

QUARTERLY
PROGRESS REPORT

GEORGIA COMMUNITIES
EMPOWERED FOR LOCAL
DECISION-MAKING

OCTOBER TO DECEMBER 2005

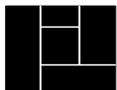
Prepared for



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Georgia Communities Empowered for Local Decision-Making
United States Agency for International Development
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Cooperative Agreement No.:	114-A-00-04-00131-00
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Project Description

The overall objective of this project is:

— More Effective, Responsive, and Accountable Local Governance in Georgia (USAID Strategic Objective 2.31).

Intermediate Results that should advance the objective include the following:

— Improved Capacity of Local Communities to Engage Local Government to strengthen communities' capacity to rebuild essential services, restore incomes and empower all citizens of Georgia to have an effective voice in government.

CELD is designed to achieve community level impact by using a bottom-up approach to systematically assist Georgian communities to nurture democratic reform efforts.

Expected key results are:

1. Legislative reform matching local government revenues more closely to local government responsibilities is in place.
2. The interests of local governments are advocated and local government best practice is disseminated through demand-driven, democratically organized associations with grass-roots support.

3. Local government/citizen partnerships implement more effective and participatory methods for managing resources and delivering services.
4. Realistic local economic development plans and actions in targeted communities are developed and implemented.
5. Sustainable capacity of Georgian organizations to deliver technical assistance and training to local governments is established.
6. Public awareness of and citizen participation in the affairs of local self-government is increased.

I. HIGHLIGHTS

Samtskhe-Javakheti

- As part of the public consultation phase of the Borjomi city Economic Development Plan, 1,000 brochures summarizing the Plan and requesting feedback from citizens were distributed by the Borjomi coordinator, the local consultant group, and the youth group through schools, local organizations, hotels and restaurants, and the Gamgeoba and Sakrebulo. Six hundred of the brochures were returned to the Sakrebulo on November 24. With assistance from CELD partner NGO ABCO, the Borjomi local consultant group prepared a report on the citizen comments and revised the Plan. The final version of the Plan was then submitted to the Sakrebulo for review by commissions and approval. On December 13, 2005, the Borjomi local self-government and the economic development planning group presented the Plan to the Sakrebulo, which approved it.
- The Ninotsminda Market Steering Committee (placemaking project) decided to establish Public-Private Partnership for the market. The partners are the local self-government, the private-sector market cooperative, and a local NGO. CELD is assisting the PPP in registering.

Decentralization and National Capacity-Building Activities

- The Organic Law on Local Self-Governance was adopted by Parliament on December 23, 2005. Its most important feature is that it replaces the previous system of local self-governments (elected bodies) and local governments (deconcentrated bodies) with a system that includes only elected units of local governance (approximately 70).
- On December 8, 2005, the draft law on Local Budgets had its first reading in Parliament.

Managing Local Resources

- Fee collection increased on average by 20 – 25% in the eight cities with fully implemented Service Improvement Action Plans in the solid waste collection sector.
- Private sector solid waste collection contractors in Gori and Poti invested in the service by purchasing equipment and increasing service coverage.
- Four cities included the costs of data collection for their SIAPs in their annual budgets.



II. PROGRESS OF MAJOR ACTIVITIES

Cross-Cutting Activities

Samtskhe-Javakheti Programming

Participation in U.S. Government Visits to the Region

November 14-15, 2005: U.S. Embassy Political Officer Chris Smith met with the Mayor of Akhalkalaki, Mayor of Ninotsminda, and the Council Chair of Borjomi. CELD staff traveled with U.S. Embassy staff to meet local government officials and NGOs representatives in Samtskhe-Javakheti to discuss the new organic law, the budget, and regional problems. In Akhalkalaki on November 14, the trip participants attended the formal opening of the newly renovated public hall at the mayor's office (renovations funded by CELD) and a ceremony to mark the delivery of a sanitation vehicle to the municipality (provided as in-kind support by CELD). Both local and national television covered the events.

In the evening, CELD hosted a Javakheti NGO roundtable dinner. About 20 NGO representatives from Ninotsminda and Akhalkalaki met with the Embassy staff to discuss their activities and achievements, as well as two important local issues: lack of access to Georgian-language instruction and the upcoming departure of the Russian military base.

