex 2 for details). The quarterly monitoring report shows the dynamics of the media coverage on LG during the three politically extremely active months. The first “pre-revolution” phase shows an explicit attempt by Serj Sargsyan’s authorities to illustrate positive move in reforms, development of communities, positive effects of consolidation, etc. During the active phase of protests the media was mainly focusing on the protests taking place in various communities, announcing decisions of community councils in several communities to join or support the movement. The third “post-revolutionary” phase includes discussion of programmatic issues, reporting on cases of corruption on local level, criminal cases against community heads, as well as criticism of community consolidation. It should be mentioned though that the critique of the consolidation process was mainly expressed by Artur Baghdasaryan and Armenian Renaissance party members, which due to party’s extremely low rating is not perceived as something significant.

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

During the reporting period AJC has finalized the [draft report](#) on transparency of LGs for 2018 and presented it in 10 regional administrations to representatives of LGs, local CSOs and experts. It is planned to complete the report based on the feedback received from participants of the presentations and make the final presentation in Yerevan.

[AJC also continues court cases against municipalities](#) that have violated the RA Law on Freedom of Information and did not provided the requested information.

AJC has continued update of the www.publicdata.am website based on the consultations held with consortium members. All LG transparency reports, PPTs, AJC quarterly newsletters were placed on the website. AJC continues to upload information about the communities in the website database.

2.4 Public discussions of annual community budgets and community development plans (CFOA)



CFOA assisted the target municipalities in organizing and implementation of public hearings of the community five-year development plans. As in the previous year, CFOA experts contacted the mayors proposing technical assistance and necessary methodological support for organization of the hearings. On the hearing day the CFOA experts visited municipalities in order to provide any support needed in presentations and to assess the participation level. Each expert prepared a short report highlighting the key point of each hearing, including the number of participants, questions and suggestions made.

In April CFOA experts assisted and participated in discussions of five-year development plans of 5 municipalities. The overall number of participants was approximately 135 out of which 72 (53%) were male and 63 (47%) were female. (See Annex 3 for schedule of public discussions of five-year development plans held in communities and Annex 4 for sample of short reports).

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

During the reporting period the draft law on Territorial Administration was the main target of CFOA experts. Recommendations on improvement of the draft law were prepared and submitted to MTAD. However due to the political developments revision of this draft and other legislative acts have been shifted and may require additional work in the light of the new political reality in the country. In general it should be noted that since the current Government program is an intermediate one before the elections, the conceptual approaches towards sectoral policies and reforms are still not articulated formally and there is a strong

need for intensive communication with the decision makers to clarify the key conceptual aspects of the LG policy envisioned by the new authorities.

2.10 Shadow report and an alternative roadmap (EPF/CFOA)

During the reporting period EPF and CFOA have completed the development of alternative roadmaps for community consolidation. Overall 17 reports (See Annex 5 for the reports) were developed and submitted to the MTAD. As in case of the pilot Armavir Alternative Roadmap, these reports also give the region-specific analysis of the situation, describe expectations, concerns and demands of the participants, as well as describe the optimal configurations of the consolidated communities.

During the reporting period the comments on the shadow report on community property management in Tumanyan, Tatev and Dilijan communities were received from CFOA experts and have been passed to the expert team. Due to the fact that CFOA experts have made significant amount of comments and suggestions there will be a need to resubmit it to CFOA once again after second revision. It is expected to have the final version of the report by the end of the next reporting period. In addition to the above mentioned, EPF and CFOA teams have discussed the necessity of announcing call for the second shadow report in the light of the changing situation in the country and have agreed to postpone the announcement of the second call once the situation calms down and topics and priorities become clearer.

2.11 Advocacy for business-LG cooperation with a special Focus on IT (ISDTC)

During the reporting period ISDTC has conducted series of meetings and discussions with state and private sector representatives to discuss the mechanisms of cooperation for provision of electronic services on local level as required by the Government decision #572-N dated May 25th, 2017, on providing citizens with electronic identification necessary for receiving electronic services envisaged by law.

To prepare the necessary package of suggestions and recommendations for the LGs, ISDTC team has met with such entities as EKENG CJSC, Nikita Mobile, Ucom, and Beeline. The major issues for discussion were further development of MMIS to make the electronic identification card system (eID) applicable for the local services authorization, development and integration of Mobile ID system to make the electronic services applicable also from

mobile devices. Based on the discussions ISDTC has made improvements in MMIS and provided LGs with information about new opportunities.

