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Civic Engagement in Local Governance (CELoG) Program

Annual 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
CSO - Civil Society Organization
CSO DePo – CSO Development Program
CLASS - Community Level Access to Social Services Program
CFOA - Communities Finance Officers' Association
ECRG - Engaged Citizens for Responsive Governance Program
EPF - Eurasia Partnership Foundation
FB- Facebook
FoI - Freedom of Information
GOAM - Government of Armenia
ISTDC - Information Systems Development and Training Center
LG - Local Government
LGAI - Local Governance Annual Index
LSG - Local Self-Government
MAB - Management Advisory Board
MICE - Media for Informed Civic Engagement Program
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
PAARA- Public Administration Academy of the Republic of Armenia
TARA - Territorial-Administrative Reform in Armenia
TIAC - Transparency International Anti-Corruption Center
YB- Youth Bank
YPC - Yerevan Press Club

Introduction

The Communities Finance Officers' Association (CFOA) in consortium with the Information Systems Development and Training Center (ISTDC), the Yerevan Press Club (YPC), the Asparez Journalists' Club (AJC), Eurasia Partnership Foundation (EPF), and the Caucasus Research Resource Centers-Armenia (CRRC), is implementing a Program titled "Civic Engagement in Local Governance" (CELoG), the Armenian equivalent of which is «Հանրային մասնակցություն տեղական ինքնակառավարմանը» (ՀաՄաՏեղ).

The Program aims at increasing civic engagement and oversight of decentralization and local self-government reform at the national and local levels.

This will be achieved through the accomplishment of the following four objectives:

- a) 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;
- b) To strengthen civil society's capacity to monitor the central and local government institutions and officials, and the implementation of the decentralization reform;
- c) To increase citizens' access to independent and reliable information on the decentralization reform; and
- d) To improve the civil society enabling environment with a special focus on decentralization.

This report introduces the activities carried out during the fourth year of program implementation, the political context in Armenia, a narrative analytical description of overall program progress towards results, data on indicators established in the Activity M&E Plan, as well as outlines priorities for the next reporting period based on the reflection of achievements reached and problems encountered during the fourth program year.

Political Context

The major political event that took place in Armenia during the reporting year was the Velvet Revolution that took place in spring 2018 and resulted in resignation of Prime-Minister Serj Sargsyan and transfer of power to the new revolutionary government led by Nikol Pashinyan. Thus the project implementation year can be conditionally divided into three periods: before (October 2017-February 2018), during (March-May 2018) and after (June-September 2018) the revolution.

It is natural that the processes taking place in LG sector in Armenia before the mass protests and demonstrations have started were completely different from what happened afterwards. After the change of political authorities in the country the major reform processes have been either frozen or slowed down. Particularly the community consolidation as a major reform in the LG sector was frozen and will be most likely revived only after the snap parliamentary elections.

The first period was in logic of the launched reform processes, particularly the community consolidation process: after piloting consolidation in two smaller phases the Government has initiated the third and biggest wave of consolidation, which however was strongly criticized both by civil society and the communities since according to them the clusters were designed unilaterally by a closed group of senior officials in the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Development. This phase was also important because of the local elections in 69 communities, which was particularly interesting since many consolidated communities were holding elections for the first time.

Policy-wise the pre-revolutionary phase was significant also because of the gradual conceptualization of what and how should be done in LG sector. Particularly the speech of ex-President Sargsyan during the meeting with community heads on December 9th 2017, was important in terms of the emphasis made on the necessity in obtaining resources for community development by the communities themselves. The statements made by Sargsyan were quite illustrative both in terms of lack of resources in the country and some kind of governance crisis and the fatigue of the central authorities.

The development of the draft decentralization map was another important happening of the pre-revolutionary period. The fact of its appearance was, however, more important than its content, since it was not conceptually reflecting the current state of the LG system.

While speaking about the “revolutionary” phase of the reporting period the most important aspect is probably the fact that for the first time in the entire history of independent Armenia there was an institutional involvement of LGs in political process. 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.

Another important aspect that should be taken into account was the side effect of the strategy chosen by Pashinyan during the launch of the protests. His “My Step” walking campaign from Gyumri to Yerevan with stops and visits to many communities resulted in direct involvement of people outside Yerevan in the process. Unlike the previous cases when the major events were being organized in Yerevan and the rest of Armenia would join the capital, this wave of protests was decentralized and thus the local protests mattered much more than before. In this respect it should also be noted that the decentralized essence of the protests allowed the citizens of Armenia to self-organize in their home communities which naturally targeted not only the central but also local authorities and the latter had to choose either to remain loyal to Sargsyan and RPA or to express their solidarity towards the movement.

The post-revolutionary period was important first of all in terms of stabilization of the situation in the country and ensuring that all state institutions are working properly. The second important aspect was peaceful completion of transfer of power. Although this primarily relates to the National Assembly, transfer of power in some LGs in such communities as Yerevan, Echmiadzin, Hrazdan and others was also crucial. Thus resignations of mayors and dismissals of community councils were followed by local elections in several communities. The third important aspect of the post-revolutionary period was related to the conceptualization of LG sector development by the new authorities. Up until the end of the reporting period it was done mainly through statements of the PM Pashinyan and Minister Papikyan on community consolidation, decentralization and other aspects of the LG sector. The essence of these statements is that TARA is generally acceptable for the new authorities, however the quality of implementation of the reform by previous authorities was evaluated quite negatively, namely because of the lack of involvement of the communities in designing of community clusters. At this point in time these statements are declarative and it is expected that during and after the snap parliamentary elections there will be more clarity.