On November 15, the group attended the opening ceremony marking the completion of the first phase of the renovation of Ninotsminda Park (funded by CELD) and met with the Mayor, before traveling on to Borjomi.

December 8-9, 2005: USAID Mission Director met with the Mayor of Ninotsminda, Ninotsminda and Akhalkalaki Youth Groups, and other USAID contractors. CELD staff and the Association of Business Consulting Organizations (CELD partner NGO) organized and participated in meetings of the USAID Mission Director with local government officials, local youth groups, and other USAID contractors in Javakheti.

Community-Based Economic Development in Samtskhe-Javakheti

Ninotsminda: In Ninotsminda, the Market Steering Committee decided to establish a Public-Private Partnership (an LLC) for the market. The partners are the local self-government, the private-sector market cooperative, and a local NGO. CELD is assisting the PPP in registering.

As part of the development of a comprehensive business plan for the market, the Steering Committee decided to survey customers and vendors in Akhalkalaki (where the nearest functioning market is located) and in Ninotsminda (in Ninotsminda, street vendors were surveyed). A total of 500 people were surveyed by the local youth groups; 200 in Akhalkalaki and 300 in Ninotsminda. The results showed that more than half of the surveyed Ninotsminda residents travel to Akhalkalaki to shop because of the lack of goods in Ninotsminda. The results will be incorporated into the business plan for the market, which will be presented to potential partner international organizations in January 2006.

Akhaltzikhe: CELD assisted the Mayor of Akhaltzikhe in developing an English-language fund-raising brochure for the Rabati project, which he distributed in the US while participating in the US International Visitors' Program in November. The U.S. State Department expressed interest in the project and the Mayor has requested help from CELD in developing a proposal for submission to the State Department.

The Rabati Steering Committee finalized the cost estimates for the materials needed for the small, start-up projects and reached agreement with the city on its contribution. CELD is providing support for the following projects:

- Street lighting;
- Museum billboards; and
- Road repair at the entrance to Rabati.

The Akhaltzikhe youth group conducted a survey and a clean-up day in support of the Rabati project. The youth group surveyed 50 people (bus drivers and passengers) on a proposal to move the location of the bus stop (which currently interferes with traffic entering the Rabati neighborhood). The CELD local coordinator analyzed and present the results to the Steering Committee, which decided to move the bus stop. The youth group also organized a clean-up day for the Rabati entrance on November 10, 2005. Approximately 20 youth participated in the event, for which the city provided cleaning equipment. Local television covered the activity.

Borjomi: As part of the public consultation phase of the Borjomi city Economic Development Plan, 1,000 brochures summarizing the Plan and requesting feedback from citizens were distributed by the Borjomi coordinator, the local consultant group, and the youth group through schools, local organizations, hotels and restaurants, and the Gamgeoba and Sakrebulo. Six hundred of the brochures were returned to the Sakrebulo on November 24. With assistance from CELD partner NGO ABCO, the Borjomi local consultant group prepared a report on the citizen comments and revised the Plan. The final version of the Plan was then submitted to the Sakrebulo for review by commissions and approval.

On December 13, 2005, the Borjomi local self-government and the economic development planning group presented the Plan to the Sakrebulo, which approved it.

With assistance from ABCO, the Borjomi economic development planning group developed one of the Plan projects—establishing a Tourism Information Center—as a proposal for funding and submitted it to CELD.

Youth Groups in Samtskhe-Javakheti:

- The Akhalkalaki youth group formally became a branch of the national Georgian Youth Association (GYA).
- GYA conducted a survey on citizen participation in local decision-making in Akhaltzikhe for CELD.
- The Borjomi youth group established a city budget working group of five members, which analyzed last year's budget and developed recommendations for the upcoming budget. The youth group also participated in a televised debate on solid waste collection in the city.
- See also activities under Community-Based Economic Development.



