



Civic Engagement in Local Governance (CELoG) project

Quarterly Progress Report

Reporting period: 1 April-30 June 2015

Cooperative Agreement No. AID-111-A-14-00004

1. Political Context

The major event that took place in the sphere of local government in Armenia was the organization of local referendums in three community clusters that were held on May 17, 2015. This event became a central focus for the CELoG Consortium for the period between the announcement and the day of the referendums, since during that period of time information visits had to be conducted to all 22 communities of the 3 clusters.

Being the first in the history of independent Armenia, these local referendums became important not only from the point of view of administrative reform but also as a political occurrence. Thus, ensuring the transparency of the process and trustworthiness of the results became crucially important, particularly taking into account the low level of trust towards electoral processes in Armenia. Due to this fact, CELoG used its organizational resources to monitor the referendums and created mobile groups of observers to visit all 22 communities on May 17.

Another important task for the Consortium in light of the referendums was to ensure that the decision of voters in each of the communities was conscious and informed. This is one of the main reasons why the preliminary information visits to the communities were organized. However, receiving feedback from the population of the 22 communities was also of extreme importance, since these were the first information visits organized where expectations, aspirations and concerns were expressed. Collection of this feedback will serve CELoG in further communication with the decision makers.

2. Summary of Conducted Activities

Activity 1.3. Survey on perceptions of LSG and decentralization (CRRC)

The preliminary works ahead of the fieldwork took longer than anticipated, as the questionnaire was circulated through the CELoG consortium members as well as other consortium members and discussed multiple times. But this proved to be a very good practice in terms of having all the interested parties involved from the very beginning, acknowledging the importance of the issues to be surveyed. The cooperation went smoothly; the whole process was an informative one.

As CRRC-Armenia proceeded with the development of the main tool for the survey, it was finalized and shared with consortium members for their feedback. The final version that was issued for the pretest considered all the comments suggested by our partners.

Two field supervisors took the questionnaire to the field to test it before the main fieldwork. The first stage of the pretest resulted in a very lengthy interview period (about two hours). Considering this an inappropriate indicator, the questionnaire was revised and compressed, while preserving the main logic and goal of the survey. The second stage of the pretest identified some minor issues that were immediately addressed and the questionnaire was polished and sent for printing.

A separate interviewer instruction was developed to equip them with the main categories/terms used in the questionnaire and provide explanations regarding complicated questions.

The Electricity Networks of Armenia household lists were used as the sampling frame. To combine the random sampling approach with the convenience sampling method (to include the target communities that are due for governing reform) 33 pilot clusters were added to the 100 randomly selected clusters. Eleven households were selected from each cluster as a main sample of about 1460, and another set was taken from the same clusters as a reserve list to be employed as needed.

9 supervisors and 38 interviewers were recruited to conduct the fieldwork. A day-long interviewers' training was conducted on June 19, 2015 by the CRRC-Armenia Program Manager and Research Director who carefully went through the questionnaire and addressed all the questions that arose during the training. Representatives from the lead organization were present as well; they welcomed the field staff and briefed them on the importance of the project. The fieldwork was conducted during the period from June 20 to the end of June 2015.

Along with the household survey, a community questionnaire was also employed to measure community-based services locally. 145 questionnaires were filled in for this component.

The field was monitored during the fieldwork period. Lori, Shirak, Gegharkunik and Aragatsotn marzes were checked through personal visits.

The data entry software (CSPro) has been adjusted for the survey questionnaires and is ready for data entry. It is anticipated to have the cleaned data set by the end of July 2015.

Activity 1.4. Organizational Activity Seminar on strategies of public involvement in LSG (EPF)

During the reporting period, EPF finalized the development of the OAS final reports. Namely, EPF structuralized and edited the full report of the OAS as well as developed a document consisting of 9 major highlights focused on the possible application of OAS results in CELoG. The recommendations clarified the thematic framework of the sub-granting projects to be announced by CELoG, identified possible directions and preliminary topics for trainings for both LSGB representatives and community members, identified the major aspects of renewal of the InfoTun network methodology, etc. These highlights along with the final report were submitted to CFOA and USAID for further discussion.