Another important development that was also partly related to the LG sector was the process of working on revisions of the Electoral Code. According to Prime Minister's decision an Electoral Legislation Reform Commission was established specifically tasked to review and amend the Code and related legislation. From the point of view of LG most disputed topics that could be discussed were the tendency of making the elections of community heads in consolidated communities indirect as in case of Gumri and Vanadzor; and the issue of participation of civic initiatives in local elections.

But due to the urgency of amending the legislation for the snap parliamentary elections the major topic in this respect was whether these issues should be discussed in a rush or postponed for the period after snap elections.

Overall the reporting year was a turning point for the country. As any radical societal change the Velvet Revolution contains both significant risks and unique opportunities for subsequent progress in LG sectoral reform.

Summary of Conducted Activities

During the fourth year of implementation, the consortium has contributed to all four objectives of the project. Below is a brief introduction of the activities conducted under each objective.

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

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

EPF continued to support consortium partners in development of media materials. EPF team members have authored articles for Hamaynq-Hamategh newspaper issues, assisted InfoTuns in developing success stories for celog.am web portal as well as worked closely with JCA team



during the development of the quarterly newsletters. EPF has developed and published a brochure entitled “Society and local-self-governance: Perspectives for development” based on the results of the OAS organized during the 3rd project year which was included in EPFs [Annual report](#) as well.

In addition to that EPF team has produced CELoG promotional materials (notebooks, pens, folders and T-shirts) for dissemination among project partners and beneficiaries; other distribution materials (cups, pins, notepads, and badges) were developed jointly with MICE project for Mardamej SIC participants.

Data indicators: Articles, briefers, project related products developed and disseminated by the consortium.

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

During the reporting period CELoG team continued its cooperation with other development actors. CELoG has periodically used its communication resources -- the website, mailing lists and Hamaynq-Hamategh monthly for dissemination of announcements, news and other

information about CSO DePo, MICE, (ECRG), My Armenia, CLASS and other USAID-funded projects.

CELoG team members took part in Management Advisory Board (MAB) meetings organized within the framework of the MICE project on a quarterly basis. Active cooperation between CELoG and MICE projects took part also during organization of trainings for media outlets, Mardamej Social Innovation Camp and other activities.

Another important cooperation was launched with USAID funded Community Level Access to Social Services (CLASS) project. The meeting held between representatives of the two projects was aimed at presenting activities and discussing cooperation opportunities. It was agreed that CELoG team will assist CLASS project in target communities in their efforts on improvement of social services through work with LGs, circulation of information and provision of expert feedback.

Another important case of cooperation was between CELoG and Armenian Territorial Development Fund (ATDF). ATDF approached CELoG with a request to identify the level of awareness of the community members about the programs implemented by ATDF. CELoG has proposed ATDF both methodological support of CRRC in development of the questionnaires and the support of InfoTuns to conduct the survey in target communities. In August a meeting with InfoTun coordinators was organized at EPF premises where the whole process was presented by the representative of ATDF. It is expected that the survey will be conducted during the next project year.

Data indicators: Cooperation and intensive communication with USAID funded projects is taking place on regular basis. Projects and organizations are exchanging information, products and experience based on requests.

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

During the reporting period the consortium held one board meeting and organized a retreat to sum up the activities of the fourth project year and discuss the fifth year activity plan.

In order to react effectively to the political developments during the active phase of protests in the country the Consortium members were in active communication with each other. 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).

The Consortium retreat was organized in September with the involvement of staff members from all Consortium organizations. During the retreat the results of the fourth project year were summed up and year 5 work plan was discussed based on the feedback received from consortium members and submitted to USAID for approval.

Apart from these meetings the consortium staff held periodic meetings to discuss particular project activities/components or ongoing issues related to the management, communication, etc.

Data indicators: 1 board meeting, 1 Consortium retreat, periodic thematic meetings.

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

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

During the reporting period CFOA experts continued monitoring of the local government sector and worked on the preparation of the regular annual report.

The 10th edition of “Local Self-Government in Armenia” (2017) dedicated to the study and coverage of the reforms carried out in 2017 was developed and published. The Monitoring was implemented in accordance with the methodology used during the development of previous reports. It consists of 7 Chapters covering different aspects of LSG, such as Administrative-Territorial Division, Finance, Democracy, and Public Services, etc. Similarly to previous issues the book is bilingual (Armenian and English) languages and is published in 500 copies. It will be distributed to main stakeholders including the MTAD, National Assembly, universities, partner organizations and others.

In the course of the third project year CFOA and CRRC developed Local Governance Annual Index (LGAI) methodology based on international experience in this sector and by localizing it in LG sector in Armenia. During the reporting period the CFOA expert team calculated LSG Index for the year of 2017. It was compared with LGAI assessment results of 2015 and 2016, analyzing the changes over the last 3 years. Based on the assessments of 52 indicators defined in 5 local governance sectors, LGAI scored 4.38 points for 2017, which is by 0.14 higher than that in 2016 (4.24) and by 0.02 less than that in 2015 (4.40). Some of the main reasons of the increase of the score by 0.14 in 2017 are the increase of the share of municipalities that organized public hearings/discussions on the annual report of budget execution, provided with pre-school education, extracurricular education, waste disposal service, had official web-sites, MMIS, general plans. The exception is “municipal assets, development programs and finances” sector, where some regress was noticed in 2017 with the average score decrease by 0.4.