Resource Management in Samtskhe-Javakheti

Performance Management: Service improvement working groups in Akhalkalaki and Ninotsminda drafted Service Improvement Action Plans (SIAPs) for solid waste management. The groups conducted a needs assessment for the service and identified the major problems: lack of customer data, low rate of fee collection, lack of strategy for service improvement, and poor equipment. Communal services departments in both cities now have computers and use billing and collection software provided by CELD, which will allow them to organize accurate customer data that can be used to forecast revenues. As noted above, CELD also provided a sanitation vehicle (and 30 garbage bins) to Akhalkalaki as in-kind assistance for the improvement of the solid waste collection service. (See also Performance Management below for information on Borjomi and Akhaltsikhe.)

Donor Coordination

CELD met with a wide variety of donor and donor-funded organizations, including AgVantage, CHF, Mercy Corps, CARE, the Council of Europe (CoE), ECMI, GTZ, the Millennium Challenge Fund Georgia, NDI, IRI, the OSCE, the Heinrich Boll Foundation, and the United Nations. Highlights include a Gender Donor Coordination Meeting on Women's Involvement in Local Self-Government Elections, hosted by CELD for OSCE, the Heinrich Boll Foundation, NDI, UNIFEM, UNDP, Women's Education and Information Center, and the Association of Gender Development and meetings of COE, UNDP, OSCE, ECMI, and MPs to coordinate support for the establishment of the Secretariat of the State Decentralization Commission.

USAID Visit to Kutaisi:

CELD staff organized and participated in the USAID Deputy Mission Director's trip to Kutaisi to meet with the Governor of Imereti and the Mayor of Kutaisi on December 21, 2005. Problems associated with landfill development, solid waste, snow removal and property transfer were identified for further investigation and assistance.

Decentralization and National Capacity-Building Activities

Decentralization Activities – Central Government, NALA

Organic Law on Local Self-Governance: This new, fundamental law on local self-governance was adopted by Parliament on December 23, 2005. Its most important feature is that it replaces the previous system of local self-governments (elected bodies) and local governments (deconcentrated bodies) with a system that includes only elected units of local governance (approximately 70). This eliminates over a thousand existing governmental units. The law:

- Clearly defines self-governance and self-government units
- Affirms the importance of citizen participation
- Includes authority to create joint service provision entities

CELD provided assistance to the Parliamentary Committee on Regional Policy, Local Self-Government, and High Mountainous Regions, which drafted the law, and helped to identify other legislation that will need to be changed in response to the passage of the Organic Law. Francis Conway, US-based UI expert on decentralization, provided comments on the draft version of the law, which CELD disseminated among the stakeholders. The final version of the law eliminated some important provisions that had appeared in earlier drafts; CELD will work on addressing these gaps in the coming months. The Parliament is expected to act on legislation addressing budget and transfer issues, providing for a full description of citizens' rights to participate in all aspects of decision making and limiting the supervisory role of the central government.

Local Budget Law: On December 8, 2005, the draft law had its first reading in Parliament. The draft:

- Clearly defines the budget authorities of local self-government units
- Defines revenue sources and expenditure responsibilities
- Includes an equalization formula

CELD provided support to various stakeholders working on the budget law, including the Parliamentary Committee, the Budget and Finance Committee, the Ministry of Finance, the State Commission, and NALA. CELD also developed simulations of the equalization formula, so that its impact could be understood by the stakeholders.

Secretariat of the State Decentralization Commission: CELD organized four meetings of COE, UNDP, OSCE, ECMI, and MPs to coordinate support for the establishment of the Secretariat. The goal is to have one entity responsible for coordination of legislative drafting and monitoring implementation of local government legislation.

Media Training: In December, CELD, NDI, and IREX organized two training sessions for a total of approximately 50 journalists on local government reform, legislative issues, and the upcoming elections. The training sessions were held in Kutaisi, and Ozurgeti.