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

3.2 Small grants to target communities, InfoTun and Youth Bank networks for monitoring (CFOA, EPF/CRRC)

Small grants (CFOA)

As it was presented in the previous progress report, CFOA used small grant awards for local organizations to develop alternative roadmaps¹ in 10 sub-regions. In April the selected 10 organizations conducted studies of public opinion regarding the community consolidation in Artik, Spitak, Ashtarak, Talin, Hrazdan, Abovyan, Sevan, Gavar, Masis and Artashat sub-regions. These studies were conducted via telephone interviews with community heads or other LG representatives as well as organizing Town Hall meetings to discuss possible scenarios of the community consolidation. After collection of the necessary material the consortium team experts developed the final report that contained analytical part and description of most popular scenarios on community consolidation including proposals on community clusters. Final reports were collected and shared with MTAD along with the official cover letter. It is planned to organize a presentation of the results of the studies with participation of representatives from MTAD, municipalities, CSOs and other interested stakeholders in July.



Along with the above-mentioned activities, during the reporting period CFOA was also managing 4 sub-grants in the framework of the small grants component. All grants are designed to promote public participation in the communities by using various tools. In Tegh and Tatev communities (“Dynamica” civic initiative) the main goal is to involve

¹ Alternative roadmap contains general observations on the perceptions and expectations of the population in regard with community consolidation process.

community active groups in decision making at the local level and increase the accountability of LGs. For that reason, “media courts” were organized in April and May in the respective communities with participation of mayors and active citizens. In Metsamor (“Family and Community” Charitable NGO) 16 seminars on community issues assessment, resource mobilization and public participation as well as a meeting with the council members to discuss most relevant issues of the community were organized. In Tumanyan consolidated community (“Center for Community Mobilization and Support” NGO) five-year community development plan is monitored by the active groups, formed in each settlement. “Geghareg” Educational-Cultural NGO organized 10 capacity building seminars and focus-group discussions on community issues with the involvement of the youth in Gavar, Sarukhan, Noratus and Karmirgyugh communities.

InfoTun Activities (EPF)

Similarly to small grants component, part of activities of EPF’s InfoTun network was dedicated to organization of Town Hall meetings and development of Alternative Roadmaps on Community Consolidation (See description of the Activity 2.10 for details).

Overall InfoTuns have organized 32 events with involvement of 1072 (503 female, 569 male) participants.

Below are the highlights of other activities implemented by InfoTuns during the reporting period (See Annex 6 for full report).

Activities implemented by InfoTuns include three major blocks: capacity building of community activists, support to local initiatives, cooperation with LGs and other local actors.

During the reporting period CRRC has provided Vayk and Syunik InfoTuns with trainings on Data Utilization via SPSS software package. This was initiated after a request from the two InfoTuns for professional trainings necessary for implementation of surveys and other sociological studies in their communities.

The reporting period has registered several cases of cooperation between InfoTuns and community institutions working in spheres of art and education. Namely Vayk InfoTun has deepened its cooperation with community library and during this reporting period Vayk InfoTun coordinator assists staff of library to effectively run the FB page of the library. In the

previous reporting period, InfoTun together with the library staff developed the list of activities/events to be conducted by community library. In this reporting period one of the planned events has already took place. “Literary Vayots Dzor” event was organized by community library and was attended by the young writers and interested people of the region. Vayk InfoTun has also launched promotion of the idea “Every child in Vayk should get aesthetic education”. Within the frames of this initiative the School of Art of Vayk community organized a concert with headline “The School of Art for public schools”.

Armavir InfoTun continued its activities in the cultural aspect of community that was initiated in the last reporting period. The initiative aimed at stimulation of community cultural life through bringing together all cultural institutions working in Armavir and finally develop the strategy of developing the culture in the community. InfoTun organized several meetings with the representatives from cultural sector such as School of Art, State College of Art in Armavir, House of Culture of Armavir City and School of Music in Armavir. InfoTun also conducted series of meetings with the students of the mentioned institutions.

Community public transportation was among other issues common for several InfoTuns. Vanadzor InfoTun activists have started to work on improving the bus stops in Vanadzor city already in the previous reporting period and during April-June, they have arranged meetings with the chief architect of Vanadzor city, the head of department of architecture and urban development, Suren Abovyan and presented their suggestions for city bus stops.

InfoTun and Goris municipality agreed to initiate monitoring of public transportation services. InfoTun active group monitored the public transportation schedule for several days, conducted survey among the users about the services of public transport and based on the results developed recommendations which will be presented in the next reporting period.

