Independent Reporting Mechanism (IRM): Georgia Design Report 2018–2019

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Table of Contents

Open
Government
Partnership

Executive Summary: Georgia

Georgia's fourth action plan includes initiatives undertaken by the central government, the Parliament, and several local municipalities. Despite the range of topics covered, many commitments aim for minor improvements and do not clearly align with stakeholder priorities identified during the consultations. Moving forward, the next action plan could be more focused on commitments relevant for anti-corruption, such as disclosure of beneficial ownership, improvement of public procurement practices, and fulfillment of the long-standing commitment to adopt the Freedom of Information Law.

The Open Government Partnership (OGP) is a global partnership that brings together government reformers and civil society leaders to create action plans that make governments more inclusive, responsive, and accountable. The Independent Reporting Mechanism (IRM) monitors all action plans to ensure governments follow through on commitments. Georgia joined OGP in 2011. Since then, Georgia has implemented three action plans. This report evaluates the design of Georgia's fourth action plan.

General overview of action plan

Since joining OGP, Georgia has introduced many transparency and good governance reforms, particularly around public officials' asset declarations, budget monitoring, and public service delivery. Georgia has taken a leadership role in OGP by serving as co-chair in 2016, hosting the 2018 Global Summit, and being re-elected to the OGP Steering Committee in 2019.

To develop the fourth action plan, the Ministry of Justice conducted several public consultations throughout the country. Civil society representatives withdrew from the multi-stakeholder forum due to disagreements with the government over the decision-making process and the action plan's lack of ambition. Georgia's co-creation process reached "involve" for the level of public influence. This was lower than rating for the previous action plan's process (which reached "collaborate").

In 2019, the multi-stakeholder forum secretariat transferred from the Ministry of Justice to the Administration of the Government of Georgia, a move that civil society welcomed. The fourth action plan also saw the inclusion of Open Parliament commitments through consultations led by the Open Governance Permanent Parliamentary Council.

Table 1. At a glance
Participating since: 2011
Action plan under review: 4
Report type: Design
Number of commitments: 28

Action plan development
Is there a Multi-stakeholder forum: Yes
Level of public influence: Involve
Acted contrary to OGP process: No

Action plan design
Commitments relevant to OGP values: 26 (93%)
Transformative commitments: 0
Potentially starred: 0

Action plan implementation
Starred commitments: N/A
Completed commitments: N/A
Commitments with Major DIOG*: N/A
Commitments with Outstanding DIOG*: N/A

DIOG: Did it Open Government?

Unlike all previous Georgian action plans, the fourth plan does not have any potentially transformative commitments. Despite overall lower ambition, the commitments cover a wide range of thematic issues, including public services, court decisions, and budget information. In addition, they cover new areas, such as the Sustainable Development Goals, homelessness, and information disclosure by state-owned enterprises. The action plan also includes numerous commitments on improving open government at the municipal level and in Parliament.

Notable commitments at the national level include those working toward publishing court decisions in a unified database, increasing transparency of the public grant-funding system, and improving transparency and efficiency of public procurement. Other notable commitments involve developing strategies for transparency and integrity in eight municipalities and creating a Citizen Engagement Center in the Parliament of Georgia.

Table 2. Noteworthy commitments

Commitment description	Moving forward	Status at the end of implementation cycle
Commitment 9: Publish court decisions in a unified database and create a retrieval system	The Supreme Court of Georgia aims to improve access to court decisions by upgrading the newly created registry. A public awareness campaign could help increase the visibility of the registry.	*Note: this will be assessed at the end of action plan cycle.*
Commitment 12: Increase transparency of the public grant-funding system	This commitment aims to introduce a national regulatory standard for issuing governmental grants. Moving forward, it will be useful to create a tool for monitoring and evaluating the unified standard regulations. It would also be useful to create a unified website with information on all governmental grant opportunities.	*Note: this will be assessed at the end of action plan cycle.*
Commitment 13: Electronic innovations for more transparency and efficiency of public procurement	This commitment seeks to improve the availability and usability of procurement data on the opendata.spa.ge portal. It also seeks to better align the information on the portal to the Open Contracting Data Standard. Moving forward, the IRM researcher recommends that the State Procurement Agency publish detailed CPV codes of specific goods or services procured, as well as information on subcontractors.	*Note: this will be assessed at the end of action plan cycle.*
Commitment 16: Strengthen transparency and good governance in municipalities	This commitment aims to develop transparency strategies in eight Georgian municipalities, with support from international donor organizations. For better coordination of local initiatives, a platform could be established to share best open government practices across the municipalities.	*Note: this will be assessed at the end of action plan cycle.*
Commitment 27: Create a Citizen	The new Citizen Engagement Center could develop an evaluation mechanism to assess	*Note: this will be assessed at the end of action plan cycle.*

