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The European Union for Georgia

TRANSITION
Transition Promotion Program

SOCIAL SERVICE WITH LONG-TERM PERSPECTIVE

Best Practices of Social Services on Local Level

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Introduction

The purpose of this publication is to provide information regarding successful practices in the framework of the project: “Enhancing the participation of regional CSOs in policy dialogue on social inclusion in Georgia”, implemented by People in Need with financial support of the European Union and the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs in four municipalities of Georgia – Khoni, Tkibuli, Zugdidi and Gori and enable stakeholders on local and national levels to replicate successful practices and apply the knowledge and experience of the project to other municipalities of Georgia.

This brochure briefly describes the challenging and exciting ways of adapting PIN’s social integration program to the Georgian reality and applying it to four municipalities of Georgia in order to improve the social services in target municipalities and thus contribute to the well-being of local communities.

The brochure illustrates the best practices of the project and guides you through the process of implementation, highlighting the most common risks and opportunities.

With this publication, we hope to inspire you to change the social reality of local communities everywhere in the country for the better while providing you with the tools to do so.

PIN Worldwide and in Georgia

People in Need (PIN) is a Czech non-governmental, non-profit organization which provides relief aid and development assistance, while working to defend human rights and democratic freedom in crisis regions worldwide.

PIN was established in 1992 in Czech Republic. Working at home and in more than 50 countries, PIN gradually became one of the largest organizations of its kind in post-Soviet Europe.

People in Need’s mission is based on the concepts of humanism, freedom, equality and solidarity. It believes that people everywhere in

the world should be able to exercise their rights and freedoms as expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

In order to achieve this goal, PIN implements various humanitarian, developmental, educational and human right programs in Czech Republic and beyond.

Activities of the organization are focused on four main areas:

1. Emergency relief and development cooperation
2. Human rights support
3. Social integration programs
4. Educational and informational programs

PIN is a member of Alliance 2015, a network of eight European NGOs that fight poverty, as well as the Czech Forum for Development Cooperation (FoRS), EU Monitoring Centre (EUMC), Euro-step, Concord and Voice.

People in Need began its mission in Georgia in 2006 by assisting the reintegration of returnees. Nowadays, PIN’s mission in Georgia is much more comprehensive and the impact it has on the local society is considerably more significant. Its activities are implemented from offices in Tbilisi, Kutaisi, Kazbegi, Zugdidi and Gori.

PIN Georgia aims to reduce poverty and inequality in Georgian society, especially in rural areas by:

1. Making poor people benefit from economic growth;
2. Building the capacity of people, organizations and networks to advocate and implement changes;
3. Protecting the most vulnerable households that remain excluded from the development process.

PIN works with many and various local partners. Big family of PIN employees in Georgia includes both – national and expatriate staff members.

Overview of the Social Security System in Georgia

The Social Security System in Georgia is highly centralized and mainly focused on a targeted assistance approach. The main principle of the social policy is to provide state resources for the poorest persons as identified by the evaluation system. Monetary assistance and medical insurance schemes are being developed as the basis for social integration and access to medical services and public health care.

Most of the social projects are implemented by the Social Service Agency – a legal entity of public law, established under the Ministry of Labor, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia. The Social Service Agency is represented in all regions of Georgia through its 68 territorial units.

The Social Security System in Georgia is composed of social assistant schemes, old age schemes, social compensation schemes and social services.

The social assistance schemes cover the most disadvantaged groups who cannot escape extreme poverty through economic activities, while the old age scheme includes the flat rate, universal pension, which is paid to any person who has reached the retirement age. State pensions are provided for people with disabilities and families who have lost the primary household income generator. Social compensation schemes refer to different kinds of benefits paid to the citizens of Georgia who meet one or more criteria related to a situation of prior repression.

The Social Service Agency provides different residential and alternative, community and family based social services for people with disabilities, orphans and the elderly. Some services are based on an “outsourcing scheme”, enabling civil society organizations to become service providers on the basis of the voucher system. However, it is important to mention that all services listed above are administered on the central level.

At the municipal level, there is no practice of “needs assessment” nor involvement of local citizens in the process of planning of social programs. Therefore, planning is based solely on the needs expressed by the citi-

zens in their applications in the previous years. Social assistance policy is mainly based on limited financial assistance for various groups of socially disadvantaged citizens. Only a few municipalities implement long-term social services as a more sustainable and efficient alternative to one-time financial assistance.

PIN Intervention

Project “Enhancing the participation of regional CSOs in policy dialogue on social inclusion in Georgia” was implemented as a response to the gaps existing in the social inclusion system on the municipal level. The main aim of the project intervention was to empower different stakeholders of municipal social service provision and facilitate their coordinated efforts to improve the social service delivery in target municipalities.

In order to achieve the project objectives, PIN transferred the Czech experiences of Social Integration Programs to Georgia and applied it to the Khoni, Tkibuli, Gori and Zugdidi municipalities.

Target civil society organizations were selected in each municipality as main pillars of the project on the local level and familiarized them with the Czech model of Social Integration Programs. Participants had an opportunity to learn about the PIN SIP experience of providing social services, communication with stakeholders, networking with other CSOs.

Fund Sukhumi, Tkibuli District Development Fund (TDDF), Rehabilitation and Development Charity Center Tanaziari and Charity Humanitarian Center Apkhazeti were mobilized and empowered through a series of training courses.

Representatives of target organizations were acquainted with methods of strategic and community planning processes, stakeholder mapping, ways of involving the target groups of socially disadvantaged people into the process of community planning and other relevant topics.

Based on the assessment of the training needs of the target organiza-

tions, conducted by partner organization, Center for Strategic Research and Development of Georgia (CSR DG) on the initial phase of the project, these target organizations were provided with training courses on Advocacy and Monitoring and Evaluation.

Based on the Czech experience, Advisory Committees, consisting of decision-making officials, civil society organizations, representatives of vulnerable groups and other stakeholders were established in each target municipality as an efficient platform for cooperation and coordinated efforts of stakeholders to improve social service delivery. Advisory Committees were strengthened through non-formal education activities and representatives of target organizations were appointed as facilitators of Advisory Committee meetings.

Based on the findings of the research assessing the social service delivery in target regions, Advisory Committees developed Municipal Strategies on Social Inclusion and annual action plans.

In order to support the implementation of the action plans, PIN launched a grant scheme. Seventeen proposals were supported by small grants with an obligatory 30% co-funding from local authorities.