Ijevan InfoTun which was working on improving the communal services in Ijevan city in the last reporting period, achieved progress in this reporting period. Ijevan InfoTun activist Davit Khachatryan was contacting the municipality, the department for communal services for already a year requesting to install waste bins in one of the streets of Ijevan city. In this reporting period, the municipality finally installed one bin in Metaghagortsner Street in Ijevan.

Another interesting case was registered in Martuni where a group of citizens applied to InfoTun to assist them in establishing condominium. CFOA provided Infotun with relevant contacts of experts, working with condominiums, who consulted and provided necessary materials to Martuni InfoTun. Already in April the condominium was registered, however due to some technical issues it has not yet started its activities. In the reporting period InfoTun got two more requests from the residents for support. For instance, one of the citizens from Dzoragyugh community contacted InfoTun with the issue of power cables bypassing his house. The house is located 20 meters far from “Dzoragyugh” hydro power station. The power cables that are bypassing his house are very old cods bypassing his house. The lawyer of MWCC follows up on this issue.

Mardamej Social Innovation Camp

Due to political fluctuations Mardamej SIC was postponed from March to June and since the postponed event was organized in new political situation the EPF team has partially revised the agenda. Namely the brainstorming of new project ideas was implemented with a focus on the new reality in the country, as well as an additional session was considered to meet representatives of the new Government: Deputy Ministers of Education, Territorial Administration and Development and Justice.

The event took place on June 28-July 1, in Aghveran with involvement of 67 participants including InfoTun Coordinators and representatives of MICE project Target Media outlets (Hetq, Lratvakan Radion and A1Plus). The participants were selected out of 190 applicants that have reacted to the open call for participation.

The three day work resulted in development and presentation of 9 project proposals to the jury. 5 out of 9 presented projects were selected as winning proposals and will be funded during the coming months. Below is the brief description of the winning projects (See the Annex 1 for more detailed description of the event).

Usta Khcan (Ուստա ԽԿԱՆ) aimed at promoting reusing and reinterpreting domestic waste and as a mean for this idea, the team selected plastic bottles and the corks. In the initial phase of the project the team will collect the plastic bottle caps through online and offline sources also engaging local business and LG representatives and use this waste in creating various artworks carrying social messages. It is anticipated that gradually these initiatives will

transform into conceptual art laboratories making artwork from household waste. The sustainability of the projects is in continuous promotion of waste management through cultural and artistic performances and exhibitions. During the project implementation the initiative team will use other types of waste such as plastic cups, bottles etc. and find cultural and artistic solutions to promote waste management and raise awareness about local issues through the waste.

Gyughamej (Գյուղասկեռ) project aims at creating joint platform which will contribute to enlarging agro market and will ease the communication between producer and consumer. Joint platform of various regions of Armenia will be created which will contain relevant information on agro products and will ensure effective communication between costumers and sellers.

The other project was **Dream fulfillment start up lab**. The initiative group will create platform bringing together and sharing dreams of people who have serious health issues. On the other end, people who would like to help these people and make their dreams come true can do learn about their dreams through the portal and contribute to it.

Lost and found project aims at bringing attention to the communities of Armenia that are getting empty. The initiative team will create platform which will share information about touristic potential of these communities as well as will suggest alternative and creative solutions to rehabilitate these abandoned communities.

And finally **Smart Bin** project was designed as an innovative solutions for waste collection and recycling. The residents of the communities will get points depending on the amount of their waste. Moreover, local authorities will serve as a connecting point between citizens and businesses through transferring the sorted waste to businesses.

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

During the reporting period CFOA published 1 double issue of monthly newspaper “Hamaynk-Hamategh” covering April and May. The newspaper presented the information on implementation of the CELoG project, developments and news in the sphere of Local Self-

Government, as well as other topics of interest. The June edition of the newspaper is in progress and will be published soon.

During the reporting period AJC has developed and finalized the 14th and 15th issues of quarterly newsletter and has developed the 16th issue.

EPF in communication with CFOA and ISDTC have finalized the scripts of two new animations dedicated to the local initiatives and the MMIS system. It is expected to have the animations ready during the next reporting period.

During the reporting period ISDTC continued its day-to-day work on administration of the celog.am web portal. With the support of other consortium members new posts were added in different sections of the portal (See table below for the number of new posts per section).

Number of visitors in the mentioned period is 2054 and the overall number of portal visitors as of 30.06.2018 is 36505. (See Annex 7 for more information about web portal updates).