Data indicators: Monitoring report 2017 and index for 2017 developed and presented.

2.2. Annual media awards (YPC)

During the reporting period, YPC carried out monitoring of the Armenian media coverage on LG issues. 17 online media outlets were monitored including Hetq.am, Aravot.am, ALTtv.am, Panorama.am, Armlur.com, Armday.com, Civilnet.am,

A1plus.am, Tert.am, News.am, Shamshtyan.com etc. The monitoring proved that LG issues attract interest of national media mostly in the periods of local elections, when journalist refer to the candidates' figures, their positions and property, business and family ties. The election programs of the candidates are almost neglected mostly because of the absence of the candidates' pre-election platforms. Even less the LG reforms and decentralization are addressed out of electoral campaigns. The crucial political changes in the country since April 2018 even more decreased the interest of media to the LG reforms, especially because of the new government slowed down or has put the reforms in the sector on hold.

YPC continues coordinating the work of the jury of the award ceremony for best coverage of local self-government sphere. The Jury considered 330 publications and shortlisted about 20 publications of 11 authors as candidates for the awards. In the light of the recent political developments, as well as the necessity of clarification regarding the reforms policy in the LG sphere it has been found more convenient to postpone the award ceremony to later period.

Data indicators: 17 media outlets monitored, more than 330 publications reviewed, 20 publications and 11 authors shortlisted.

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 completed the redesign of the publicdata.am website and since there were technical and other issues during the previous implementation year and the data was reposted on the website in its new shape. AJC has also launched the new process of official inquiries to the LGs based on the FoI law. The new LG transparency report (Annex 1) was developed based on the results of the inquiries and some of LGs that did not provide the requested information and thus violated the FoI law were sued by AJC and the cases are currently in process.

AJC has organized 10 presentations of the report in all marzes of Armenia and invited regional and local authorities, CSOs, media and expert community representatives to the presentations. Overall 606 participants were involved (241 Female, 365 Male).

Data indicators: LG Transparency report developed, 10 court cases opened against LGs that have violated the FoI Law, publicdata.am website redesigned and new data posted, 10 regional

presentations of the LG Transparency report, 606 participants (241 Female, 365 Male).

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

During the reporting period CFOA provided assistance to the target LGs to organize and implement public hearing of the community budgets and five-year community development plans. As in the previous year, CFOA experts have actively supported local authorities in organizing these events and encouraged local authorities to use different channels to ensure the participation of diverse groups. CFOA experts were present at every public hearing to provide any support necessary as well as to assess the level of civic participation. Afterwards, short reports were developed.

Overall during the 4th project year CFOA experts assisted in the organization of budget hearings in 40 municipalities and in the discussion of five-year development plans in 9 municipalities. The overall number of participants was approximately 1800 (52% male, 48% female), including community council members, LG staffs and community activists. Compared to the previous year (around 780 participants), there is a sharp increase in the participation rate.

In 2017 discussion of municipal budget in the target municipality Ashtarak was organized online via official page of the municipality, where users were able to make comments and suggestions. As a result, 18 comments and suggestions were received. It shows that this kind of approach in participation on local level is quite effective and it would be useful to discuss the possibilities of applying similar methods in other municipalities as well. During the reporting period an event was organized jointly by CFOA, ISDTC and EPF and this case was presented to other municipalities and MTAD representatives.

Data indicators: Assistance in organization of municipal budget hearings in 40 municipalities and five-year development plans in 9 municipalities provided.

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

During the reporting period CFOA jointly with the Electoral Legislation Reform Commission adjunct to the Prime Minister organized a public discussion on August 1 with the involvement

of LSGs, CSOs, independent experts to collect suggestions and opinions regarding regulations on local elections. Among the main topics were expanding the scope of municipalities with proportional election of Community Council (currently this system applies only to Yerevan, Gyumri and Vanadzor), direct elections of mayors in municipalities where Community Councils are formed through proportional representation elections, possibility of participation of civic initiatives in LSG elections, etc. During the public discussion representatives from MTAD, CSOs and the Electoral Legislation Reform Commission¹ had an opportunity to express their opinions on the issues, make some recommendations which were recorded. A detailed article devoted this event was also published in [Hamaynq-HaMaTegh monthly newspaper](#).

Data indicators: 1 round table discussion with involvement of around 40 experts and CSO representatives organized, recommendations on regulation of local elections in the new Electoral code developed and submitted to MTAD and Electoral Legislation Reform Commission.

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

During the fourth year the draft law on Inter-Community Union, draft law on Territorial Administration and law on Financial Equalization were the major targets of CFOA experts. Starting from December till February recommendations on improvement of the mechanism of establishment of Inter-Community Unions were prepared and submitted to MTAD. During the presentation of the draft law Deputy Minister Mr. Vache Terteryan expressed his gratitude to CFOA for the assistance. In March the amended draft law was adopted.

