

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT
INITIATIVE
CITY OF GABROVO**

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A
CITIZEN PARTICIPATION
PROGRAM**

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LOCAL GOVERNMENT INITIATIVE CITY OF GABROVO

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PROGRAM

This report presents recommendations developed during a trip to Bulgaria during February 3-15, 1997. During that time I met with members of the USAID Mission in Sofia, the Local Government Initiative (LGI) team, contractors implementing other USAID-funded democracy related initiatives, and, in Gabrovo, a variety of local government elected officials, staff, and members of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). A list of persons contacted, and an organizational chart of Gabrovo's municipal government is in Annex A. I would like to thank all of those individuals for their thoughtful contributions to this report.

CONTEXT

Gabrovo, like most municipalities in Bulgaria, is undergoing a dramatic transition in the relationship between the municipality and citizens. While the old model was based on the municipality being the surrogate for the State and the Party in terms of the power and control center of city life, the new model is based on a collaborative partnership between the municipality and citizens. The old model also fostered the impression that local government (the Party) would take care of all needs. No participation was required of citizens. This pattern further distanced local government from the citizens.

The earlier model is still very visible in the Gabrovo city hall. For example, at the principal entrance, citizens who want to request permits such as building or business permits are required to leave a formal request with a clerk at the "information office" who then transmits the request to the Mayor's office and then to the responsible department. Citizens are not given direct access to the department with which they must deal. Also striking, the services that have the most contact with citizens—civil registry and tax collection—are relegated to narrow quarters accessed by a back entrance.

However, there is now strong support from municipal leadership (the mayor and council members) and openness on the part of senior staff to conduct business in an open, citizen-oriented manner. One council member described the urgent need to overcome "the inertia of the command administrative approach." Indeed, despite the emerging openness, old attitudes drawn from the command style still prevail among some council members and administrative staff. Part of the problem, particularly in regulatory services, stems from cumbersome procedures required by outdated legislation. The government also appeared constrained, in part, by the lack of knowledge of other models or techniques of dealing with public affairs. Nevertheless department heads openly discussed new techniques for making services more accessible and responsive to citizens. Interest in changing the style of governing is also shared with a number of active NGOs in Gabrovo.

The current economic crisis and the extreme hardship it imposes on average citizens may make advances in democratic local governance less important than they would be in

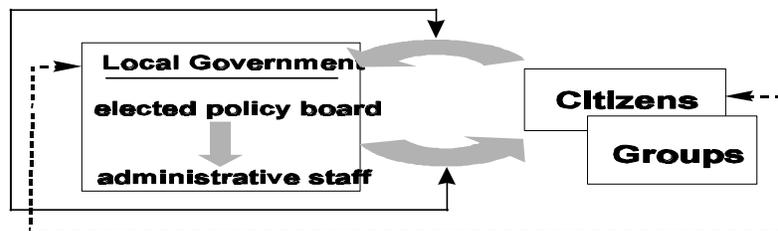
normal circumstances. People focusing on the necessities of surviving will be less concerned with the new openness of the municipality: a hungry stomach has no ears. Therefore, promoting greater citizen participation may be difficult, although no less important, in the near term.

At the same time, international assistance that brings attention to local governance and brings visible improvements in local conditions will be a demonstration that the international community cares and is paying attention to life at the local level.

ASSESSMENT APPROACH

The Research Triangle Institute's (RTI) governance paradigm, which was used as the framework for this assessment, recognizes the importance of the national enabling environment in providing a legal and institutional framework for actions that are taken by stakeholders at the local level. It also recognizes that important features of the contract between government and citizens are put into operation at the local level, where citizens and local government interact. In the Bulgarian context, the legislative environment is an important factor because much of the frauring the communist regime still applies to local governments in terms of financial resources and service responsibilities. The regulatory services provided by municipalities still reflect the highly bureaucratic approach of the command governing style.