Support for the National Association of Local Authorities (NALA): CELD provides support for the general operations of NALA, which carried out the following activities during the reporting period:

- Work on the draft laws on local self-government
- Regional meetings
- Meetings at the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe
- Executive Board Meeting
- Study tour to Latvia to meet with the Association of Local Self-Governments of Latvia

Regional Associations and NGOs

CELD NGO Advisory Committee. The six-member NGO Advisory Committee, which includes representatives of NGOs and local self-governments, met to discuss achievements in 2005 and plans for 2006. Topics included: NGO participation in the implementation of the newly adopted legislation; NGO training; NGO small grants programs; and the introduction of resource centers. The Advisory Committee's recommended the following:



- In order to strengthen NGO capacity in the regions, identify the strongest ones and use them as umbrella organizations in their respective regions.
- Promote regional connections between core NGOs.
- Discuss possibility of introduction of web-page for sharing information and NGO publications.
- Add to the existing list of training topics lobbying and advocacy and relationships between NGOs and political parties.
- Announce small grants program to provide encouragement to citizens and community for becoming involved in local decision making.

Small Grants Competition for Local Self-Government Associations: Projects funded under the existing small grants competition were completed during the reporting period. Five associations published 14 issues of newsletters and the Tskaltubo Rayon Sakrebulo Association published a profile of the rayon including information on the budget, socioeconomic data, etc. Eight proposals were received from associations for the new round of small grants competition; finalists will be announced by the end of January 2006.

Academic Institutions

GIPA: During the reporting period, 33 students completed the first distance-learning semester of the Local Government Program. GIPA also identified articles from various English-language textbooks to be translated and published as *Models of Local Democracy in Eastern Europe* and *Modern Urban Development*.

Zhvania School of Public Administration in Kutaisi (Ministry of Education and Sciences): Mzia Mikeladze, CELD Civic Education Director, participated in the selection of the director and faculty for the new School. CELD funded the TOT for the School's teachers of Georgian conducted by the Center for Civil Integration and Inter-Ethnic Relations.

Gender and Youth Activities

Georgian Women's Association (GWA):

- The GWA quarterly board meeting was held in Tbilisi.
- CELD announced a small grants competition for GWA branches to increase participation in local decision making.

Georgian Youth Association (GYA):

- CELD provided a grant to GYA to fund a Students' Decentralization Working Group that will develop recommendations on political, territorial, fiscal, and administrative decentralization. State legislative and executive branch representatives, professors, and experts from Georgian and international organizations will provide assistance to the students. The recommendations will be presented at dialogues with the central government and local self-governments.

- GYA has met several times with Parliament members and has been asked by the Parliament's PR Department to prepare an article about local self-government reform in Georgia. Vano Khukhunaishvili, the Deputy Chair of the Parliamentary Committee on Regional Policy, Local Self-Government, and High Mountainous Regions, asked GYA to help the committee distribute its supplement on local self-government issues which appears in *24 Hours*.
- CELD conducted at TOT sessions for 27 GYA members from 12 cities on program budgeting. These members in turn trained others in their cities and then established working groups that are working with local self-governments on the 2006 budgets. In Gori and Kvareli, the working groups have already presented their recommendations on the budget to the local self-governments.
- CELD announced a small grants competition for GYA branches to increase public participation in local decision making and improve cooperation between citizens and local self-governments.

Strengthening Communities: Managing Local Resources

As directed by USAID during workplan development, work at the local level focuses on creating grass roots support for decentralization and building a base and developing models to support an intensive roll-out of assistance to new local self-governments in subsequent years, once the decentralization legislation has been passed. (Special programming for Samtskhe-Javakheti is discussed above, in Cross-Cutting Activities.)

Community-Based Economic Development (CBED)

Media Training: CELD Economic Development team conducted a training in Batumi for local and regional print and television journalists on Community-Based Economic Development methods and tools. Approximately 35 journalists from Ninotsminda, Akhalkalaki, Akhaltsikhe, Kutaisi, Ozurgeti, Poti, and Batumi attended the training.

Adjara: The Ministry of Finance and Economy of the Adjara Autonomous Republic and Adjara television broadcast a public service announcement of the survey of the business and NGO communities and the general public of the region for the regional Economic Development Profile. Approximately 7,000 questionnaires were completed and returned to the planning team. The survey results and profile will be presented at the first Adjara Advisory Group workshop in January 2006.

Poti: The Gamgeoba established a monitoring board for Poti's approved Economic Development Plan consisting of five representatives of the NGO and business communities and the local self-government. The board members were trained in performance measurement methodology by CELD staff and developed a draft scope of work for monitoring the implementation of specific programs in the plan.