Projects implemented by civil society organizations and local governmental bodies focused on the development of long-term social services for children, youth, IDPs, elderly, people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups, in order to improve the quality of their lives.

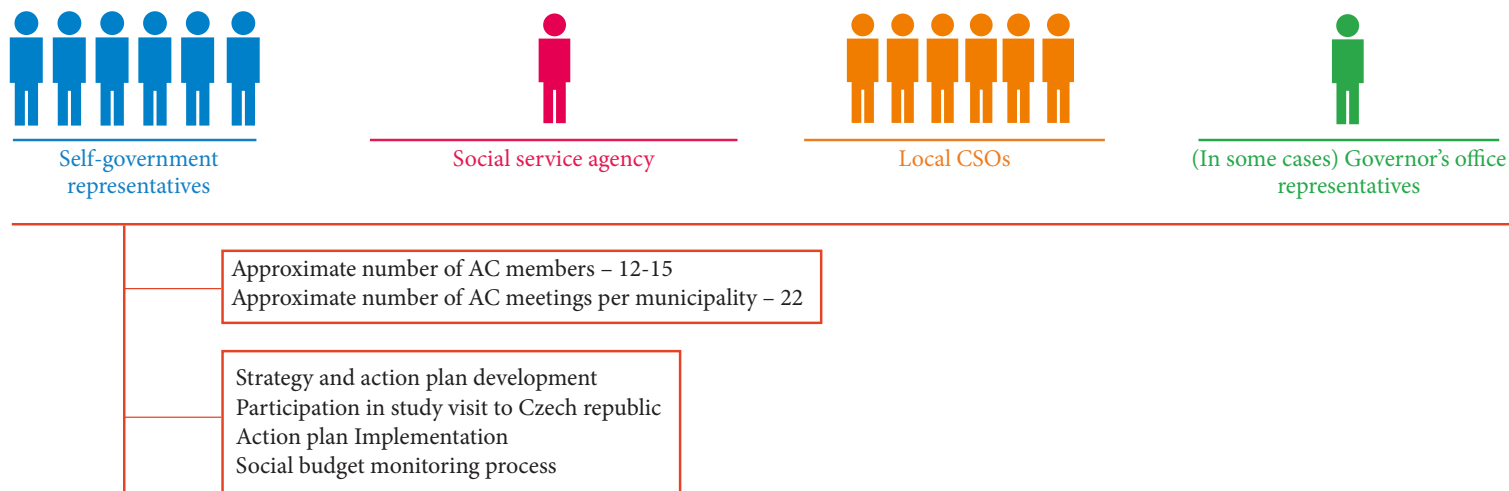
As a result of its intervention, these projects significantly contributed to better coordination, planning and policy dialogue on the social service provision in the target municipalities. A one-time monetary assistance approach practiced as the main form of social assistance in the Khoni, Tkibuli, Gori and Zugdidi municipalities changed to development of needs tailored, sustainable social services.



Best Practices

Advisory Committees

Structure of the Advisory Committees



Legal Framework of Advisory Councils in Georgia

According to amendments to the local self-government code of Georgia from July 2015, new regulations regarding the participation of citizens in the exercise of local self-government were enacted. According to the local-self government code of Georgia, the city hall of each municipality has an obligation to form a council of civil advisors. According to the law, the council shall be a deliberative body of the Mayor of the municipality. It shall be composed of the representatives of entrepreneurial legal entities, civil society organizations and citizens of municipality. Composition of the council of civil advisors shall be approved by the Mayor. The mayor is obliged to submit for discussion to the council of civil advisors

a draft municipal budget, documents related to the municipality spatial planning, proposals on giving names to the municipality geographical features, as well as other significant draft administrative-legal acts, infrastructural and social projects.

Most of the municipalities all over the country created Advisory Councils as required by the law, although both the non-existence of practice or the lack of experience in strategic planning, inclusive decision-making and facilitation of multi-stakeholder discussions led to the relatively symbolic function of Advisory Councils with limited roles in decision-making process.

Even though the creation of advisory councils under the Mayor of the municipality is a progressive step towards the inclusive decision-making

process in general, the experience of PIN in the Czech Republic illustrates the considerable advantages of separate inter-sectoral municipal committees working on the issues of social inclusion.

Procedures of Establishment of Advisory Committees in target municipalities and its structure.

The establishment of Advisory Committees requires careful planning and consistent execution of concrete procedures.

First, in order to eliminate the risk of miscommunication and mismatch of the interests and visions in the later stages of the process, it is important to communicate the idea of establishing an advisory committee, its aims, role and functions to high-level, self-government officials in the very first stage of the project.

In order to make sure that the process of the establishment and functioning of the Advisory Committee is duly facilitated on the local level, it is essential to select the target civil society organizations and empower them through relevant capacity building, based on the assessment of their training needs and expectations.

Taking into consideration the strategic role of Advisory Committees, the selection of its members is a process a high priority.

The facilitation process is essential for proper functioning of the Advisory Committees: the COS should be selected that will be responsible on organizing the AC meetings, communicating with the AC members, developing the agenda of the meetings, writing the meeting minutes. The process of facilitation is also important for raising awareness about the ACs and spreading information.

In order to ensure the efficient involvement of civil society in the decision-making process, there should be an assessment of social service-provider NGOs conducted in the target municipalities. Civil society organizations shall be selected based on their experience in social field, cooperation with local government, the added value they can bring into

the committee, their motivation and readiness to be part of the committee and spread information about the work of the AC. In order to guarantee the representation of different vulnerable groups in Advisory Committees, it is very important to ensure the involvement of civil society organisations, working with different target audiences.

The optimal number of committee members is 12-15 people. Committees must involve senior representatives of local government bodies, especially the heads and deputy heads of representative and the executive government of municipality, heads of the social service departments, main service provider civil society organizations, representatives of vulnerable groups and other stakeholders of social service deliveries on the local level.

After the completion of staffing, it is essential to strengthen the capacities of committee members through different types of non-formal activities. In the framework of the given project, the members of Advisory Committee were trained in strategic planning skills and familiarized with the methodology of the Czech Advisory Committees during the study visit to the Czech Republic. Committee members had the opportunity to visit



the Prague municipality and the Czech NGOs that provided various social services to see the social service provision practice.

Through effective communication, careful selection of Advisory Committee members and their needs-based capacity building, we create a strong, sus-

tainable, structured platform for cooperation and coordinated efforts of the stakeholders of social service delivery, thus improving the quality of lives of vulnerable groups in target municipalities.