Figure 1
Strengthening Linkages



The framework defines the relationships that could exist between the local government and civil society and between the policy-making elected officials and the administrative staff within the local government. Linkages between civil society (citizens and the various interest groups that represent them) and local government describe the types and richness of participation. In a simple form, citizens vote and pay taxes while local government provides services in response to or independent of citizen preferences. Linkages between elected officials and municipal staff (and between municipal staff and citizens) are described by the procedures and management style of the municipal administration. Strengthening the linkages among elected officials, municipal staff, and citizens/civil society is the principal way to build

APPROACH TO STRENGTHENING CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN GABROVO

Establishing open and responsive local government where there are few accepted models and where attitudes and practices have their basis in a command style of governing requires a strategic approach to designing start-up citizen participation activities. The prevailing economic crisis that forces citizens to focus on day to day crises also underscores the need for an approach that will produce visible, meaningful results.

- ! Activities should target all actors (elected officials, administrative staff, NGOs, and other community representatives), strengthening their capacity, building confidence in the new approach, and bringing them into a constructive partnership.
- ! Activities should focus, as much as possible, on specific issues and they should demonstrate specific approaches to citizen participation. At the same time, the activities should demonstrate the range of modes of participation.
- ! While the activities will focus on increasing capacity of all actors, some activities must produce impacts visible to the general citizenry, affirming the value of the municipality's new approach. In addition to addressing the general municipality-citizen relationship, the activities should address issues that were identified as priorities by a number of people during the assessment.
- ! The package of activities carried out by the municipality should include a mix of modes of participation.

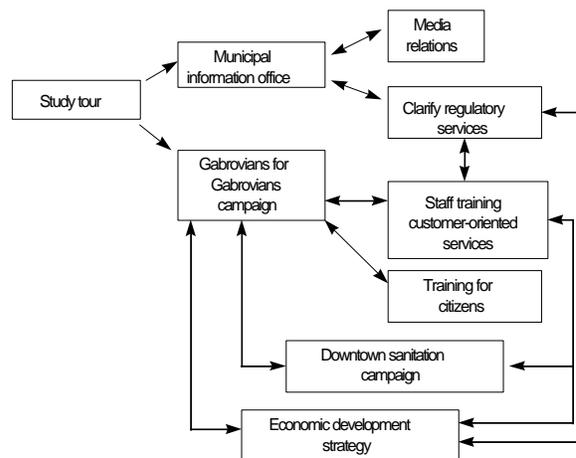
PROPOSED OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

In addition to building the general capacity of municipal officials to engage in a more participatory governing process as the first objective, the program aims to achieve objectives relative to three types of linkages between local government and citizens. They are presented below in summary form and developed in more detail, including scope, timing, and resources, in Annex B.

Although described separately, the program is designed more as an integrated package of activities that reinforce each other in an effort to strengthen the ability of all actors to engage in more participatory government. The integration is achieved through the proper timing and sequencing of activities and the participation of key actors in the design and implementation of the activities. It should be noted that the study tour to the United States is the start-up event; it is also the event from which many other activities will flow. Figure 3 describes the linkages among the activities. It will be vital to ensure that the activities are conducted through a task force approach, with technical assistance facilitating the work of locally based actors from whom

the ideas must emanate and be validated. This is part of the process by which the participatory approach will be internalized.

Figure 3
Activity Linkages



Rather than identifying a program solely for LGI funding, the proposal constitutes an overall program for the municipality. Several of the activities can be undertaken by the municipality directly, without external resources. Others will be funded jointly by the municipality, NGOs, and various USAID/Local Government Initiative funding sources (USAID Mission participant training, the HUD in CEE contract, and the Democracy and Governance IQC).

Objectives and Activities

General Capacity Building

- ! Study tour of local government in the US for a team of elected officials, municipal staff, and NGO representatives. The visit will take place at the beginning of the program to stimulate participation in the program and to generate further ideas for citizen participation.
- ! Training for municipal staff in citizen involvement and customer-oriented services. The training should help reorient staff from the command bureaucracy to client-oriented services. It will include establishing benchmarks by which to measure progress.

- ! Training for newly elected council members in local government role and operations and participatory approaches. Although presented in the context of the Gabrovo program, this could be nationwide training for newly elected councilors sponsored by a national organization such as the National Association or the Foundation for Local Government Reform (FLGR). LGI has collaborated with both these organizations in the past, and both are members of the LGI Municipal Training Project's working group. There exists an on-going dialogue about the institutionalization of training, and the role of these two organizations.