N	Section title	Number of entries as of							
		01.10.2016	14.01.2017	01.04.2017	01.07.2017	30.09.2017	30.12.2017	30.03.2018	30.06.2018
1.	News	58	90	121	163	200	261	313	336 ↑
2.	Announcements	11	14	29	35	52	52	56	59 ↑
3.	Calendar	7	15	30	40	68	75	94	96 ↑
4.	Reforms	10	10	13	13	14	19	19	19
5.	Surveys	3	3	3	4	5	6	6	6
6.	Documents	4	4	7	7	8	8	10	10
7.	Library	6	10	13	13	15	15	16	17 ↑
8.	Reports	7	7	7	8	8	8	8	8
9.	Videos	18	32	55	60	72	96	96	96
10.	Albums	4	7	10	10	11	12	14	14

11.	Legislation	17	21	21	21	22	22	22	22
12.	Newspaper	9	12	14	17	20	24	25	26 ↑
13.	F.A.Q.	14	14	14	14	14	22	22	22
14.	Registered users	45	47	50	58	59	59	63	64 ↑

ISTDC also continued management of Facebook page by posting materials from CELoG web portal, partners' websites, InfoTuns' materials, official information from MTAD website, municipal websites, as well as LG-related news from online media, such as Hetq.am, Tert.am, 1in.am and others. (See Annex 8 for more details on Facebook page updates).

3.5. TV talk shows regional broadcast (YPC)

In the period April-June 2018 Yerevan Pres Club has not implemented TV programs envisaged under the component "TV Program" of "Civic Engagement in Local Governance" (CELoG) Project. The main obstacle to that has been the position taken by our partner "Yerkir Media" TV Company with regard to the recent political developments in Armenia. This position is directly linked with the position of ARF Dashnaksutyun and may change drastically depending on the political developments. This was probably also the reason for RA Minister of Territorial Administration and Development Suren Papikyan to decline our official invitation to participate in the TV program. During the next reporting period YPC and the Consortium management team will discuss the possibility of changing the partner in case the situation continues to develop in same direction.

As in the period April-June, Yerevan Press Club is still considering alternative possibilities for efficiently continuing this component of the project.

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

4.3 Sensitizing community CSOs to the issues of improving their enabling environment (trainings, YBs, InfoTuns) (EPF)

During the reporting period EPF has developed a briefer summing up the outcomes of the presentations of the study in InfoTuns. During the next reporting period EPF will hold a

meeting with involvement of consortium members, InfoTuns, other CSOs and state representatives aiming at presenting the results and discussing how the legal and policy environment can be improved for regional CSOs in the light of their possible cooperation with LGs.

Additional Activities

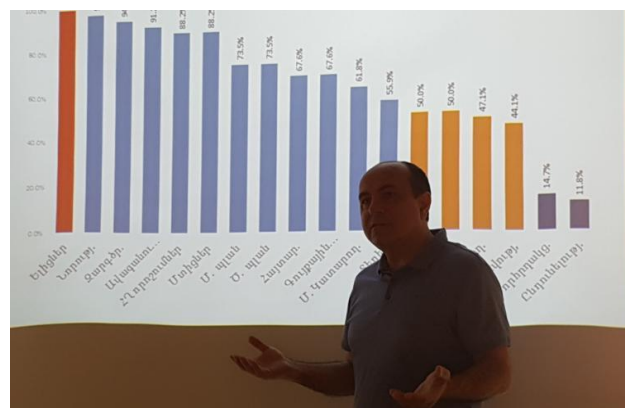
Promoting the LG related discourse and dialogue between the civil society and decision makers (YPC/CFOA)

In collaboration with Communities Finance Officers Association and with the engagement of EaP CSF Armenian National Platform (ANP) on June 5, 2018 a conference on “Administrative reforms and the development of local self-government sphere in Armenia” was held by YPC. The conference was attended by many experts, more than 50 members of stakeholder CSOs, as well as Mr. Ashot Giloyan, Head of the Local Self-Government Department of the RA Ministry of Territorial Administration and Development. As a result of discussions, on June 18, 2018 ANP released a [statement](#) expressing the position of Armenian National Platform (uniting around 258 CSOs) and also presenting specific recommendations to the RA Government on the future progress of administrative territorial reforms.

YPC continues consultations with CSOs interested in the sphere, being convinced that the new situation in the Republic of Armenia has created unprecedented opportunities for initiating and implementing even more efficient reforms in local self-government sector.