Work format

In order to ensure the efficient functioning of the Advisory Committee, the aim and objectives, powers and functions, composition, structure and work format of the body shall be clearly identified and described in the statute of the committee.

For the effective facilitation of the working process, it is recommended to appoint persons/bodies who are responsible for the facilitation process and clearly describe their scope of work and responsibilities.

In the project, the target NGOs, mentioned above, are considered as the leading points for the Advisory Committees. They are in charge of the facilitation of the entire process. In the frames of the project, each target NGO nominated as a facilitator organize AC meetings, design meeting agendas, prepare minutes and ensure regular communication between the members. Facilitators of the Advisory Committees are also responsible for the administration of social media groups.

Advisory Committees convene once per month.

During the project implementation period, the Advisory Committees analyzed annual reports of the budget execution, studied the reports of health and social departments of respective municipalities, examined the rule of issuing social assistance, analyzed municipal social packages.

Functions of the Advisory Committees

One of the main functions of the advisory committee is the elaboration of the social inclusion strategy and the action plans and their monitoring process.

Another responsibility of advisory committees is the monitoring of the social budget of the local government which supports the governments of the target municipalities to improve social programs and social service development.

Social Budget monitoring.

Budget monitoring process is pretty difficult and complex process and requires special knowledge and experience.

Results and the findings of the monitoring process are reflected in the monthly monitoring reports and are discussed during the Advisory Committee meetings. In a majority of cases, the recommendations from the monitoring process are taken into consideration by local governmental bodies.

As example, we can refer to the elaboration of the rule of Social Shelter for the Gori municipality and changing the rule of social budget provision in other municipalities. The issue was discussed during the Advisory Committee meetings and the members of the committee suggested to the Social Service Department to elaborate the rule. Local self-government bodies and CSO representatives jointly worked on development of the document during the next several meetings. Finally, the rule was accepted by the city council

Social Inclusion Strategies

Process of Strategy Development

In order to enable the Advisory Committee to design an evidence-based strategy for social inclusion, it is necessary to study vulnerable groups and the social services available at the local level.

Research of existing situations can be conducted using several different methods of qualitative and quantitative research, such as focus groups, in-depth individual interviews, group interviews and surveys.

Research findings allow us to define the main beneficiaries of social services, identify their problems and needs, discuss problem-solving mechanisms and corresponding activities, and formulate appropriate strategic goals and objectives.



In the frames of the PIN intervention, there was an expert study and participatory needs assessment on available social services and on vulnerable groups conducted in all four target municipalities. The research was organized by the Civil Society Institute.

The research revealed a high level of centralization of the social inclusion system in the country. According to the study, municipal social services mainly represent a kind of supplementary component for national social programs. Municipal social programs are mostly monetized. Provision of social services to the local population is not common as social and health care programs are based on cash benefits.

In order to address identified issues, Advisory Committees started working on the Municipal Strategies on Social Inclusion. The process was preceded by Strategic Planning workshops enabling the members to gain necessary skills and competencies for drafting the document. Such workshops are also crucial for identifying the main priority directions of the strategy and achieving a consensus on the logical frame of the document.

Importance of Strategic Planning

Strategic Planning is a process of defining a strategy or direction and making decisions on allocating existing resources to pursue this strategy. It may also extend to control mechanisms for guiding the implementation of the strategy.

On the municipal level, strategic planning is an effort through which it is possible to establish directions and create strategic initiatives that mobilize limited resources to fulfill the local government's mission, to achieve its goals and to take maximum advantage of trends in the internal and external environment.

Developing a strategy takes resources. It requires the time and commitment of people involved in the process. Sometimes it seems extremely challenging, risky and complicated to invest in strategic planning. So why do we need a strategy? Why shall we take time for planning?

First and foremost, we need a strategy because it sets the direction and estab-



lishes priorities. It defines our view of success and prioritizes the activities that will make this view our reality.

Strategic planning is a good tool to get everyone on the same page. It simplifies the decision-making process, prevents us from wasting resources on random discussions and distracting initiatives. Strategic planning allows us to focus the effort and resources on the areas that are aligned with the priorities.

Structure of Social Inclusion Strategies

The structure of a municipal Social Inclusion Strategy may vary from one municipality to another depending on specific features of concrete administrative unit, although the structure of strategies, designed in frames of PIN intervention may serve as a good basis for further elaboration.

First, it is important to provide create general information about the municipality. Geographical data, a brief description of the local government, the private sector, civil society and other stakeholders create general picture of the municipality.

Presenting the problems and challenges of social inclusion in the municipality and their comparison to the priorities of social services on

national and local levels leads to adequate strategic goal-setting. The strategic plan on social inclusion shall be complimented with a description of different aspects of its implementation, such as the method of dissemination of the information, inclusive planning, selection of beneficiaries, monitoring and evaluation.

The process of creating the social inclusion strategies



1. Establishing the Advisory Committees at the Local Self-governments

- 1.1 Self Government representatives;
- 1.2 Social Service Agency representatives
- 1.3 Local CSOs and social service providers



2. Expert research and participatory needs analyses about the availability of social services

- 6.1 Assessment the situation on the central level
- 6.2 Assessment the situation on the local level
- 6.3 IDP related issues



3. The process of creation the municipal social inclusion strategies

- 7.1 Assessment the existing resources on municipality level
- 7.2 Assessment the problems and challenges on local level
- 7.3 Identifying the priority directions of social services