Activity 1.5. Development of regulations on the Formation and Activities of Consultative Bodies, Public Participation in LSG, Public Hearings and Discussions (CFOA)

Under this activity, CFOA has developed three draft models of regulations.

The first regulation refers to the formation and functioning of LSGB consultative bodies. The regulation defines procedures on forming these bodies, their structure, selection and nomination criteria, etc.

The second regulation clarifies the roles and obligations of each party involved in participatory governance, defines the mechanisms and procedures of public participation, and ensures equal opportunities for each group of beneficiaries to participate in the process of community government.

The third regulation defines the mechanism and procedures for organization and implementation of public hearings and discussions in the communities, clarifies data processing and reporting procedures, and specifies mechanisms for ensuring the transparency of the decision making process at the local level.

These draft models of regulations will be presented to the Municipal Councils of the 35 target communities for discussion and further adoption. Prior to adoption, each of the regulations can be adjusted in accordance with the specific need of this or that community.

The process of development of the regulations consisted of the drafting of each regulation by a member of the CFOA expert team, followed by internal discussion at CFOA and adjustments proposed by other experts. This kind of peer review ensured the development of comprehensive and professional products, ready for wider dissemination and discussion.

Activity 1.7. Trainings on FoI in LSG (AJC, CFOA)

AJC continued the delivery of trainings on freedom of information in the target communities. During the reporting period, 16 trainings were held in the Gavar, Sarukhan, Noratus, Vardenik, Karmirgyugh communities of Gegharkunik region, Goris, Sisian, Qajaran, communities of

Syunik region, Metsamor, Mrgashat, Sardarapat communities of Armavir region, Berd and Dilijan communities of Tavush region, and Paraqar, Ashtarak and Oshakan communities of Aragatsotn region. Overall, 370 beneficiaries participated in these trainings of which 97 were men and 273 were women, including 8 community heads, 7 municipal council members, 254 representatives of institutions funded from community or state budgets, 7 regional media representatives and 63 representatives of the civil society sector.

Activity 1.9. Redevelopment of the CFOA website and re-launch of “Hamaynk” periodical (CFOA)

During the reporting period, a first edition of the “Hamaynk” periodical was drafted. However, during the preparation work, some miscommunication and differing perceptions between USAID and CFOA were revealed on the content and appearance of the periodical, due to which its publication was postponed. In order to find an effective solution to the issue, a CELoG Board meeting was organized and the issue was discussed by all partners and USAID. The meeting resulted in a decision to redevelop the concept of the periodical and submit it to USAID for final approval.

Articles prepared for the first edition of the periodical have been placed on the CFOA web page.

Activity 1.11. Consortium Management and Communication training (EPF)

EPF has finalized the training module and agenda and agreed on the date of the training convenient for all partners. A two-day training was held at the EPF premises with the participation of representatives of all partner organizations and USAID.

The training was tailored to the particular needs of the partner organizations and the Consortium in general, and apart from capacity building the development of a joint vision of the Consortium was also targeted.

During the training, the results of the CET evaluation and its analysis were introduced, which was followed by a session dedicated to the identification and combination of individual and joint visions and perceptions of the mission of the program. The next session was dedicated to the discussion of the philosophy of consortium management with a special focus on interconnections between the activities and outcomes of the partner organizations. During the next sessions, participants discussed issues such as internal and external communication, policies and procedures, monitoring and evaluation.

Activity 1.13 Development of the Consortium web portal and other IT tools of the project (ISDTC)

During the reporting period, ISDTC continued the development of the web portal. After the development of the technical assignment, ISDTC started to focus on the overall design of the portal, structural features, database, coding etc. The draft design of the main page of the portal was developed. It is planned that during the next reporting period, the first draft of the portal will be introduced to the partners, adjusted and finalized by the end of the first program year.