Engagement Center in the Parliament of Georgia	the overall effectiveness of the Center. This could include tracking the number of persons who engage the Center, types of questions and requests, petitions, and engagement cases. The evaluation could also monitor service quality and feedback opportunities.	5

Recommendations

The IRM recommendations aim to inform the development of the next action plan and guide implementation of the current action plan. For the next action plan, the IRM researcher recommends that the government focus on fewer, more ambitious commitments targeting key policy areas still on the agendas of stakeholders. Commitments in the next plan should form part of a cohesive open government strategy through which Georgia aims to achieve tangible results around key priority areas.

Table 3. Five KEY IRM Recommendations

Strengthen the co-creation process by mandating the role of the multi-stakeholder forum and developing guidelines aligned with the OGP Participation and Co-Creation Standards
Promptly adopt the Freedom of Information Law
Conduct an independent, objective, and politically neutral comprehensive assessment of the country's anti-corruption needs and the effectiveness of current institutional frameworks to address the same.
Expand the national action plan policy areas to cover beneficial ownership transparency and establish a registry of beneficial owners of foreign companies that hold assets in Georgia and participate in public procurement.
Continue efforts to publish public procurement data using the Open Contracting Data Standard.

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The Open Government Partnership (OGP) aims to secure concrete commitments from governments to promote transparency, empower citizens, fight corruption, and harness new technologies to strengthen governance. OGP's Independent Reporting Mechanism (IRM) assesses development and implementation of national action plans to foster dialogue among stakeholders and improve accountability.

Open
Government
Partnership

I. Introduction

The Open Government Partnership is a global partnership that brings together government reformers and civil society leaders to create action plans that make governments more inclusive, responsive, and accountable. Action plan commitments may build on existing efforts, identify new steps to complete ongoing reforms, or initiate action in an entirely new area. OGP's Independent Reporting Mechanism (IRM) monitors all action plans to ensure governments follow through on commitments. Civil society and government leaders use the evaluations to reflect on their own progress and determine if actions have made an impact on people's lives.

Georgia joined OGP in 2011. This report covers the development and design of Georgia's fourth action plan for 2018–2019.

The Independent Reporting Mechanism of OGP has partnered with Nodar Kherkheulidze, an independent researcher, who carried out this evaluation. The IRM aims to inform ongoing dialogue around development and implementation of future commitments. For a full description of the IRM's methodology please visit https://www.opengovpartnership.org/about/independent-reporting-mechanism.

II. Open Government Context in Georgia

During the last two decades, Georgia has introduced many policy and administrative reforms that aspire to democratic values through open governance principles. There have been successes in transforming the delivery of public services, fiscal transparency, and proactive data disclosure. However, many policy areas related to high-level corruption and public procurement need to be addressed to further reinforce open governance.

As a member of OGP since 2011, Georgia has made notable progress in the open governance context. It has extended its fourth national action plan beyond the executive branch to all the dimensions of governance: judiciary, legislature, and local governments. In 2015, Georgia became one of the first countries to adopt the Open Parliament action plan and signed the Declaration on the Parliamentary Openness. In that same year, Georgia was recognized with the first Open Government Champion Award at the OGP Global Summit in Mexico for its collaboration with civil society in the development of an Open Parliament plan.[1] In 2016, during its third national action plan, Georgia included five municipalities and raised that number to 11 under the fourth action plan. Tbilisi, the capital of Georgia, also became one of the pioneers of the OGP subnational government pilot program[2] and submitted its first action plan in 2016.

Georgia was elected a member of the OGP Steering Committee in 2014 and, later, as a co-chair in 2016. In 2017, succeeding France, Georgia became the OGP lead chair and hosted the OGP Global Summit in summer 2018.[3] Along with Germany and Indonesia, Georgia has been elected to lead OGP starting 1 October 2019, during the country's second term as a member of the Steering Committee.[4]

Participation in OGP has helped Georgia make considerable progress in open governance through improving the transparency of public administration, and accessibility to public services. On the World Justice Project's 2015 Open Government Index, Georgia scored first in the Eastern European and Central Asian regions and 29th in the global ranking among 102 countries.[5] (The index measures government openness in practice, based on the experiences and perceptions of the general public and in-country experts worldwide.)

