



Final presentation - “Informed citizens in public service”

On March 31, 2016, the Georgian Young Lawyers Association held the final presentation of its project. The project “Informed citizens in public service” was implemented with the financial support of the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA).

The project aimed to identify the best model of citizen participation in decision-making in addition to contributing to citizens’ involvement in local self-governance, cooperation between self-government bodies and citizens, and raising of consciousness.

As part of the project, initiative groups of active citizens were created in the project’s coverage area – specifically, in the self-governing cities/towns of Tbilisi,^[1] Rustavi, Telavi, Mtskheta, Zugdidi, Ozurgeti, Gori, and Akhaltsikhe – for the purpose of ensuring citizens’ involvement, increasing the accountability of local self-government bodies, and cooperating with local citizens. The initiative groups identified pressing problems for the local population, planned an advocacy campaign, and got involved in the process of self-governance (through participation in public meetings and attendance at meetings of city/town councils, filing recommendation proposals,

involvement in budgeting, requesting public information, etc.).

The project team surveyed representatives of the city/town councils and municipal administrations/ city/town halls, in order to identify the best model of citizen participation in decision-making, as well as to harmonize the opinions of all the parties – both citizens and representatives of local self-government bodies – and to develop recommendations. One hundred and two representatives of local self-government bodies took part in the survey. After the survey, the project team met with citizens and representatives of self-government bodies in all the target municipalities to familiarize themselves with the attitudes of both sides, to exchange information about the findings and challenges of the project, and to develop joint recommendations on their basis.

The study has made it clear that:

Although the self-government bodies have become much more public and open and the legislation made them obligated to ensure effective exercise of citizens' right to be involved, it is also important to ensure that citizens themselves and local NGOs and community organizations are equipped with necessary skills and resources that will help them exercise their authority effectively and get involved actively and effectively in the decision-making process of self-government bodies.

On the basis of analysis of the findings reached and the challenges revealed during the implementation period of the project, we can single out the key areas in which work should continue to improve citizens' involvement in local self-governance, specifically:

- Improvement of reporting by local self-government bodies;
- Real decentralization of local self-government bodies and enhancement of their competence;
- Effective communication of local self-government bodies with the population and taking their interests into consideration in decision-making;
- Practical implementation of new forms of participation envisaged by the Local Self-Government Code.

საქართველოს ახალგაზრდა იურისტთა ასოციაცია GEORGIAN YOUNG LAWYERS' ASSOCIATION



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[1] The coverage area in Tbilisi included the Gldani and Didube districts.