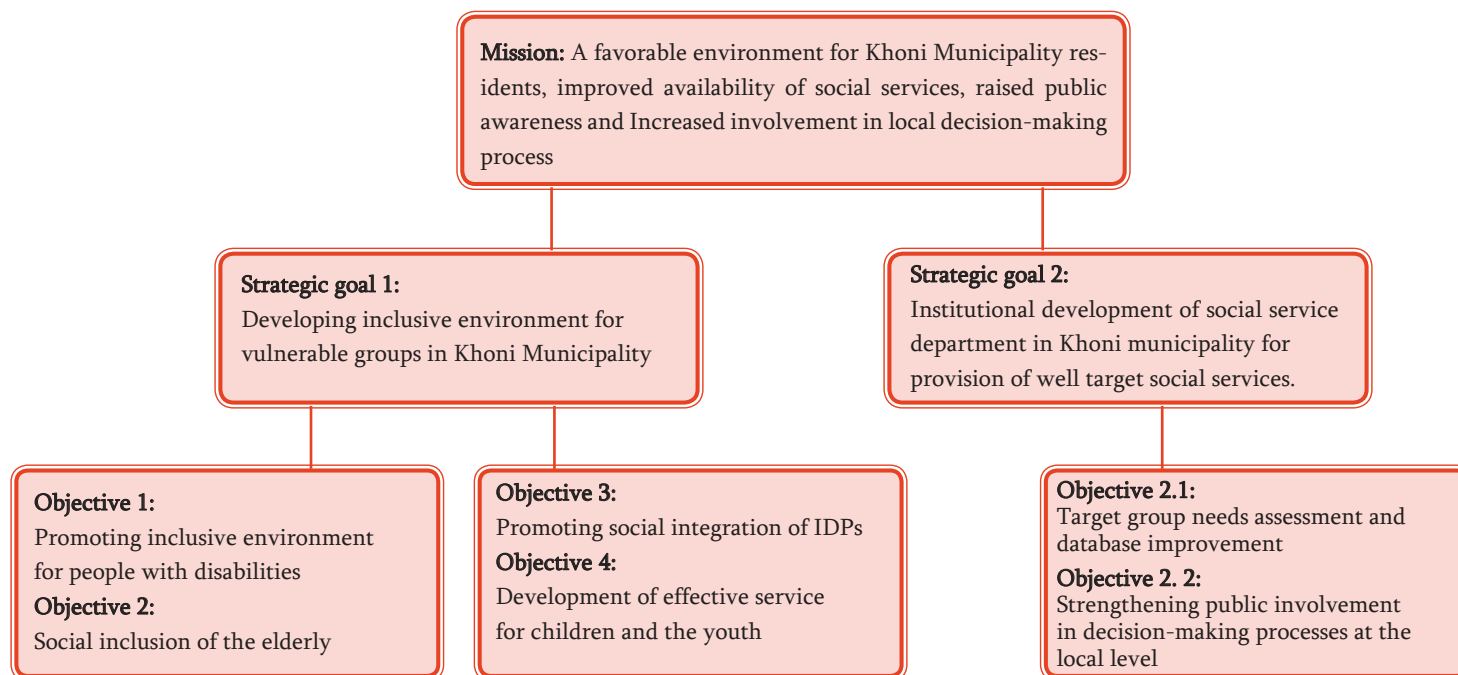


4. Developing and funding the action plans

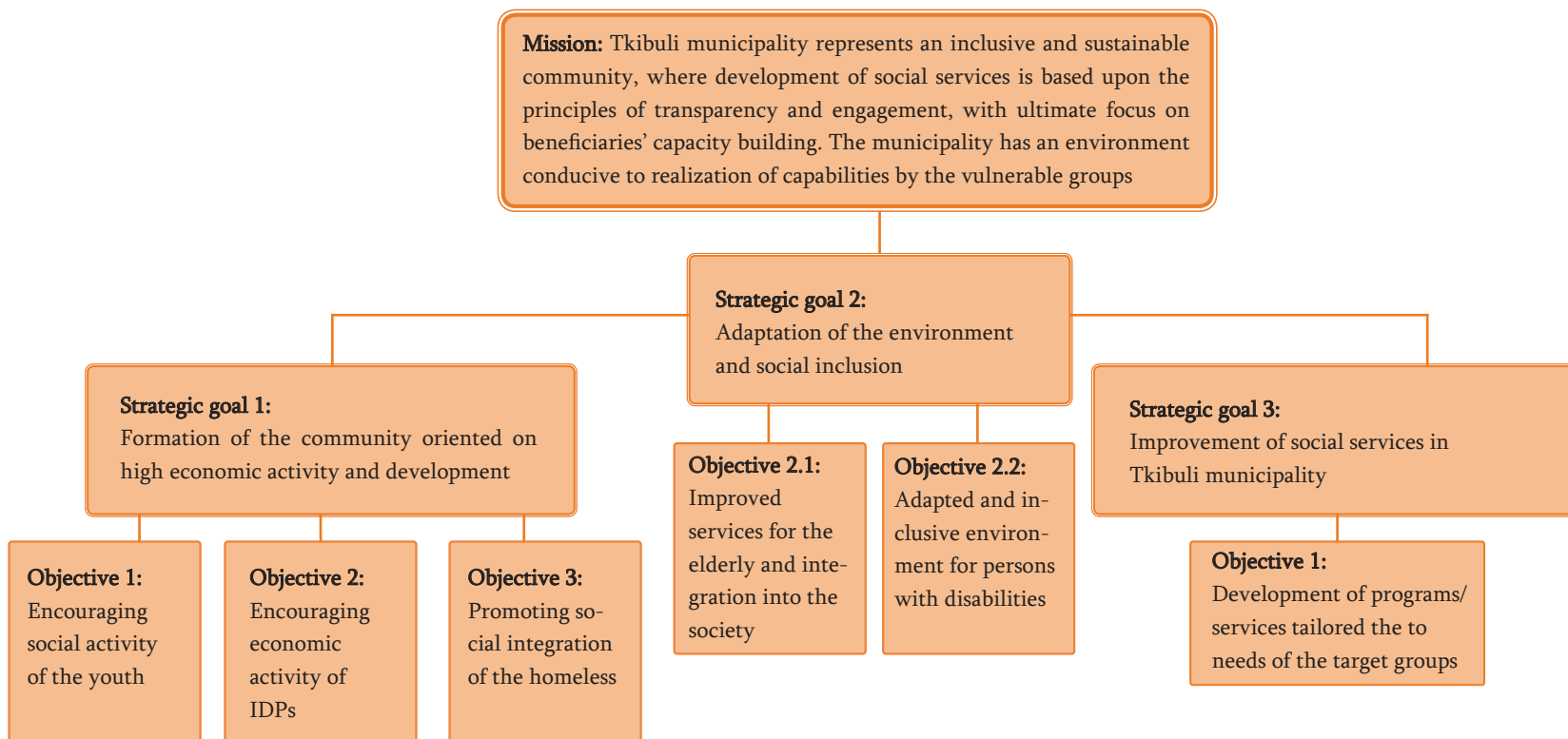
- 8.1 Writing the detailed objectives and activities
- 8.2 Co-financing the action plan of 2017 by People in Need
- 8.3 The action plans considered into the social budget of 2018 and continued funding of social service

As an example, below are the strategic organizational (chart) structures of four municipalities:

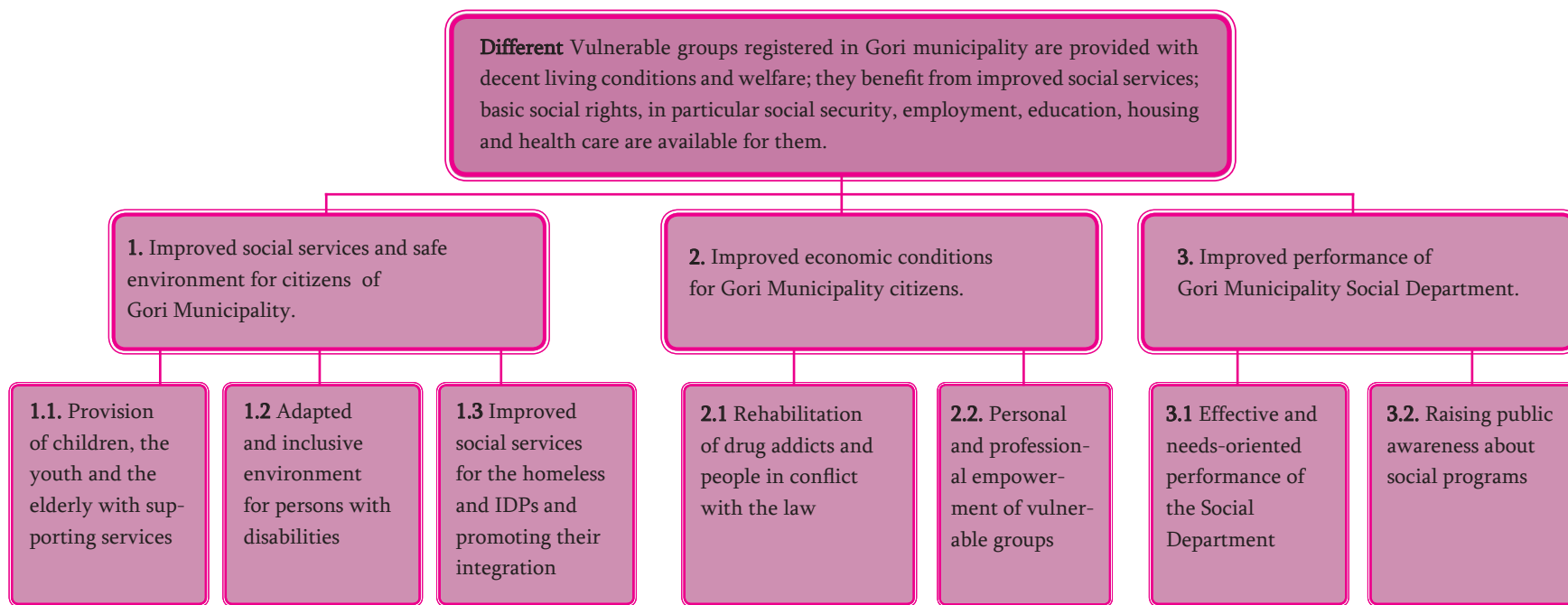
Strategy of Khoni municipality:



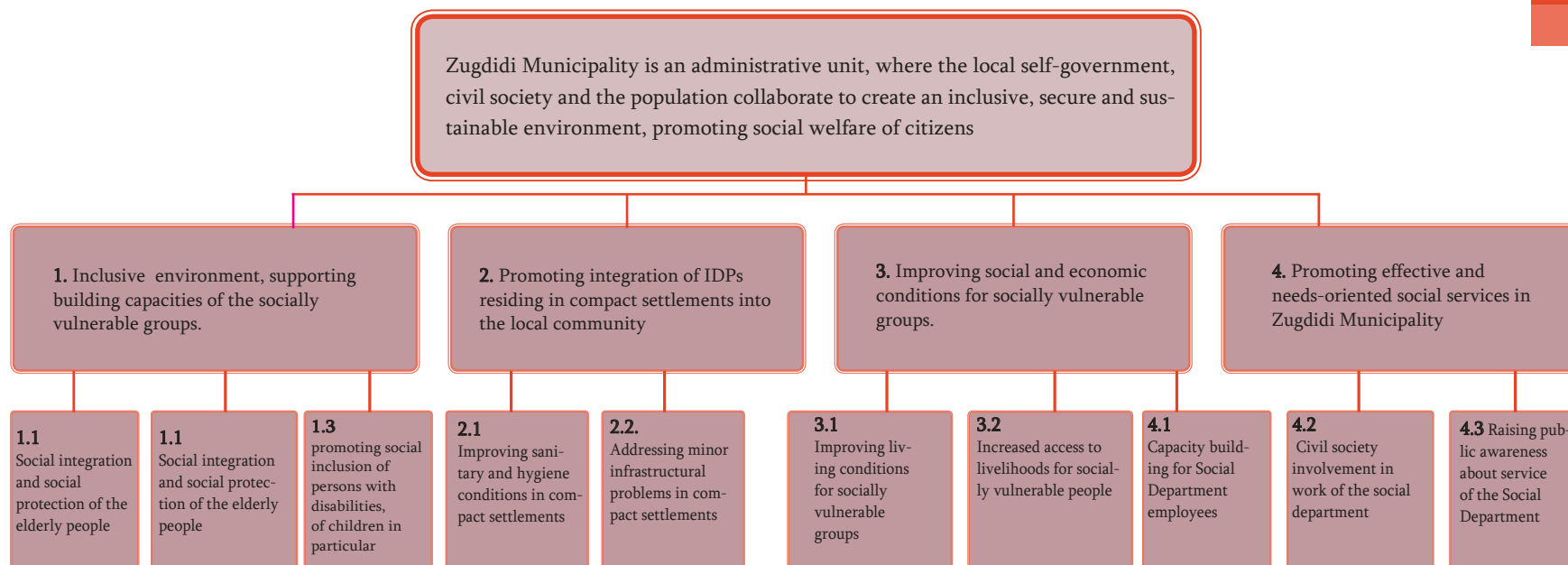
Strategy of Tkibuli Municipality



The Strategy of Gori Municipality



The Strategy of Zugdidi Municipality



Action Plan

In order to fulfill the goals and objectives described in the social inclusion strategy happen, it is necessary to develop an action plan.

The Advisory Committees, functioning in the frames of PIN project, elaborated annual action plans for social inclusion.

In order to correspond with the Social Inclusion Strategy, the Action Plan shall be drafted in the form of sub-programs to be addressed through specific activities of the CSOs and local authorities. Activities, reflected in the Action Plan shall address the challenges and problems of different vulnerable groups.