Kutaisi: CELD staff met with Imereti and Kutaisi city officials to discuss implementing a Community-Based Economic Development program in Kutaisi. CELD will issue an RFP in January to identify a local NGO partner for the planning process.

Financial Management



Kutaisi: Provided computers for accounting and program budgeting and for property management.

Introduction of financial management in new cities: During the reporting period, CELD provided training on financial management in Marneuli and Gardaban.

Development of the 2006 program budgets: CELD continues to provide assistance in developing program budgets to the 14 cities already participating in the financial management program.

Performance Management

Service Improvement:

Partner cities: Gori, Ozurgeti, Akhaltsikhe, Borjomi, Gurjaani, Zestaponi, Poti, and Kvareli reported the interim results of their SIAPs:

- On average, the fee collection rate increased by 20-25%
- Contractors in Gori and Poti invested in service delivery by purchasing equipment and increasing service coverage
- Zestaponi, Borjomi, Akhaltsikhe, and Gori allocated funding for one round of Trained Observer Ratings and service-focused surveys

Youth groups conducted the third round of Trained Observer Ratings and surveys in eight cities. These results will be incorporated in local service delivery annual reports to be presented at public meetings in January.

Tbilisi

Solid Waste Collection: At the request of USAID, CELD provided an international consultant, Gary Windolph, to assist Tbilisi in developing a competitive, transparent tender for solid waste collection in the city. Gary Windolph worked with CELD staff and the Tbilisi communal services, economic policy, and procurement departments to develop a package of tender documents. The tender is expected to be announced in early January 2006.

Financial Management: The Association of Economists of Georgia (AEG) and the Regional Development Association (RDA), CELD's NGO partners for financial management in Tbilisi, completed their assessments of Tbilisi's financial management. RDA has drafted an action plan for developing a program budget, which was approved by the council's finance committee and is expected to be approved by the full council in January 2006.

Needs Assessment: CELD funded a needs assessment carried out by the Civil Society Institute in order to identify factors reducing the efficiency of city operations. CSI interviewed the Mayor, 17 city service heads, and the head of the Tbilisi Sakrebulo. The main needs included:

- Access to information (covering a wide range of issues, from basic databases to knowledge of relevant legislation)
- Skilled staff
- Improved infrastructure for service delivery
- Mechanisms for citizen participation

Sister City Exchange with Atlanta, Georgia. Nick Gvishiani, CELD Resource Management Director, traveled to Atlanta, Georgia, with the Tbilisi deputy mayor, council head, and several city department heads. The Tbilisi delegation was particularly interested in Atlanta's experience with economic development planning and procurement. One result of the trip will be the establishment of a permanent Sister City Committee comprising the deputy mayor, city officials and representatives of Tbilisi's NGO and business communities.

Village Civic Education Activities (Missionary Program)

Village Civic Education TOT and Design Workshop. A new format for the Village Civic Education program was developed and eight trainers and seven CELD local coordinators were trained. The new format will be introduced in Imereti, Adjara, Javakheti, Shida Kartli, Kvemo Kartli, and Kakheti, Samegrelo and reach more than 2000 people.

Staff Training

- Nino Tavadze: Public Administration (semester), GIPA.

III. DELIVERABLES AND REPORTS

- Georgian Youth Association, "Recommendations on the Draft Organic Law on Local Self-Government."
- CELD staff and APLR, "Concept Paper on Regional Economic Development for the Adjara Autonomous Republic."
- CELD staff and ABCO, "Public Response to the Borjomi City Economic Development Plan."
- CELD staff and Tamaz Petriashvili (Mayor of Akhaltsikhe), "Rabati: Hearth of Historic Georgia," Placemaking brochure.
- CELD staff, ABCO, and Akhalkalaki and Ninotsminda Youth Groups, "Akhalkalaki and Ninotsminda Markets: Vendor and Customer Survey Results."
- Regional Development Agency, "Assessment of the Tbilisi Financial Management System."
- Akhmeta and Zestaponi Local Government Association Newsletters.
- NALA, "Decentralization," Newsletter.
- Borjomi Economic Development Working Group, "Borjomi City Economic Development Plan," adopted by Borjomi City Council on December 13, 2005.