During its first and second action plans, Georgia launched data.gov.ge[6] and an open data portal—opendata.ge.[7] It also started proactively publishing information in various policy areas, such as education, healthcare, construction, agriculture, and state procurement. The Open Data Barometer 2016 gave Georgia a score of 37.88 out of 100 points and ranked it 40th worldwide.[8] The Global Open Data Index 2015[9] ranked Georgia 47th. There has been considerable progress in areas such as detailed government budget, business registry, election results, and tenders and procurement transparency. However, transparency of some key pillars of government data, such as land ownership and detailed government spending, remains a challenge.[10]

Under previous OGP commitments, Georgia has also significantly improved the disclosure of information about the financing of political parties and assets of public officials. The transparency of political party financing has been increased by the adoption of a new framework ensuring that annual party financial declarations are available publicly.[11] The Civil Service Bureau has introduced the annual monitoring system for public officials' asset declarations to improve the accountability of public officials and mitigate the risks of corruption.[12]

In recent years, Georgia has made considerable progress in terms of fiscal transparency. According to the 2017 Open Budget Survey results, Georgia has made all key budget documents available publicly. This resulted in Georgia's fiscal transparency score of 82 out of 100, and its ranking of fifth among 115 countries. Accordingly, Georgia is one of the five countries where budget transparency is sufficient and extensive information is available.[13] [14] [15] In Georgia, the Parliament has the exclusive authority to adopt the budget and monitor its implementation through its accountable constitutional body, the State Audit Office (SAO). Under OGP, SAO has introduced a new public participation web portal

(budgetmonitor.ge[16]) to provide complete information about the state and municipal budgets and enhance citizen participation in the supervision of public finances.[17] According to the Open Budget Survey 2017, Georgia has created opportunities for public participation in budgetary processes; however, participation remains low (22 out of 100). Still, this level of participation is higher than the global average score of 12.[18]

Georgia committed to develop and adopt the freedom of information act under the second and third action plans, which were strongly advocated by civil society.[19] [20] The right to information is guaranteed by the Constitution of Georgia and regulated by the Administrative Code of Georgia, adopted in 1999. There has been a long-standing public call for a dedicated law with a strong enforcement mechanism to guarantee this right to information. Georgia's Global Right to Information rating is 44 out of 123 countries, because of its freedom of information legislation.[21] The Ministry of Justice (MoJ), in collaboration with civil society, drafted the Freedom to Information Law in 2014 However, this draft has not been submitted to the Parliament for further legislative procedures. The passage of the Freedom to Information Act remains a priority for Georgian civil society.

Under previous OGP cycles, Georgia has taken remarkable steps toward improving public service delivery. For example, Georgia has introduced and implemented successful projects, such as Voice of Consumers,[22] Just Drive,[23] and Community Centers.[24] The country has also offered the Public Service Hall—the largest public agency providing public services nationwide—to persons with special needs.[25]

Georgia also saw transformative change in the area of environment. As part of its third action plan, Georgia adopted the Environmental Assessment Code in 2017.[26] That code opened decision making on the environmental assessment process to citizen participation. The code requires the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia to proactively inform citizens about proposed projects through its webpage and newspapers, collect feedback, and inform them about the final decision. The fourth action plan continues the process of transparency and participation through the introduction of a web platform providing improved access to information and better participation opportunities for citizens (Commitment 5).

Throughout its OGP participation, Georgia has advanced open contracting, developing an e-procurement tool from concept to functional electronic procurement system.[27] The current action plan aims to further advance public procurement by better aligning the system with the Open Contracting Data Standard (Commitment 13). However, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Anti-Corruption Network[28] and the Council of Europe,[29] as well as civil society organizations in Georgia, have identified loopholes and exemptions in the procurement system. Notably, the lack of published information on subcontractors has allowed blacklisted companies to participate in contracts as subcontractors. The Institute for Development Freedom of Information (IDFI) recommends that the portion of subcontracting taken by blacklisted companies should be made public to verify who was subcontracted and on what terms.[30] The legislation can be amended to restrict companies and their management who were convicted of corruption and fraud from participating in public procurement.