Activity 2.1 Monitoring of implementation of LSG reform and publishing reports (2012, 2013 and 2014) (CFOA)

During the reporting period, the 2012 and 2013 monitoring reports, developed in the previous period, were finalized and translated into English. Currently, the files have been sent to the publishing house. Sample designs for the book cover will be prepared and, as soon as the cover is approved, the books will be published. It is planned to have 500 copies of the book, which will be distributed to different stakeholders.

CFOA experts started the development of the monitoring report for 2014. This report also will be prepared according to CFOA's methodology. It will have all the sections the previous reports contained and the process of development of the new report will be similar to those already finalized.

Activity 2.2. Development and sharing of at least 2 policy and legal recommendations on reform (CFOA)

During the reporting period, CFOA organized a discussion on the **draft law on Principles and Procedures of Community Amalgamation and/or De-merger, as well as Election Timing in Newly Established Communities**. This law has a vital importance in the consolidation process initiated by the Government since spring 2015.

The discussion was held at Haghartsin Hotel, Dilijan, on June 12, 2015. CFOA invited participants from the RA Ministry of Territorial Administration and Emergency Situations, National Assembly, USAID, consortium member organizations, municipalities, international and local nonprofit organizations. During the event, the draft law was presented, and a discussion followed. Participants provided CFOA with valuable comments and recommendations which will be incorporated in the final version of the document.



The document will be translated and sent to the international experts involved in the program for the comments. The draft law will be finalized based on the comments received, and submitted to the Ministry for approval.

Activity 3.4 Introduction of community consolidation concepts in 40 target communities (CFOA)

In order to inform citizens about the consolidation process and its benefits, as well as discuss the risks, CFOA organized awareness-raising discussions with citizens and active groups in all municipalities included in the pilot project. CFOA experts, along with representatives of consortium organizations visited 22 municipalities of the three clusters: Tumanyan (Lori marz), Dilijan (Tavush marz) and Tatev (Syunik marz). During these meetings, the main essence of consolidation, its pros and cons were introduced, and feedback was collected from community members.

On the day of the referendum, CFOA in cooperation with AJC and EPF organized an observation mission. The CELoG team formed three mobile observation groups so that each group could observe the process in one cluster. As a result, CELoG observers visited all 22 communities, checked voting lists, and interviewed members of electoral commissions and regular voters. During the ballot count each of the members of the group stayed in the polling station until the count was finished. Each group submitted a report on the observation as well as developed articles about the referendum, all of which are placed at CFOA's web page.

Activity 3.5 Seminars and briefs for journalists (YPC)

Yerevan Press Club continued preparations for organizing the trainings for media outlets envisaged by CELoG objective 1. Two trainings will be organized during the month of July both for regional and national media outlets. The first training session will be held on July 6-7 and the second one is arranged for July 19-21. YPC also continued the study of the media coverage of local governance reform and civic engagement in this process as well as a prior assessment of the Armenian media community awareness on local governance reform.

The premises were arranged for the upcoming first briefing on June 30. An agreement with Tesaket Press Club was acquired for the event. Also, an agreement was arranged with leading media outlets, both traditional and new, to provide competent and experienced journalists for the briefing. However, due to the rallies on Baghramyan Street against the price rise of electricity (since June 22) only several media representatives confirmed their participation. The briefing led by CELoG consortium leadership Vahan Movsisyan and David Tumanyan mostly concentrated on issues of the local government reforms, the results of local referendums and on awareness issues. The following media outlets participated in the briefing: Arminfo news agency, Media Initiative Center, H2 TV, A1+ online TV, Nyut.am online news, Yerkir Media TV, Hraparak.am online news etc.

Activity 3.6.1. Production of talk shows on decentralization and broadcast via national TV channel (YPC)

During the reporting period, YPC continued the production of TV talk shows called “Mamuli Akumb-HaMaTegh” in cooperation with Yerkir Media TV Company. 3 TV shows were produced and broadcast in the April-June period.