Improve the Flow of Information to Citizens about Municipal Activities

- ! Establish a municipal information office: define tasks and structure, relationships with other municipal departments (for example, prepare and disseminate brochures, annual report, citizen's guide).
- ! Strengthen relations with mass media to increase coverage of municipal activities.
- ! Support citizen training sessions in municipal government to stimulate an active electorate and build the base of potential municipal councilors. This can be achieved through two existing NGOs in Gabrovo: (1) Citizens Union for Local Development—a youth program, and (2) Open Society Club—an adults program.

Build More Responsive Municipal Services

- ! Build client-oriented services: "Gabrovians for Gabrovians" campaign which comprises of building the awareness of municipal staff and promoting citizen involvement.
- ! Clarify regulatory procedures: regulatory agencies prepare brochures describing procedures in simplified form, identify ways to simplify procedures.
- ! Make city hall more "user friendly": place directional signs at entry hall, erect signs for departmental offices, improve/beautify entry for civil registry and tax collection departments. Eventually, reorganize space so that functions with direct contact have service center near main door, and create satellite/neighborhood offices for information, tax collection, civil registry.
- ! Continue support for Youth Center.

Build a Dialogue among the Municipality and Citizen Groups on Priority Issues

- ! Establish a collaborative process including business representatives, local environmental groups, and the municipality to develop a program to improve sanitation in the downtown area, a pilot program for improving sanitation throughout the city.



- ! Establish facilitated economic development strategy: identify stakeholders, conduct SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis, define strategy, conduct community review, implement (for example, define the role of the business center, create a Gabrovo website, conduct business promotion activities).

Program Management

In addition to technical support from LGI, the Gabrovo program should have a strong local management team. It will be based in the municipality, headed by an appointee of the mayor. It will include an elected official, a municipal staff member, and at least one NGO representative. The management team will be responsible for coordinating all activities, identifying the primary participants in each activity, monitoring progress and providing periodic progress assessments to the mayor, council, the LGI coordinator, and other interested parties.



ANNEX A

LIST OF CONTACTS FEBRUARY 4-14, 1997

Municipality of Gabrovo

Mr. Nikolay Dachev, Mayor
Mr. Vassil Pancharov, Head of Mayor's & Foreign Office
Mr. Ivan Nenov, Chairman of the City Council
Mr. Kmetov, Councilor, Chairman of the City Planning Committee
Mr. Panchev, Councilor, Chairman of the Village Administration Committee
Mr. Popminkov, Councilor, Chairman of the Restitution and Privatization Committee
Mr. Guinev, Councilor, Chairman of the Education Committee
Mr. Popov, Councilor, Chairman of the Finance and Budget Committee
Mr. Stelianov, Councilor, Chairman of the Culture Committee
Mr. Georgiov, Councilor, Chairman of the Public Safety and Order Committee
Mr. Tzenko Tzenkov, Deputy Mayor for Economy
Mr. Mikhailov, Department of Economy, Business Activities
Mr. Dragkov, Department of Economy, Business Activities
Mrs. Gorchova, Department of Economy, Business Activities
Ing. Valeri Marinov, Deputy Mayor for Building and the Environment
Mrs. Stoykova, Dept. of Building and the Environment, City Planning
Mrs. Rakova, Dept. of Building and the Environment, Cadastre
Mrs. Koeva, Dept. Building and the Environment, Public Utilities
Mr. Aramov, Dept. Building and the Environment, Housing Construction
Mr. Miroslav Katrandjiev, Deputy Mayor for Social and Cultural Services
Mrs. Veylinova, Dept. of Social and Cultural Services, Health Services
Mr. Impanov, Dept. of Social and Cultural Services, Regional Health Center
Mr. Boyanov, Dept. of Social and Cultural Services, Assisted Housing
Mr. Nanov, Municipal Secretary

Other Organizations, Gabrovo

Mrs. Emilia Marinova, Youth Cultural Information Center
Mr. Bogdan Fortunov, Chamber of Commerce and Industry
Mrs. Bogdana Soultanova, Open Society Club, Interpreter
Mrs. Nanova, Citizens Union for Local Development
Mr. Andre Gospodinov, Mr. Jovcho Spasov, Manager,
Gabrovo Environmental Maintenance Co. (municipal public works company)
Dr. Maria Tomova, Inter-Assist (Swiss assistance project)