At the 2016 London Anti-Corruption Summit, Georgia committed to take steps to ensure transparency of the ownership and control of all companies involved in public contracting. It also committed to explore the feasibility of establishing a public central register of company beneficial ownership information.[31] Furthermore, in 2017, the OECD Anti-Corruption Network recommended that Georgia require mandatory disclosure of beneficial ownership in legal persons in a central register and that it should publish this information online.[32] However, there is no commitment on beneficial ownership, despite the fact that issues related to the transparency of beneficial owners remain a challenge for fighting corruption in the country. Many companies registered abroad participate in the public procurement tenders and own significant assets in Georgia. However, there is no information available about the beneficial owners. Absence of this information entails high risks of corruption, organized crime, and conflict of interest.[33]

Regarding its anti-corruption efforts, Georgia has achieved remarkable progress in eliminating minor corruption in the public administration during the past years. In 2018, the country reached a historical high of 77.4, according to the Control of Corruption indicator and ranked ninth among European

countries. It also scored 72.12 and ranked 59th worldwide on the Government Effectiveness indicator.[34] Moreover, according to the World Justice Project's 2019 Rule of Law Index, Georgia ranks 24th out of 126 countries on the "absence of corruption" dimension. Since 2014, the country has maintained its first place ranking in rule of law performance over other Eastern European, Central Asian, and lower middle income countries.[35] Transparency International reports also show that the level of corruption in Georgia has significantly decreased since 2003, and Georgia ranked 41st worldwide in the 2018 Corruption Perceptions Index.[36]

According to the 2015–2016 Global Corruption Barometer, less than 7 percent of Georgians paid a bribe when they came into contact with public service over the past 12 months.[37] However, 41 percent of citizens consider the government's anti-corruption policy ineffective.[38] Despite Georgia's significant achievements in recent years, many shortcomings in Georgia's open government processes have been recognized by various international organizations.[39] The European Parliament expressed concerns regarding high-level corruption in its 2017 report on implementation of the European Union–Georgia Association Agreement.[40] The OECD also noted that "elite corruption" is a major challenge in Georgia.[41]

Currently, there are three major anti-corruption governmental institutions in Georgia: the Intergovernmental Anti-Corruption Council (ACC), a division of the Criminal Prosecution of Corruption Crimes under the Chief Prosecutor's Office, and the Anti-Corruption Agency of the State Security Service of Georgia. The ACC[42] is a consultative body under the MoJ consisting of state agencies, civil society, international organizations, municipalities, and businesses. It is responsible for the development of anti-corruption policies. The Criminal Prosecution Office Division and Anti-Corruption Agency of the State Security Service perform investigative and prosecution procedures.

However, civil society in Georgia argues that the current anti-corruption setup does not provide effective mechanisms for fighting and preventing high-level corruption. The spreading of anti-corruption functions among three government bodies does not ensure a proper level of independence and does not reflect a mandate for fighting the elite corruption that still remains a challenge in the country. Accordingly, civil society strongly advocated the creation of an independent anti-corruption agency that could provide more guarantees for combating high-level corruption. However, the government argued that anti-corruption institutions have been performing well and there is no need to establish a separate independent agency. The contradictory views negatively affected the development process for the fourth action plan.

According to the four OGP core eligibility criteria, Georgia received the maximum number of points— four out of four—in fiscal transparency,[43] access to information,[44] [45] and disclosure of public officials' assets.[46] Georgia received three of four points in citizen engagement, the fourth core eligibility criteria. This criterion entails the level of openness to citizen participation and engagement in policy making and governance, including basic protections for civil liberties.[47] [48]

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III. Leadership and Multi-stakeholder Process

To develop Georgia's fourth action plan, the Ministry of Justice and Parliament conducted nationwide public consultations in 11 cities, with 800 individuals attending overall. Disagreement in the multi-stakeholder forum over the elaboration of the action plan led key civil society members to leave the forum. The fourth action plan saw the inclusion of Open Parliament commitments through consultations led by the Open Governance Permanent Parliamentary Council. In 2019, the national OGP Forum secretariat transferred from the Ministry of Justice to the Administration of the Government of Georgia.

3.1 Leadership

This subsection describes the OGP leadership and institutional context for OGP in Georgia. Georgia is a parliamentary democracy with power separated among the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government. Georgia's national OGP action plans have included commitments regarding all three branches of the government.