Regarding the draft law on Territorial Administration, CFOA experts revealed several inconsistencies with the Law on Local Self-Government as well as some technical issues. Recommendations highlighting the shortfalls and drawbacks of the draft law were made and submitted to the MTAD. The draft law is still under development.

On October 20, 2016 the new Law on Financial Equalization was adopted, fully addressing the drawbacks of the Acting law. However, if application of adjustment factors for municipal

¹ According to Prime Minister's decision an Electoral Legislation Reform Commission was established specifically tasked to review and amend the Code and related legislation.

revenue capacity is sufficient, there is a need to streamline assessment of municipal expenditure needs. This can be done by introducing adjustment factors taking into account the ongoing administrative-territorial reforms. For that reason, the required analysis along with the application of some simulation techniques were done, the recommendations were submitted to MTAD for the improvement of the existing model.

Data indicators: Recommendation sets on 3 draft laws developed and submitted, two draft laws adopted one in process.

2.10 Shadow report and an alternative roadmap (EPF)

In November-December 2017 EPF in cooperation with Armavir Development Center, CFOA and CRRC has initiated the development of Alternative roadmap on community consolidation in Armavir sub-region of Armavir marz. The idea of the initiative was to collect bottom up information about needs, expectations and attitude of the community population and LG representatives about the consolidation process that was not yet implemented in Armavir marz. As a result a comprehensive report based on telephone interviews with LGs and town hall meetings with community members was developed. The results of this survey showed that there is a strong need to design the community clusters with active involvement of LGs and the population, since there are many specific issues that are simply not known on local level, such as existing connections of disagreements between this or that communities, expectations of the population from the process itself and finally the communication on local level has revealed that the lack of trust towards consolidation is primarily conditioned with the lack of knowledge about the process of planning the consolidation. Due to importance of the received data for policy-makers the report was shared with MTAD. The reaction of the Ministry was extremely positive and MTAD upon reviewing the report requested CELoG to conduct similar activities for other parts of Armenia where the consolidation process was not yet initiated.

In spring 2018 EPF and CFOA have mobilized the InfoTun network as well as other local CSOs to conduct similar activities in 17 other sub-regions² as well. As a result 18 Alternative roadmaps were developed in total covering Ararat, Armavir and Aragatsotn marzes fully, biggest part of Kotayk marz and those ‘sub-regions’ of Shirak, Tavush and Lori marzes where the consolidation did not take place. Since the study started before but was completed after the

² Although there is no official sub-regional division in present day Armenia, however there are natural connections between smaller number of communities within marzes that are mainly inherited from the Soviet time when the sub-regional division existed.

Velvet Revolution the reports were presented to the new Minister of TAD Suren Papikyan.

In parallel with this EPF has launched the process of development of the shadow report the topic of which was defined after consultations with CFOA experts. The idea of the report was to identify the major tendencies in community property management in Tumanyan, Tatev and Dilijan communities. After announcing the call and selecting the winning group of experts EPF team has coordinated the process of the report development (fieldwork, expert interviews, focus groups etc.).

The draft report was communicated with CFOA and after comments were received the second draft of it was developed. Due to active political processes in spring 2018 the revision process of the draft report was slowed down which caused delays in making the final product. However in summer 2018 the report was resubmitted and finalized by EPF (Annex 2).

Data indicators: 18 Alternative roadmaps developed, 1,600 participants involved in the process (774 Female, 826 Male), 18 reports submitted to MTAD, 1 shadow report developed.

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

During the reporting period ISDTC has completed the study on the opportunities for cooperation between the IT and telecommunication business entities and LGs. The study that was submitted during the previous reporting period was based on the meetings and consultations held with both parties and included practical recommendations on boosting the cooperation. As a result ISDTC has developed the ICT catalogue with detailed description of major ICT actors in Armenia that have the potential and the willingness to cooperate with LGs and provide ICT services to them (Annex 3).

It was planned to hold the presentation of the catalogue in September 2018 however due to some technical reasons it was postponed to next reporting period.

Data indicators: ICT catalogue containing detailed description of business entities that can cooperate with LGs developed.

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

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

CFOA Small grants

During the reporting period CFOA was managing 5 sub-grants in the framework of the sub-granting component of the project. All grants were aimed at promoting public participation in Gavar, Sarukhan, Noratus, Karmirgyugh (Ghegharkunik region), Parakar, Metsamor (Armavir region), Tumanyan (Lori region), Tegh and Tatev (Syunik region) municipalities by using various means and tools. Within the framework of these projects numerous events were organized. In Gavar, Sarukhan, Noratus and Karmirgyugh (“Geghareg” Educational-Cultural NGO) as well as in Tegh and Tatev municipalities (“Dynamica” civic initiative) capacity building seminars, focus-group discussions on community issues were organized. For increasing the accountability of LGs, “media courts” were organized in Tegh and Tatev with participation of mayors and active citizens.

In Parakar (“KAMQ” Center for Youth Projects” NGO) and Metsamor (“Family and Community” Charitable NGO) communities a number of cultural events and contests were organized to bring the municipal issues to LG’s attention and promote dialogue between different actors. In Tumanyan consolidated community the major focus of the project was on Five-year development plan and 2018 municipal budget.