#3 “Mamuli Akumb-HaMaTegh” TV talk show

The talk show was filmed on April 10 and broadcast via Yerkir Media on Monday, April 13 at 18:40 and rebroadcast on Friday April 17 at 11:40. The duration of the program was 40 minutes. The topic of the program was “Public engagement in local self-governance: is it possible?”

Program host: Boris Navasardian, YPC President

Invited speakers:

- David Tumanyan, CELoG Program Director
- Naira Arakelyan, Chairman of Armavir Development Center
- Gevorg Ter-Gabrielyan, EPF Director
- Lendrush Manukyan, Chief expert at the Programs’ department of Gyumri Municipality

The program link also was shared on the Facebook Group of the consortium.

#4 “Mamuli Akumb-HaMaTegh” TV talk show

The talk show was filmed on May 6 and broadcast via Yerkir Media on Monday, May 11 at 18:40 and rebroadcast on May 15 at 11:40. The duration of the program was 40 minutes. The topic of the program was “Local referendums to decide the issue of consolidation of the communities.”

Program host: Boris Navasardian, YPC President

Invited speakers:

- David Tumanyan, CELoG Program Director
- Levon Barseghyan, member of Gyumri City Council
- Sara Petrosyan, Hetq.am online journalist
- Grisha Khachatryan, Chairman of Information systems development and training center

The program link also was shared on the Facebook Group of the consortium.

#5 “Mamuli Akumb-HaMaTegh” TV talk show



The talk show was filmed on June 5 and broadcast via Yerkir Media on Monday, June 8 at 18:40 and rebroadcast on June 12 at 11:40. The duration of the program was 40 minutes. The topic of the program was “The results of local referendums on consolidation of the communities.”

Program host: Boris Navasardian, YPC President

Invited speakers:

- Vache Terteryan, First Deputy Minister of Territorial Administration and Emergency Situations
- Vahan Mosvisyan, CFOA Chairman

The program link also was shared on the Facebook Group of the consortium.

Activity 3.6.2. Media award for covering issues related to local government and decentralization

The jury for annual media award for covering issues related to the local government and decentralization was in the process of formation. It is anticipated to involve representatives from consortium members as well as key media experts from outside. During the reporting period, YPC staff members continued limited media coverage monitoring to identify media outlets and journalists that are involved in the coverage of local government reforms. In addition, YPC contacted other media experts for their opinion on this media coverage. YPC has also started working on criteria in accordance to which the evaluation of the award candidates will be implemented.

Activity 4.1 Communication with other USAID consortia on CSO environment (2 meetings, CFOA/EPF)

During the reporting period, the Consortium members were actively cooperating with other consortia funded by USAID. Namely, there was cooperation with CSO DePo partners during the referendum, involvement of experts from CSO DePo in the CELoG Communication and Management training, as well as the incorporation of questions important for other consortia in the CRRC questionnaire. This illustrates that there are many opportunities for effective cooperation that multiply the effect of the activities implemented by these Consortia.

3. Progress towards results

The project has already entered its active phase and all partner organizations are gradually sharing preliminary products of their activities with the audience. Cooperation between partners

and interconnections between their activities are also starting to appear. This indicates that the project is functioning in accordance with its initial design and the working plan. The Consortium and the project are already recognized by major stakeholders. This can be seen from the invitations to topical discussions, proposals for cooperation and interest towards project activities shown by various stakeholders. The Consortium continues to develop its internal capacities and in parallel with that involves new beneficiaries and partners in the circle of its activities mainly via public events and presentations.

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

- Continuation of capacity-building activities of the consortium and within the consortium.