The format of the Action Plans should use SMART criteria, providing feasible mechanism of addressing the problems, resources required (including municipal budget, grants from donors or private funding), responsible bodies/people; potential beneficiaries and timing of implementation.



Grant Scheme

In the interest of implementation of the annual action plan, elaborated by the Advisory Committees (ACs), PIN launched the grant scheme for civil society organizations and governmental bodies in target municipalities.

Any institution interested in replicating the methodology in other municipalities of Georgia can use the structure of the grant scheme described below. Although taking into consideration specific features of target municipality, one may need to come up with a different set of procedures.

A Call for Proposals was announced by PIN through local media and job seeking websites. Additionally, interested candidates were offered trainings on proposal development as well as follow-up consultations to fine-tune and complete their project ideas.

Forty-one project proposals, submitted by local CSOs and government authorities during the Call, were reviewed and shortlisted through the pre-selection process.

Before the final selection, monitoring site-visits were carried out in order to check the feasibility of the project ideas that were submitted.

An independent grants committee, comprised of representatives of the local government, civil society organizations and other stakeholders, was established. Six selection criteria and the rating system were presented and explained by the grants committee during the AC meetings: Relevance to the Action Plan; Innovative approach to social service provision or extension of already existing service; feasibility; sustainability; cost-effectiveness and experience of the applicant.

Seventeen proposals were selected and supported through small grants. Grants amounts varied from 7000 to 20 000 GEL with obligatory co-funding of 30% from local authorities.

It is noteworthy to mention that self-government bodies in each target municipality assumed the responsibility to take over the new services after the completion of the project and cover relevant expenses through their respective municipal budget.

In the next chapter of the publication, we will familiarize you with the best practices of social services introduced by local government administrations and civil society organisations in the target regions.

Moving towards Social Service Provision

Best practices of social services introduced in the frames of the project

Services for Children:

Preschool education in Georgia is regulated by the “Law of Georgia on Early and Preschool Education”. The above-mentioned law is the output of recent reform and obliges all kindergartens to meet certain standards regarding education, food, hygiene, infrastructure and other indicators. Nevertheless, due to the limited budget and the lack of capacity, local governments fail to provide kindergartens with sufficient means for quality performance and high standards.

The lack of hot water is one of the challenges for kindergartens in most municipalities of the country. Use of cold water can lead to the spread of helminthiasis, an infestation of parasitic worms, and other infectious diseases among children. As helminthiasis was identified and detected as one of the most acute problems among children under the age of six in the Khoni



municipality, the NGO “Green Regions” decided to make the initiative to eliminate the problem.

During the intervention process, caregivers, parents, representatives of self-government, local NGOs and media representatives were informed about the problem, its causes and possible solutions. Children were examined for helminthiasis and several informational and awareness campaigns were organized and held. Most importantly, solar water heaters were installed in three kindergartens in the Matkhoji, Kukhi and Gocha-Jikhaishi villages.

As a result of the intervention, the awareness of the kindergarten staffs, parents, municipal decision-makers and other stakeholders about the importance of high sanitary standards in preventing children from infectious diseases significantly increased in Khoni municipality. At the conclusion of this project, the children and kindergarten staff in three kindergartens in three villages of Khoni comply with the pre-school education standards.





Services for IDPs

According to official statistics for 2016, there are 273,765 Internally Displaced People (IDP) registered in Georgia. 129,751 of them are registered in compact settlements in various regions throughout the country.

While the provision of durable accommodations and assistance to the integration of IDPs into socio-economic life still remains the priority for the Government, before IDPs return to their permanent residence places most of the IDPs in so-called “collective centers” live in severe conditions.

In the IDP community of 1,500 persons in the Khoni municipality, there is a Kindergarten (#2) with a capacity for 80 children. Not only did the number of applicants exceed the capacity of the kindergarten, but, also, the kindergarten could only accept children from three years and above because there was no nursery. Parents had been seeking for the resolution of the issue for a long time, to no avail.

In cooperation with the Kindergarten and with the financial support of PIN and the local government, the IDP Integration and Promotion Center renovated and fully equipped the area for the nursery group in Kindergarten #2, in accordance with respective standards. A full package of facilities and toys for 24 children were purchased that gives a chance to them get good early pre-school education.

As a result of the intervention, 24 children under the age of three and their families are now able to benefit from the access to early pre-school education service in the IDP settlement of Khoni municipality.

The former department store and former Hippodrome building in the village of Rukhi in the Zugdidi municipality belongs to the compact IDP settlements. Before the project intervention, both buildings were far below the acceptable living standards.

With financial support of PIN and the local government, association “Imedi” initiated reconstruction works in both settlements. In the frames of the project intervention, the roof of the former department store was rehabilitated



and a water system constructed in the former hippodrome building. Through the project intervention, the living conditions of IDPs residing in two collective centers in the village of Rukhi were significantly improved. As a result, beneficiaries became more active, motivated and proactive to seek solutions to their problems and basic subsistence issues.

Services for Young People

Young people are the most important asset for any country. The development of youth in any country is necessary in order to ensure the democratic and socio-economic expansion and progress of its society. 20% of the population of Georgia falls under the definition of youth. State policies, such as the National Youth Policy, within the joint efforts of different stakeholders of the field regulate a wide range of issues related to the development of youth. Young people in Georgia, however, still encounter many challenges in different spheres of their lives.

Youth participation is one of the main pillars of a strong and growing democracy, although the culture of an active citizenry is not yet fully cultivated in Georgian society.

According to the study “Generation in Transition” carried out by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, only 27% of young people in Georgia have carried out volunteer work in the past year.

Due to the non-existence of a comprehensive, organized structured platform for youth involvement, young people in the Tkibuli municipality have very few opportunities so that they can get engaged in social life and cultivate their civil activism.

The civil society organization, the “Road of Changes”, - established an youth resource center in order to create a space for young people of Tkibuli municipality to become more active, get involved in different social activities and initiate their own projects.





In the frames of the project, a room in Tkibuli Youth Palace was renovated and equipped as a creative space for young people to gather, create, come up with ideas and initiate different social activities. Twenty-five young people were selected and trained in teamwork, volunteering, leadership and project-cycle management. Youth organized and hosted different thematic meetings, conducted group voluntary activities in different institutions for other youth as well as the elderly and people with disabilities.

As a result of the intervention, the youth of the Tkibuli municipality got an equipped space, motivation for cultivating active citizenship and the foundation of volunteerism.