During the fourth project year CFOA used small grant awards also for supporting local organizations to develop alternative roadmaps in 10 sub-regions. 10 selected organizations conducted studies of public opinion regarding the community consolidation in Artik, Spitak, Ashtarak, Talin, Hrazdan, Abovyan, Sevan, Gavar, Masis and Artashat sub-regions. (See Activity 2.10 for more details).

EPF InfoTun Network

During Year 4 different issues were raised by InfoTuns and several registered success. One of the issues is library improvement in several communities. For instance, the public library of Ararat community was renovated after several meetings with the library director. Moreover,

the reading hall that was dysfunctional is now open for public. The same issue was raised by Martuni InfoTun. As a result, it was decided to move the library to a more convenient location. Besides the library, other municipal subsidiary organizations, such as community school of art, development center for kids were also moved to the same building serving as a community center. Vayk InfoTun addressed the same issue as well. InfoTun has started to cooperate with the community library, mainly they have consulted and assisted library staff how to run the Facebook page. As a result the Facebook page registered progress and the number of followers increased from 35 to 150 which lead also to increase of interest from the community youth. The cooperation between the InfoTun and the library has resulted in increase of enthusiasm among the library employees who are eager to initiate new activities. It is planned that InfoTun together with EPF will organize a strategizing and planning sessions for the library during next reporting period.

During Year 4 several of InfoTuns covered issues regarding transportation services. For instance, Ararat InfoTun's civic journalists covered the issue of absence of bus stops and finally during this year [3 bus stops](#) were installed in different parts of the city. Gyumri InfoTun was actively engaged in public transportation monitoring. As a result, it was decided to develop [online public transport map of Gyumri](#). Another result was registered: public transport time schedule to Mush 2 district (25) was prolonged from 19:00 to 20:30 and there is improvement of public transport service. Vanadzor InfoTun activists have applied to the chief architect of Vanadzor with a suggestion to transform the bus stops that are in better condition into smart bus stops with Wi-Fi, information board, charging spots, etc. The reply was positive and it was mentioned that this proposal may be included in the budget and the work plan of the coming year.

During this year Ijevan InfoTun worked in various areas. Regarding improving communal services Ijevan InfoTun activist Davit Khachatryan contacted the municipality for installing trash bin on the Metaghaghortsneri Street where there have never been garbage collection. As a result, the municipality finally installed it. Ijevan InfoTun raised the issue of throwing garbage Aghstev river by near y shops, as well organized public discussion on this. The results will be provided in the next reporting period.

It is worth mentioning the activities done by Syunik InfoTun. During this year as the result of applying to the community council with a petition initiated by Syunik InfoTun resulted in renovation of the windows of House of Culture in Halidzor. Another activity has recorded

success. Syunik InfoTun activist Iza Astsatryan raised an issue of renovation of the playground of the kindergarten located next to the House of Culture in Halizdor. Finally, it was also renovated.

In terms of cooperating with the LG sector, Martuni InfoTun raised an issue of proper street lighting and poor condition of sidewalks of Kamo and Abovyan streets in Martuni city. As a result the issues were included in the community council agenda and they applied to the Ministry of Transport, Communication and Information Technologies. The InfoTun has applied both to central and local authorities because the mentioned streets are part of intercommunity roads. Community council assured that by the end of the year there would be a positive reply of the Ministry.

InfoTun activity planning for October, considered developing cultural life in Armavir. InfoTun mainly focused on the establishment of classical musical choir. As a result, the director of State College of Art in Armavir city provided the college hall for the activities of choir. (See Annex 4 for detailed description of InfoTun activities for July-September 2018 period).

Mardamej Social Innovation Camp

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 Radio 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.

Usta Kh'tsan (Ուստա Խոստի) 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 dedicated with 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 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 (Գյուղամեյ) 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.

CELoG has selected the Smart bin project since it is mostly related to LG sector.

During the reporting period the TimPulse project, the winner of the last year Mardamej SIC, has entered its active implementation phase. The community council meetings monitoring and evaluating methodology was developed, Martuni was selected as the pilot destination of the project and the teams were formed. Currently the teams are actively working with their particular community members and trying to address issues of community importance.

Data indicators: 5 small grants projects concluded, 10 final reports on community consolidation, 121 events organized by InfoTuns with involvement of 4,904 people (2678

Female, 2226 Male), Mardamej SIC organized with involvement of 67 participants, 5 projects funded, one of them by CELoG and four by MICE.

3.2.b CELoG Research Fellowships (CRRC)

The third round of fellowships was implemented by CRRC during the reporting period.

Three research fellows were selected during the 4th year of project implementation with the following research topics listed below:

1. Narek Karapetyan, “Comparative evaluation of expenditures of community budgets in Armenia” [In Armenian]
2. Vardges Bokhyan, “Assessing the Factors Influencing the Perception of Satisfaction of community services”
3. Hamlet Smoyan, “Involvement of ethnic minorities in the local governance and impact of community consolidation on ethnic minorities. [In Armenian]

All three studies were completed and will be presented during next reporting period.

Data indicators: 3 fellowships awarded, 3 research papers developed.

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

During the fourth year of the program, CFOA continued its support to three initiative groups in submitting petitions to municipal councils in Dilijan, Yeghegnadzor and Vedi.

In Dilijan for the construction of the bridge in Haghartsin 250 signatures were collected and the package was presented to the avagani. The avagani approved the decision and instructed to prepare documentation for construction.