Sofia

Aaron Bornstein, Country Director, Democracy Network Program
Plamen Dimitrov, Deputy Director,
Galya Dimitrova, Training Coordinator,
Jill Arace, Institute for Sustainable Communities
Nickolai Gerassimov, Program Manager, ProMedia Program





ANNEX B

DETAILED ACTIVITY DESIGNS

Objective 1: Build General Capacity

1.1 Study tour of local government. A team of up to ten elected officials, municipal staff, and NGO representatives will participate in a two-week observational tour of US local governments. The objective of the visit will be to familiarize a core group with a new model of participation and specific participatory techniques to stimulate their commitment to the program in Gabrovo and to generate further ideas for citizen participation there. It will focus on participatory techniques that are part of the Gabrovo workplan. The study tour should take place at the beginning of the program, for example in May, 1997, when US local governments are completing budget preparation, a time in which there is considerable citizen involvement. The tour will be highly focused on specific examples of participatory government in North Carolina (where RTI has sponsored many study tours on this subject); in the Washington, D.C. area, where the mayor participated in a study tour in 1996; or in another area. At the end of the visit, the participants will conduct an action planning exercise in which they will identify how they can apply what they have learned to Gabrovo.

Timing: May 15 - 30, 1997

Resources: Participant travel: USAID Mission participant training funds
Planning and coordination: HUD in CEE request for services

1.2 Training for municipal staff in citizen involvement and customer service-oriented government. The training will target senior and mid-level staff and should help re-orient them from the command bureaucracy to client-oriented services. It will include the philosophy of client-oriented services, techniques for identifying client needs, techniques for analyzing the service process, customer relations, and establishing benchmarks by which to measure progress. It will also build on recent initiatives in Gabrovo, such as the use of surveys and a consultative process to solve downtown traffic congestion. The module could include the development of a video as a training support and to facilitate the dissemination of the approach to a wider municipal audience.

Timing: Course development: July-September 1997
Delivery: September/October 1997

Resources: LGI Training funds

1.3. Training for newly elected mayors and council members in the role of local government, operations, and participatory approaches. The objective of the training will be to ensure that newly elected officials can assume their positions rapidly and effectively, and be sensitive to new styles of governing. Although presented in the context of the Gabrovo program, this could be nationwide training for newly elected councilors sponsored by a national organization such as the National Association or the Foundation for Local Government Reform.

The training will include the legislative framework of local government, basic operations and procedures, the municipal structure, including the roles of the legislative and executive branches, the responsibilities of the municipal councilor, and the benefits of participatory government. It should be offered as soon as newly elected mayors and councilors take their seats. Because the next municipal elections are scheduled for 1999, this task will prepare materials and test them on current council members.

Timing: Materials preparation: November - December 1997.

Resources: LGI Training resources, grants to the FLGR and the National Association

Objective 2: Improve the Flow of Information to Citizens about Municipal Activities

2.1 Establish a municipal information office. The municipal information office will be responsible for providing information to the public about municipal affairs such as the schedule of meetings, service initiatives, and performance results. The municipality has tentatively proposed attaching this office to the Municipal Secretary's Department. This task will define tasks and structure (including staff requirements) of the Information Office, its relationships with other municipal departments (for example, how to obtain information on services, budgets, and procedures), and its mode of interaction with the media, community organizations, and the general public.

Timing: Design office operations: June - September 1997

Resources: Technical assistance: HUD in CEE request for services or D&G IQC
Office operations: Municipal budget and start-up grant from LGI

2.2 Strengthen relations with mass media to increase coverage of municipal activities. Assistance can be provided to inform the media (newspaper and radio primarily) about the general role of local government through, for example, a workshop or information session in conjunction with the USAID-sponsored Pro-Media project. Assistance to the municipality would focus on press relations and the preparation of press releases.