Despite the significant efforts of civil society organizations, working in the field of youth, the access of young people to non-formal education is still challenging, especially in rural areas of the country. The villages of the Gori municipality are no exception. Young people in the villages of the Gori municipality have limited access to educational opportunities, and therefore, face challenges in personal and professional development.

To meet the development needs of young people from the Shindisi and Skra communities, civil society organization “Kartlosi” initiated the establishment of youth information centers in the village of Pkhvenisi and the Skra IDP settlement. Youth Information Centers were renovated and equipped, staff were recruited and trained.

Training courses, cultural events, information sessions and other activities fostering personal development of youth in the above-mentioned villages were organized in the youth information centers.

Youth club “Aurora” was established in the village of Rukhi in the Zugdidi municipality in the frames of the project. This was initiated by association “Gaenati”, as a response to the challenges that youth face in terms of personal development in the rural areas of municipality.

The youth club was equipped with furniture and computers. A small library was created. Non-formal education activities, such as training courses on leadership, teamwork, project cycle management, gender sensitivity, healthy lifestyle, road safety, conflict management and other actual topics, conferences, campaigns, excursions and other events were organized by the Club. Through the project intervention, youth from village of Rukhi got a space for gathering and socializing, a place where they can plan activities, develop ideas, take initiative, interact with each other, learn and engage in social activities. Village Rukhi is located at the Abkhazia-Samegrelo administrative border where IDP community concentration is very high. The IDP children



study and get involved in various intellectual activities at the village public school with the other children of the village.

Services for people in conflict with the law

In spite of the large number of intervention measures taken by governmental bodies, international organizations and national CSOs in order to address the issue, the process of re-socialization of people in conflict with the law is still an enormous challenge for Georgian society.

According to the research - “Professional opportunities and needs of labor market and people in conflict with law” conducted by Civil Development Agency (CIDA) - the criminal record of a person doubles the probability of his/her unemployment. According to the research, the level of trust of both society and the employer towards the people in conflict with law is below average. In addition, qualifications of people in conflict with the law does not match the requirements of the employ-



er in 25% of cases.

In order to address this issue, civil society organization “Step to Future” implemented the project “New Way” in the Gori municipality that aimed to improve the social and economic conditions of the people in conflict with the law.

In the framework of the intervention, 10 beneficiaries were trained in beekeeping and granted with hives, primary care facilities and beekeeping manuals. They learned beekeeping theoretic and practical skills through five months, twice a week. After the training, 10 people in conflict with the law acquired specific knowledge, skills and basic necessities to start their own entrepreneurial business that is the important step towards improving livelihoods and strengthening social-economic conditions.



Services for vulnerable groups

In spite of the impressive economic growth in recent years, a substantial part of Georgia's population is still living in poverty. Some are particularly disadvantaged regarding access to assets and basic services and have fewer opportunities to engage socially and politically.

In order to support socially unprotected groups in their municipalities, the local governments of the Tkibuli and Khoni municipalities subsidize the social canteens for vulnerable groups.

On the basis of Khoni Charity Center the social laundry was established and the beneficiaries get weekly service.

The social laundry in Tkibuli, established by the initiative of the municipality social service department serves the beneficiaries of the social canteen: the elderly people, people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups.

Civil society organization Bethlehem in Gori introduced a social laun-



dry. Special areas of the office have been renovated and equipped to serve the representatives of different vulnerable groups, which are not able to wash their clothes due to the health conditions, a lack of equipment and detergents. Specially trained volunteers assist beneficiaries, who are physically unable to come to the social laundries. In the case of Gori, youth volunteers use bicycles that were specially purchased for the purpose of reaching out to the beneficiaries in village Skra. It is noteworthy to mention that the social laundries located in the premises of social canteens create a unique multifunctional space for people representing vulnerable groups.



Services for People with Disabilities

International experience in the field of disabilities illustrates the importance of inclusion of people with disabilities in economic activity. On one hand, enhancing the employability of people with disabilities is much more efficient in the long-term than investing in social benefit schemes. On the other hand, the social model of disability, which pursues the inclusive approach towards the people with disabilities, is a preferred model of PWDs and is the official policy of our country since the ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2014. Employment of PWDs is one of the main challenges of the disability field in Georgia.

To address the issue of unemployment of PWDs, association “Hangi” came up with the idea of establishment of “Training-Employment Center for Disabled and Socially Vulnerable Persons”. The Center was equipped with modern equipment.

In the frames of the service, 22 beneficiaries were trained in different vocational skills, such as: sewing, tissue thermal treatment and graphic editing.



The services introduced through the intervention provided people with disabilities with the opportunity to master the skills of their choice so that they can be integrated into the labor market.

Services for Elderly People

Elderly people represent 20% of the population of Georgia. With aging, the ability of person to accomplish daily activities naturally declines. Also, older people, on average, tend to have more physical problems and disabilities than younger people. But the changes that accompany aging are more than just changes in health. Social issues influence an older person's risk and experience of illness.

The flat rate pension, provided by state is not sufficient to cover all the expenses that elderly person may face. Therefore, most of the elderly people in Georgia are socially disadvantaged. A lot of senior people live alone and face serious difficulties in self-care. Isolation and the lack of engagement in social life significantly worsen the quality of life of elderly people.



As a response to abovementioned issue, several services were introduced in target municipalities in the frames of the PIN grant scheme.

NGO „Charity Fund to the Glory of Miners” initiated establishment of a cultural center for elderly people in the Tkibuli municipality. A vacant



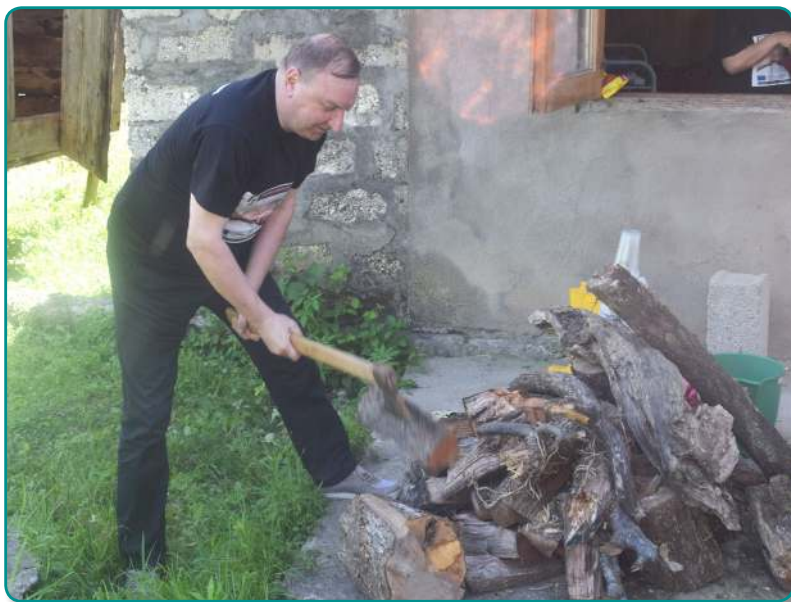
room in the Tkibuli social canteen has been renovated and equipped. In this cultural center, seniors have opportunity to play board games, attend cultural and social activities and play musical instruments. Thanks to the cultural center, elderly people feel as full-fledged members of the society. Senior visitors of the center regained the feeling of self-worth and gained motivation to be active, to network and get engaged in the social life of their municipality.