In Yeghegnadzor through public discussions the need for bus stops was identified. The initiative group collected around 160 signatures and presented to the avagani who made a positive decision for allocating funds to build three bus stops in the municipality.

In Vedi about 120 signatures supporting the renovation of the road to high school were collected. The estimated cost of reconstruction was 210 million AMD (equivalent to 450,000

USD) which, according to the mayor, wasn't possible to finance through the municipal budget. It was decided to do some road smoothing works to improve the quality of the road till finding the investment.

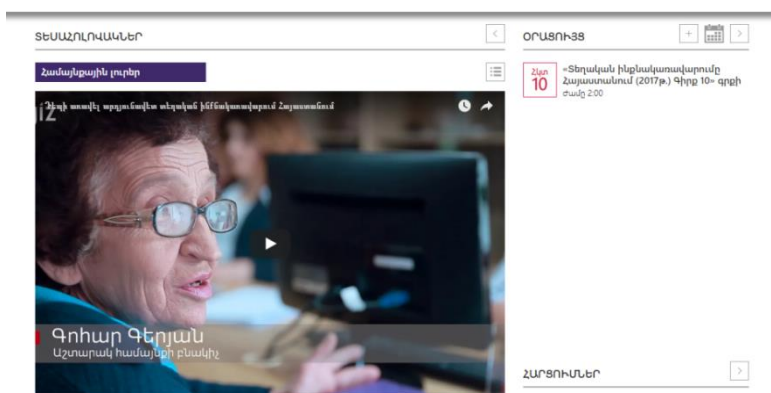
Data indicators: 3 local initiatives successfully implemented with the support of the assistance of CELoG experts.

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

During the fourth year Hamaynq-HaMaTegh («Համայնք-Հասցե») monthly newspaper was regularly published in 2000 copies. There were two joint issues: for April and May and for July and August. Due to the savings the additional issue will be published in the fifth project year.

The newspaper was disseminated free of charge among municipalities, government agencies, partner organizations, local NGOs as well as was spread during public events organized in the framework of CELoG. The online version is available both on [CFOA official website](#) and [CELoG web portal](#).

The newspaper includes news on CELoG program and major developments in LG sector, as well as interviews and articles about municipal amalgamation process and CELoG activities. At the same the editorial column provides a good opportunity for expressing consortium's attitude towards major developments in LG sector.



During the reporting period AJC has developed and disseminated 6 newsletters which apart from 4 quarterly newsletters of the reported period included also the final quarterly newsletter of the 3rd project year and an extra one produced in spring 2018.

The newsletters continue presenting detailed information about project activities, target communities and major happenings in LG sector.

During the reporting period EPF has completed two short animations from the project year 3 and developed 2 new animations dedicated to [local initiatives](#) and [IT systems in LG](#).

During the reporting period ISDTC continued administration of the FB page and www.celog.am web portal. ISDTC also provided training for consortium members on using the portal and uploading information.

The table below introduces the major statistics from the portal (See Annex 5 for more details on web portal and Annex 6 on FB activities):

N	Title of the section	Number as of	
		30.06.18	30.09.18
1.	News	336	364
2.	Announcements	59	63
3.	Calendar	96	105
4.	Reforms	19	19
5.	Surveys	6	6
6.	Documents	10	10
7.	Library	17	17
8.	Reports	8	8
9.	Videos	96	100
10.	Photos	14	15
11.	Legislation	22	22
12.	Newspaper	26	39
13.	FAQ	22	22
14.	Registered users	64	68

Data indicators: 10 issues (2000 copies each) of Hamaynq-HaMaTegh monthly issued and circulated, 6 issues of AJC newsletter issued, 4 animations on LG developed.

3.5. TV talk shows regional broadcast (YPC)

9 TV talk shows were produced and broadcast during the reporting period. All TV program links were shared on CELoG Facebook page and uploaded on the YouTube channel of YPC. All programs were hosted by Boris Navasardian, YPC President:

#34 “Mamuli Akumb-HaMaTegh” TV talk show

Date/time of broadcast: October 30 at 18:50, November 2 at 17:30.

Topic: The annual assessment index of the RA local self-government for 2015 and 2016.

Program host: Boris Navasardian, YPC President

Invited speakers:

- Vahram Shahbazyan, CFOA expert group leader
- Sona Balasayan, CRRC-Armenia Research Director
- Naira Arakelyan, Armavir Development Center President
- Abraham Artashesyan, CeLOG Project Coordinator, CFOA vice-President

#35 “Mamuli Akumb-HaMaTegh” TV talk show

Date/time of broadcast: November 13 at 18:50, November 16 at 17:30

Topic: 2017 November 5 LG elections and the current process of reforms

Program host: Boris Navasardian, YPC President

Invited speakers:

- Ashot Giloyan, Head of the Local Self-governance Department of the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Development of RA
- Vahan Movsisyan, CFOA President, CeLOG Project Director

#36 “Mamuli Akumb-HaMaTegh” TV talk show

Date/time of broadcast: November 30 at 18:50, December 3 at 17:30.

Topic: Addressing the situation in Vanadzor municipality after the Constitutional Court's decision

Program host: Boris Navasardian, YPC President

Invited speakers:

- Ara Ghazaryan, Human Rights European Convention expert
- Yeranuhi Soghoyan, Hetq online newspaper journalist
- Narine Avetisyan, Lori TV Director
- Sara Petrosyan, Hetq online newspaper journalist

#37 “Mamuli Akumb-HaMaTegh” TV talk show

Date/time of broadcast: December 11 at 18:50, December 14 at 17:30.