Timing: Assistance to the Municipality: ongoing, starting in June, 1997
Media information session: September, 1997

Resources: D&G IQC task order, Pro-Media Project

2.3 Support citizen training sessions in municipal government. The Citizens Union for Local Development in Gabrovo has developed a short curriculum for educating 18- and 19-year old students about local government with the aim of building a better informed electorate. This program should be supported by grant funds and through collaboration with the Youth Center. In addition, the Open Society Club in Gabrovo proposes to develop an adult training course on local government with the goal of stimulating the electorate and building the base



of potential municipal councilors, particularly among women. Both of these programs could be provided with grant funds for materials, while the volunteer trainers would be recruited from among the NGOs members.

Timing: Youth training: ongoing from June 1997
Adult training: begin in September (or earlier depending on the municipal election schedule

Resources: LGI grants to both NGOs

Objective 3: Build More Responsive Municipal Services

3.1 Build customer-oriented services. As a complement to the staff training presented in 1.2, the Municipality will establish a campaign to publicize its new approach. The campaign's objective will be to make the municipal staff aware of customer service approach and to inform the community about the partnership between citizens and local government. "Gabrovians for Gabrovians" has been suggested as a slogan for the campaign. A steering committee will be established to identify the various actions that will be included in campaign.

Timing: Steering committee formed: June 1997
Actions begin: October through January 1998

Resources: Technical assistance: D&G advisor
Material support: LGI grant

3.2 Clarify regulatory procedures. Although many of the regulatory processes are dictated by legislation, this task will involve municipal staff in reviewing how the procedures can be explained clearly to citizens in anticipation of regulatory requests and how the procedures can be made more efficient through, for example, closer coordination among the agencies that are part of the process.

Timing: Convene municipal staff team: July - September 1997

Resources: Technical assistance: LGI local specialists, HUD in CEE request for services

3.3 Make city hall more "user friendly." Build on ideas that currently have been expressed by municipal staff and additional ideas they may gain from the study tour, the objective of this task is to make city hall more accessible to citizens. Illustrative actions include placing directional signs at entry hall and signs for departmental offices, improving/beautifying the entry for civil registry and tax collection departments, and, as a longer term option, re-organizing space so that functions with direct citizen contact have a service center near the main door and creating satellite/neighborhood offices for information, tax collection, and civil registry.

Timing: Convene municipal staff team: July - September 1997

Resources: D&G IQC Advisor

3.4 Continue support for the Youth Cultural Information Center. The Youth Information Center has been successful in mobilizing a vital part of Gabrovo's population. While it will continue its cultural activities, it can make an important contribution to this program through collaboration in the youth local government training, economic development, and downtown sanitation activities.

Timing: May 1997

Resources: LGI operating grant

Objective 4: Build a Dialogue among the Municipality and Citizen Groups on Priority Issues

4.1 Downtown sanitation dialogue. Building on the current downtown traffic and parking experience and targeting an activity that will produce visible results, this activity will establish a collaborative process including business representatives, local environmental groups, and the municipality to develop a program to improve sanitation in the downtown area, a pilot program for improving sanitation throughout the city. It will begin with the establishment of a task force representing the stakeholders and engage in collaborative problem solving. An anticipated outcome will be the commitment by all stakeholders of in-kind and financial resources, a vital lesson at a time of serious resource scarcity.

Timing: Convene working group: June 1997
Conduct survey: July-September 1997
Prepare action plan: September 1997
Implement actions: October - December 1997

Resources: Technical assistance: HUD in CEE Request for services, D&G Advisor
Material support, as needed: LGI grant

4.2 Establish economic development strategy. The objective of this activity will be to develop an economic development strategy that results from a dialogue among all the stakeholders: industrial, commercial and tourist sector leaders; local government; non-governmental organizations such as environmental groups and the Youth Information Center. The activity will begin with an initial screening that will identify data needs, such as a business analysis and community survey, and key stakeholders and opinion leaders. It will include a workshop to bring together the key stakeholders to review the framework for economic development planning and to prepare a workplan. Following a period of data collection, a second workshop will be conducted for the stakeholders during which they will develop the



strategy. Following the first draft, there will be a period in which the strategy is taken “to the community” for additional comment and to generate support.

Timing: Initial screening, first workshop: October 1997
Data collection: November- December 1997
Second workshop: January 1998
Community review: February - March 1998

Resources: HUD in CEE request for services