Civil Society Organization “Ray of Hope” organized a hot food delivery service for 35 lonely elderly people in Nikozi community of the Gori municipality. In the frames of the intervention, a kitchen was built in the administration of Nikozi community. Beneficiaries of the project received hot meals twice a week.

This mobile food service made lonely elderly people from Nikozi community feel valued and appreciated. Healthy, nutritious food contributes to their good health and high energy level, while the care and attention they get, helps to improve their psychological well-being.







Elderly people often cannot or find it difficult to carry out personal and household activities independently due to their health conditions, disability or social disadvantages. As a response to this problem of isolation among the elderly, the Samaritan Association of Georgia (SSK) organized a home-care service for 24 beneficiaries in the villages of Skra, Gorijsvari, Tiniskhidi, Ateni, Uplistsikhe and Kvakhvrelis of the Gori municipality.

Four types of service, primary care, medical service, help with household affairs and social consultations were offered to the elderly in the frames of the home care service package. Two mobile groups of trained staff visited beneficiaries twice a week.

The service: introduced by the Samaritan Union, helps to substantially improve the quality of daily life of elderly people. Beneficiaries of the project are no longer isolated and lonely. They feel that there are people who are willing to give them a hand of assistance.

In order to improve the quality of life of elderly people in the Zugdidi municipality, the Social Department of Zugdidi Municipality City Hall has prepared an initiative – “Mobile Care Group for the Elderly”. The initiative provides services to the elderly by the mobile group in a specially equipped minibus. This mobile group includes a medical worker, a cleaner, a driver and youth volunteers. The minibus is equipped with a special water tank, washing machine and cabinets. A special space in the minibus is set-up as a hair salon. The mobile group pays home visits to pre-selected elderly beneficiaries and helps them with health and hygiene conditions, maintenance of their living environment and houses. Thirty elderly and lonely beneficiaries are selected from 48 villages of the Zugdidi municipality. Most of the time, beneficiaries request cleaning of their yard, care after the personal hygiene of the elderly and medical examination by the doctor.

By introducing a home care service through multidisciplinary mobile group, elderly people have been provided with care, a safe environment and dignified conditions.



Lessons Learnt:

Through implementation of the project, we have learned many valuable lessons about the advantages and limitations of applying the Czech experience and other initial approaches in our interventions and about the need and potential to further develop the interactions between the different actors in the social sector.

Choose the right approach for your interventions

- The Projects strategy: To work closely with self governments, local CSOs and to build the capacities of target organizations was the correct approach.
- The Project partners, ranging from the self government representatives to local CSOs, working on social issues and the target organizations, have all made small or substantial changes in their practices, attitudes and relationships, which have resulted in improved social services, better strategic planning of the social departments of project target municipalities and the establishing CSO-Local self-government interaction mechanisms.
- To make the approach successful, the Project required a committed and well-trained staff. Furthermore, it was important to keep the government informed and updated about all issues since they play an important role in social system development.

Use project co-investments to stimulate positive change

- In the case of PIN intervention, there was no need for extensive co-investments from the project side to achieve necessary changes by provid-

ing improved social services. Small amounts of grants demonstrated the cost-effectiveness of introducing the social services to local self governments. As a result, local governments decided to take the responsibility for the sustainability of the social services that were introduced.

Share knowledge and give support to address the challenges and gaps

- There was the lack of structured mechanism for local CSO and self government interaction, strategic planning and long-term needs-based social services in target municipalities before the PIN intervention.
- By raising awareness of the issues listed above, constant facilitation approach of the project, by providing extensive guidance, expertise and training by PIN project implementation team, partner organization CS-RDG and other consultants from PIN head office, the Project has helped the target organizations, local CSOs and local self-governance staff increase their knowledge, see the importance of the structured mechanism, such as the Advisory Committees and feel the cost effectiveness of diversified social services.

Select your intervention partners carefully

Selected project partners need to take ownership of intervention activities in order to maintain the motivation to change their approaches and make the necessary long-term changes.

Sustainability and Exit strategy

It is essential to have the vision on sustainability of the project intervention and possible ways of continuation of established good practices already in the beginning of the intervention.

By involving Advisory Committee members in writing the provisions, social inclusion strategies and work plans, the ownership and the importance of having the interactive mechanism such as the Advisory Committees was valued by both, the local self-government and local CSO representatives. Hence, the project guided the process of institutionalizing the ACs at the Social Service Departments of the municipalities.

It was also clear from the very beginning that the grant scheme of funding the local social services was only one year and the goal of the intervention was to show the importance and cost-effectiveness of long-term social services focusing on the needs of the vulnerable groups rather than the direct small monetary support to the beneficiaries in certain cases. The intervention was valued and accepted by the municipality governments and the same projects were included into the social budgets of the following year.

Conclusion:

The main outcome of adapting and application of the PIN Social Integration Programs to target municipalities in Georgia is a shift in attitude from a one-time, monetary social assistance practice to the introduction of tailored social services in the Khoni, Tkibuli, Gori and Zugdidi municipalities.

This change leads to more efficient spending of the municipal social budget, presenting the advantages of evidence – based strategic planning and introduction of social services.

Studies, carried out during the project as well as results of PIN intervention, revealed that the municipal social budget is much more cost effective when it is spent on social service delivery rather than on monetary assistance schemes both in terms of the number of beneficiaries and its impact on their well-being.

We hope that our publication managed to show you the power of coordinated efforts of motivated people, empowered with knowledge, skills and the right methodology and inspired you to take the initiative and do your best to change the lives of vulnerable groups in other municipalities of the country.