Topic: The Role of Mass Media in Implementing LG Reforms: The Draft Law on Television and Radio

Program host: Boris Navasardian, YPC President

Invited speakers:

- Nelli Rafayelyan, Shoghakat TV journalist
- Anzhela Stepanyan, ALT TV Chief Editor
- Ashot Melikyan, Committee to Protect Freedom of Expression, President
- Armine Tukhikyan, Urban Foundation Programs Director

[#38 “Mamuli Akumb-HaMaTegh” TV talk show](#)

Date/time of broadcast: January 29 at 18:50.

Topic: The Economic Development of Communities as a Driving Force for the LSG Enhancement

Program host: Boris Navasardian, YPC President

Invited speakers:

- Varazdat Karapetyan, RA Deputy Minister of Territorial Administration and Development,
- Vahan Movsisyan, Chairman of Communities Finance Officers Association,
- Heriknaz Harutyunyan, Editor of “Hamategh” Program,
- Artur Voskanyan, Adviser to the Head of Ashtarak Community, Economic Development Officer

[#39 “Mamuli Akumb-HaMaTegh” TV talk show](#)

Date/time of broadcast: February 5 at 18:50.

Topic: Community Development through Social Entrepreneurship

Program host: Boris Navasardian, YPC President

Invited speakers:

- Narineh Avetyan, Acting Head of Department of Territorial Investment Policy and Operational Programs at the RA Ministry of Territorial Administration and Development,
- Ruzanna Torozyan, Executive Director of Goris Women’s Development Resource Center Foundation,
- Yura Harutyunyan, Director of Ararat region Vedi city “Clean Country” LLC,
- Robert Ghukasyan, Director of Gegharkunik region Kalavan village “Time Land” Foundation

[#40 “Mamuli Akumb-HaMaTegh” TV talk show](#)

Date/time of broadcast: February 19 at 18:50.

Topic: RA Draft Law on Making Amendments to the RA Law on Intercommunity Associations

Program host: Boris Navasardian, YPC President

Invited speakers:

- Vardevan Grigoryan, RA NA Deputy, Chair of RA NA Standing Committee on Territorial Administration, Local Self-Government, Agriculture and Environment,
- Vahan Movsisyan, Chairman of Communities Finance Officers Association

[#41 “Mamuli Akumb-HaMaTegh” TV talk show](#)

Date/time of broadcast: March 5 at 18:50.

Topic: Problems regarding public, including journalists

Program host: Boris Navasardian, YPC President

Invited speakers:

- Levon Barseghyan, Chairman of the Board of “Asparez” Journalist’s Club,
- Natalya Lapauri, Member of Yerevan Community Council.

[#42 “Mamuli Akumb-HaMaTegh” TV talk show](#)

Date/time of broadcast: March 19 at 18:50.

Topic: The LSG Elections of March 11, 2018

Program host: Boris Navasardian, YPC President

Invited speakers:

- Ghazar Martirosyan, Head of Khachpar Community of Ararat Region,
- Armineh Tukhikyan, Program Director at Urban Foundation for Sustainable Development,
- Anzhela Stepanyan, Chief Editor of “ALT” TV Company,
- Vladimir Martirosyan, Correspondent of “Haykakan Zhamanak” daily.

In the period April-September 2018 Yerevan Pres Club could not broadcast TV programs envisaged under the component “TV Programme” of “Civic Engagement in Local Governance” (CELoG) Project. The major reason for this was the politically biased behavior of Yerkir Media TV station in light of the revolution and broadcasting a TV program on reforms and policies became quite risky in terms of public perception of the content that potentially

might be conditioned with the channel bias. 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 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 talk show. Also absence of substantive progress in the LSG reform on the national level made any discussions on national TV channels less productive. During the last months YPC was considering alternative possibilities for efficiently continuing this component of the project. This approach was supported by the Consortium members. Consequently, YPC started preparation for the broadcasting alternatively on regional TV channels focusing on several challenges for LSG reforms in the local level, including the municipal elections.

Data indicators: 9 national (85,000 total views) talk shows.

3.6. Annual discussions with university students (CFOA)

The annual meeting with university students was decided to postpone till the end of October due to the late publication of the 10th book on Local Self-Government in Armenia.

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

4.2 Development of policy recommendations regarding CSO engagement in LSG (EPF)

Once the presentations described in the activity 4.3 were completed EPF team analyzed the results and feedback received from the InfoTuns as well as consulted with CFOA experts on possible recommendations on policy and legal improvements that can be done to improve the quality of LG-CSO cooperation. These recommendations served as kick off point for discussion that was organized by EPF in its premises with involvement of local and central authorities, CSOs and experts.

The event consisted of presentation of EPF study and the results of InfoTun events and a presentation of CFOA study of Armenian legislation opportunities and gaps for LG-CSO cooperation. Presentations that were followed by discussion and exchange of opinions. It was agreed to formulate all major recommendations and submit them to the decision makers. Due to the fact that the political situation in Armenia has changed and the snap elections are expected it was decided to address these issues after the snap elections.