- 2004 Successes and Accomplishments (City Brochures), Borjomi, Ozurgeti, Poti, Gori, Khashuri, Kaspi, Kvareli, Gurjaani, and Akhaltsikhe.
- CELD staff, "Monitoring the Outcomes of Economic Development Programs," training materials.

IV. PROBLEMS OR DELAYS AFFECTING PERFORMANCE

The new Organic Law has caused some revisions in specific activities, such as Community-Based Economic Development, financial management and implementation of the law transferring property to local self-governments. In the case of CBED, planning efforts that CELD has intended to begin in Akhaltsikhe and Kvemo Kartli had to be revised in order to take into account the new units of local government; as a result, economic development planning will begin next quarter at the regional level in Kvemo Kartli and at the municipal level in Akhaltsikhe, rather than at the city level. With respect to implementation of the property transfer, CELD will explore with the MOED how its needs for assistance will be affected by the new law. Financial management improvements will not be started in any new cities but will shift to working with rayon level administrations to plan for the transition to the new governmental levels.

V. WORK PLANNED FOR NEXT REPORTING PERIOD

Cross-Cutting Activities

Donor Coordination

CELD will continue to work closely with other donor-funded programs, for example, by continuing to hold regular roundtables in all partner cities. Specific joint activities are listed below by component.

Batumi Anti-Trafficking Shelter

CELD will conduct a tender for building renovation for the Batumi Anti-Trafficking Shelter.

Decentralization and National Capacity-Building Activities

- Identify appropriate assistance to the MoED on implementation of the transfer of property to local self-governments within the new framework of local self-governance described in the new Organic Law.
- Work with other donor-funded organizations to support the establishment of the Secretariat of the State Decentralization Commission.
- Continue support to NALA, the Parliamentary Committee, the State Decentralization Commission, and other stakeholders working to pass the Local Budget Law.
- Provide training to the regional associations in accordance with the new Organic Law.
- Organize a joint workshop with GWA and other donor-funded organizations working on support for women candidates in the upcoming local elections.
- Train women candidates for the local elections on the principles of local self-governance and elections.

- Train GWA on program budgeting.
- Implement GWA and GYA small grant-funded projects
- Publication of manuals on Georgian as a second language for the Zhvania School of Public Administration in Kutaisi.
- Introduction at GIPA of a certificate course on Urban Management for approximately 30 students.
- Support the second semester of the LGP at GIPA.

Strengthening Communities: Managing Local Resources

Financial Management and Performance Management

- Begin development of Tbilisi and Kutaisi program budgets.
- Assess the financial management systems in Batumi (city) and Adjara (region).
- Support the preparation of the 2006 city program budgets (14 cities).
- Continue assistance to Tbilisi on tendering for solid waste collection services.
- Help establish a Sister City Committee.
- Install accounting software and provide training in Kutaisi
- Develop a Performance Management Manual for Georgian cities.
- Assist partner cities in applying performance management to new sectors.
- Conduct regional workshops for local self-government officials and communal service department staff on calculating tariffs.

Community-Based Economic Development

- Organize and conduct facilitation skills training for CBED partner NGOs and CELD staff.
- Hold a competitive selection to identify a partner NGO for CBED in Kutaisi and begin planning.
- Begin placemaking small project implementation in Rabati (Akhaltzikhe).
- Organize presentation to international organizations of the Ninotsminda Market Business Plan (placemaking project)
- Provide assistance to the Poti investment department
- Begin CBED activities in Kvemo Kartli
- Continue CBED activities in Akhaltzikhe
- Assist Borjomi in developing its Tourism Information Center
- Establish economic development monitoring board and economic development city department in Borjomi
- Conduct the first Advisory Group workshop in Adjara

Village Civic Education Initiative (Missionary Program)

- Begin Village Civic Education in Imereti, Adjara, Javakheti, Shida Kartli, Kvemo Kartli, and Kakheti, Samegrelo.

Other

Publish the 2005 Successes and Accomplishments (City Brochures)



VI. SPECIFIC ACTION REQUESTED

None.