One of the major outcomes of the reporting period in terms of building the internal capacity of the Consortium was EPF’s training organized for consortium members. The training allowed participants to rethink their approaches and perceptions towards the project and partner organizations, and gave them the opportunity to re-evaluate their capacities, identify strengths and weaknesses and brainstorm possible solutions for further development. But most importantly, the training promoted the development of a joint vision and approach which is extremely important for the internal solidarity of the Consortium and effectiveness of project activities. Apart from the training, the technical capacities of the Consortium also continue to develop particularly via work on the web portal and development of various communication materials.

- Capacity building and awareness raising of the representatives of beneficiary groups.

The reporting period had various opportunities to share important information related to local self-governance, decentralization and community consolidation with a large circle of beneficiaries. This was done through awareness-raising sessions on community consolidation in 22 communities, FoI trainings in 16 communities, discussions on draft laws, talk shows, etc. The project’s snowball effect is currently in process and the more the project develops, the wider the audience of beneficiaries will be.



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

Through its activities implemented during the current reporting period, CFOA has finalized the 2-year monitoring of the LG reform, which will be a significant event for all stakeholders once it is presented, since it will allow them to analyze the dynamics of the development of the sector based on high quality expert input.

The presentation of draft laws on the Principles and Procedures of Community Amalgamation and/or De-merger, and Election Timing in the Newly Established Communities, as well as development of regulations on Forming and Activities of Consultative Bodies, Public Participation in LSG, Public Hearings and Discussions are other important tools allowing civil society to keep track of the development of the LG system, since these processes are based not only on the significant expertise of CFOA staff but also on the feedback collected from the communities, civil society organizations, experts and representatives of state institutions.

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

Continuing production of talk shows that introduce topics in a manner that is timely and matching public need, the development of the first issue of the “Hamaynk” periodical, and the active dissemination of project-related information through the CELoG Facebook page are gradually forming the field of information dedicated to the issue of local governance. The information provided via different tools of CELoG has created the environment necessary for developing constructive discourse on issues related to local government. CELoG currently has effective and sustainable mechanisms for the dissemination of information.

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

CELoG continues its effective cooperation with other USAID-funded consortia. Participation in MAB meetings, involvement of CSO DePo staff in development and implementation of the training for Consortium members, cooperation with Goris Press Club during the referendum, and

finally inclusion of questions related to media, transparency and accountability and social protection in the CELoG survey questionnaire all help form important ties between these consortia.

4. Data on Indicators

Data on all indicators are established in the Activity M&E Plan for the award activities. Data should be disaggregated by gender where relevant.

- ✓ Referendum Observation groups visited all 22 communities in 3 community clusters during the referendum.
- ✓ Trainings on Freedom of Information delivered in 16 Target Communities,
- ✓ Training for 5 Consortium Member Organizations on Communication and Management
- ✓ 3 Talk shows developed and broadcast on Yerkir Media TV station,
- ✓ 2 draft law presentations
- ✓ 3 regulations developed and ready for presentation
- ✓ Monitoring reports for 2012 and 2013 developed and sent for publication,

5. Problems encountered, reasons why established goals were not met, if appropriate, and how challenges or problems will be overcome during the next reporting period.

There were no major problems encountered during the project implementation process. There were some shifts in timing for the CRRC survey and “Hamaynk” periodical, however in both cases the added value caused by the delay is worthwhile.

6. A comparison of actual expenditures with budget estimates, including analysis and explanation of cost overruns or high unit costs, cost savings, and any other pertinent information.

The actual expenditures during the reporting period are mostly in line with the budget estimates.

7. Priorities for programming during the next reporting period.



There are several priorities for the next reporting period. There are many products that are ready for dissemination and presentation such as regulations, monitoring reports CRRC survey results, etc.; public outreach activities will become central for the 4th quarter. The Consortium will also launch the development of networks by setting up InfoTuns as planned. The development of the web portal and population the ready-to-launch portal with information will also be an important activity for the next reporting period.

Finally, since the 4th quarter is the final quarter of the year, preparatory activities for the next project year, particularly the development of the Year Two action plan, is one of major priorities.

D. Tumanyan

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19.07.2015