Monitoring of target community websites (EPF/ISDTC)

During the reporting period EPF and ISDTC have continued monitoring of official municipal websites. The subject of monitoring included the quality of updates of the main sections, quality of information



and online services provided electronically. Similarly to the previous reporting period InfoTuns were monitoring the websites “from outside” i.e. monitoring on users end, while

ISDTC was monitoring “from inside” i.e. using MMIS were following the operations of LGs (See Annex 9.).

On June 25th a joint event was organized at EPF premises to present the results of monitoring and discuss with LGs opportunities for further improvement of the quality of electronic services and online communication. The event resulted in suggestions and recommendations, such as creating a brief guideline on monitoring community websites, institutionalizing the administration of websites in municipalities etc. (See Annex 10 for detailed description of the event).

PROGRESS TOWARDS RESULTS

The progress towards outcomes during the reporting period can be described as adaptation to the new political situation and sustaining project outcomes. The reflection on what happened in the country is going on but will still need time to understand what are the major tendencies in the present day Armenia, what are the major principles and approaches of the new government re the LG reform, anti-corruption activities, etc. Moreover the political struggle still continues and the Government is trying to identify the easiest mechanisms of organizing snap elections. These developments are quite logical, since due to the changed situation in the country the balance of political power has also changed and the current NA is not reflecting the real pattern of voters trust. In this respect the next reporting period that will include planning of Year 5 activities will be extremely important.

The political changes that took place have already influenced the beneficiaries of the project. It was particularly visible during Mardamej SIC. The youth became more open and active and there is much less fear in visioning the future than it was before.

The changes that took place in the country create interesting opportunities for the project also in terms of legal and policy improvements. If during the previous authorities the proposals were made with a vision of preventing the damage, the current situation gives grounds to hope that the proposals can be made to promote the good. In this respect there is work to be done inside the consortium and with other partners to identify the best possible ways in achieving this quality change. This will be naturally implemented during consortium board meetings and planning events, particularly the consortium retreat that will take place in September.

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.

Progress registered under this objective is mainly related to cooperation both inside the consortium and with other partners. The traditional cooperation and consultations with MICE project continues and is developing in a constructive manner. CELoG consortium continues to provide its expertise in LG sphere to MICE target media outlets.

Also the consortiums ability and flexibility in reacting to the changes in the country is worth mentioning. The board meeting, day-to-day communication as well as ability to establish contacts with the new authorities illustrate consortiums connection with reality and ability for collective reflection.

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

One of the most important things that can be mentioned under this objective is the fact that the products developed by the consortium are demanded by partners and beneficiaries regardless the political situation. This primarily relates to the Alternative Roadmaps on Community Consolidation that were happily accepted by the MTAD. This illustrates that the work of the consortium is long-term reform oriented and is not dependent on political conjuncture.

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

The major progress registered under this objective was the successful implementation of Mardamej SIC, with adaptation to the new reality. As it was mentioned in the activity description the quality of participation of youth has visibly changed and promoting this change through creating real opportunities of community work is extremely important. Similarly with the small grants awarded by CFOA, although not much time passed since the change of power the change of attitude towards the country, the community and peoples opportunities has changed drastically and it is important to transform the positive emotional energy to positive constructive energy.

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

Due to the fluctuations in the country this component was to some extent put on hold and only internal activities were implemented. It should be mentioned though that activities under this objectives create an opportunity to reflect over the new logic of CS-LG-Central Authorities cooperation.

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 issue of Hamaynk-HaMaTegh covering April-May and June period newspaper published and disseminated – 2,000 copies each;
- ✓ 3 issues of quarterly newsletter developed
- ✓ 36,505 total visits to celog.am portal as of 30.03.2017
- ✓ 8 Infotuns have conducted 32 activities with participation of 1072 participants; 503 female and 569 male
- ✓ Mardamej with involvement of 67 participants from all regions of Armenia organized
- ✓ Scripts of 2 animations developed
- ✓ Budget hearings in 5 communities and discussions of five-year development plans in 5 communities organized with involvement of approximately 135 (72 (53%) male and 63 (47%) female).
- ✓ 17 Alternative Roadmaps on community consolidation developed and submitted to MTAD.

PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED

The major problems were obviously related to time shifts and delays connected to the political situation in the country. It should be mentioned though that thanks to effective internal communication and communication with USAID the rescheduling of planned activities did not harm the project.

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 reflect the activities implemented in project year 4 and plan the activities for the project year 5,
- To finalize delayed activities,
- To continue establishing constructive working relations with the decision makers on local and national level,
- To work actively with InfoTuns aimed at identifying the new opportunities on local level,
- To consult with other partners from the CS on ways of better addressing new challenges and opportunities.

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

V. Movsisyan
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