Data indicators: Presentation of analysis of local legislation in terms of regulation of CSO-LG cooperation and practical feedback received from InfoTun presentations.

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

During the reporting period EPF has organized presentations of the study on LG-CSO cooperation mechanisms in 8 InfoTuns. Each presentation was attended by LG and CSO representatives and community activities. After the presentation a discussion of exact application of these mechanisms took place and participants proposed ideas that are relevant for their particular communities. EPF and InfoTun representatives registered all outcomes of the discussion and agreed that InfoTuns will follow up on them. Some of the initiatives are already launched or planned for the project year 5. Namely in Ararat the possibility of involving young volunteers to assist LGs in communication activities is being discussed, the idea on development of the alternative roadmap conducted in Armavir and described in activity 2.10 appeared during the study presentation in Armavir, Martuni municipality is planning to co-organize with EPF a series of public planning and strategizing events with involvement of

community population. During the next reporting period EPF will continue follow up activities to ensure that all major ideas developed in InfoTuns are properly addressed.

Data indicators: Presentations in 8 InfoTuns, 163 participants (100 Female, 63 Male).

Progress towards results

The fourth project year was full of events in the country that had their impact on the project as well. The Velvet Revolution was a big shake for the entire society, but most importantly for the youth who were the main actors of the protests. The success of the Velvet Revolution has served as a significant stimulating and empowering force for youth and has made the LGs and central authorities more cooperative. This has also changed the logic of relations between the civil society and the authorities from confrontation to cooperation. In this respect there is a significant cooperation potential that needs to be utilized.

The revolution obviously caused some problems and discrepancy in communication as well. The reforms that were launched by the previous authorities were put on hold or frozen and there is certain lack clarity of how things will develop after the snap parliamentary elections. However the new situation has brought significant potential for public participation which needs to be utilized. In this respect local initiatives become crucial since they are the ones that form precedents of new situation and allow to develop new culture of relations that may afterwards be formulated in legal and policy documents.

Below is the description of project progress by project 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 implementation of decentralization reform.

Major progress registered under this objective is in utilizing cooperation opportunities between various actors. The horizontal connections became much more effective in new situation and at the same time the need for reform has revealed that there is lack of data among major stakeholders that needs to be shared.

Another important point was revealed during the consortium retreat in September 2018 was the fact that despite the political changes in the country there is no need for significant revision of the project, which means that CELoG has initially set long term goals that are relevant for present day Armenia regardless to the political authorities.

Finally the third point that needs to be mentioned under this objective is the branding of the project that has entered a new qualitative phase, the dissemination of materials and branded

products of the project became more intensive and will continue in the coming year as well and as a result in regions the project is recognizable among major stakeholders and beneficiaries.

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 consortium continued to produce qualitative data on LG sector and the reform. This data became particularly important in the light of the new political situation in the country. The data will allow to measure progress with the change of the political power in Armenia, provide recommendations to the decision makers and expect that the expert opinion as well as bottom up initiatives will be taken into account more seriously by the new authorities.

This relates to all products developed and presented by the project under this objective: LG Monitoring and Index report, LG Transparency report, shadow report and alternative roadmaps. All these material should be effectively communicated with the decision makers.

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

The project continues to register progress under this objective. Local initiatives implemented through CFOA small grants, alternative roadmaps developed with involvement of local actors, activities of InfoTun network both before and after the Velvet revolution were quite effective in terms of voicing out existing problems and advocating for effective solutions. In the new circumstances local actors are more enthusiastic in initiating new activities and there is much less fear to formulate demands than it was before.

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

Outcomes under this objective were capitalized during the reporting period. The presentations held by EPF in InfoTuns resulted in big number of new ideas and initiatives on local level and raised the interest of both local authorities and the civil society. The follow up made by InfoTuns shows that the capitalization of the results of these presentations and success cases will continue during the 5th project year as well.

This issue was discussed in Yerevan with representatives of central and local authorities, CSOs and experts and illustrated that the potential of LG-CSO cooperation needs to be properly addressed and utilized. There are some cases where the adjustments, regulations and initiatives on central level are required and the consortium will advocate for these activities in the coming year.

Problems encountered

The major issue that has affected the project activities was the Velvet Revolution which has paralyzed the country for several weeks. This resulted in some delays in project activities and results. The change of the political situation has also made the consortium to revise its relations with the Yerkir Media TV since political bias illustrated by the channel has put the perception of the program by the public at risk.

Overall the internal communication of the project allows to state that all issues that appeared during the implementation of the project found their solutions. They only caused some technical difficulties and delays but their effect on the overall progress of the project was not significant.

A comparison of actual expenditures with budget estimates

During the fourth year of project implementation some project partners had savings and unspent funds due to delays in activities. These issues were discussed during the consortium retreat and it was decided to either reallocate funds for additional activities, or increase the funding for most effective ones. The activities that were delayed were also discussed and it was decided to move them to project year 5 in case of delays.

Priorities for programming during the next reporting period

During the next project year the program will have several priorities.

- In light of the new political situation addressing issues of participatory democracy on central level becomes a priority for the project, namely advocating for legal and policy changes is expected.
- The new project component that was added to the project as Objective 5 should be properly launched and implemented.

- More active work needs to be done to boost local initiatives and sustain their success.
- More active communication of project products is an important priority for the fifth project year.