When Georgia joined OGP in 2011, the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) led the OGP process. Within the MoJ, the Analytical Department served as the Open Government secretariat in Georgia. The department coordinated the development and implementation of Georgia's first three action plans, as well as the development of the fourth plan (2018–2019). In 2019, the Administration of the Government of Georgia (AoG) took over the leading role to coordinate OGP on the national level and at the OGP international Steering Committee. Currently, the Policy Analysis, Strategic Planning and Coordination Department of the AoG serves as OGP nationwide coordination unit. This change in OGP leadership from the MoJ to AoG enabled higher-level government representation in the OGP process. When the MoJ led the OGP process, the prime minister of Georgia was not directly involved. With the transfer of OGP leadership to AoG, the Prime Minister Chief of Staff now serves as the OGP point of contact, which ensures the prime minister's direct involvement in the process.

No separate budget is allocated for OGP. However, projected state expenditures are incorporated in the existing programs in the state budget. The fourth action plan provides information about the estimated expenditures for each commitment, as well as sources of funding, such as donor funds or state budgets.[1] The total costs are estimated only for those commitments financially supported by donor funds. After the transfer of OGP leadership from MoJ to AoG in 2019, AoG created a dedicated Public Administration Unit responsible for OGP and public administration reform under the Policy Analysis, Strategic Planning and Coordination Department. The Unit currently has four staff members.[2]

During the first two action plan cycles, the national OGP process was mainly driven by ministries and independent agencies, with some commitments for the judiciary. In the third action plan, participation expanded to local government bodies in the municipalities of Akhaltsikhe, Batumi, Kutaisi, Ozurgeti, and Zugdidi.[3] The number of municipalities expanded to 11 in fourth action plan. Notably, the capital and largest city, Tbilisi, has participated in the OGP Local Program since 2016.

Outside of OGP, the Parliament of Georgia has developed and implemented two Open Parliament action plans since 2015. These plans had been developed in the framework of the Declaration on Parliamentary Openness.[4] These action plans have not been part of the OGP action plan. Rather, Parliament led separate co-creation and implementation processes. With the order of the Parliament chairperson, the parliamentary coordination unit, the Open Governance Permanent Parliamentary Council,[5] was established in December 2015. The Council's creation is based on the Inter-faction working group principle. The Council comprises 12 members, including the chairperson of the Parliament, seven members from the majority party in Parliament, two from the minority party, and two from other parties.[6] The Parliament of Georgia had not allocated a separate budget or staff for OGP-related activities prior to the action plan's development. However, under the new Rule of Procedures, one of the staff members is dedicated to working on OGP. The estimated expenditures are incorporated into existing programs under the state budget or funded by donors.

The action plan is approved by government decree, which ensures the OGP process is legally binding and enforceable.[7] However, the Open Parliament action plan is approved by the Bureau of the

Parliament, which is the main decision-making body in Parliament.[8] After Bureau approval, the Open Parliament action plan is added into the national action plan, and this combined action plan is then approved by government decree.

3.2 Multi-stakeholder process throughout action plan development

In 2017, OGP adopted the OGP Participation and Co-Creation Standards intended to support participation and co-creation by civil society at all stages of the OGP cycle. All OGP-participating countries are expected to meet these standards. The standards aim to raise ambition and quality of participation during development, implementation, and review of OGP action plans.

OGP's Articles of Governance also establish participation and co-creation requirements a country or entity must meet in their action plan development and implementation to act according to OGP process. Georgia **did not** act contrary to OGP process.[9]

Please see Annex I for an overview of Georgia's performance implementing the Co-Creation and Participation Standards throughout the action plan development.

Table 3.2. Level of Public Influence

The IRM has adapted the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) "Spectrum of Participation" to apply to OGP.[10] This spectrum shows the potential level of public influence on the contents of the action plan. In the spirit of OGP, most countries should aspire for "collaborate."

Level of public influence		During development of action plan
Empower	The government handed decision-making power to members of the public.	
Collaborate	There was iterative dialogue AND the public helped set the agenda.	
Involve	The government gave feedback on how public inputs were considered.	✔
Consult	The public could give inputs.	
Inform	The government provided the public with information on the action plan.	
No Consultation	No consultation	

Multi-stakeholder forum

In 2012, the Government of Georgia created a forum as a coordination mechanism for OGP activities.[11] In 2014, the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) reorganized this forum, now called Open Government Forum. The Forum has been approved by the government as a multi-stakeholder structure and is co-chaired by one government representative and one civil society representative (currently Transparency International Georgia). The government also adopted the formal procedures (Guiding Principles) of the Forum.[12]

At the start of the fourth action plan's development, the Open Government Forum comprised 111 members representing 55 organizations, including public agencies, local government, Parliament, the judiciary branch, local civil society organizations (CSOs), and international organizations. The CSOs on the Forum represent prominent organizations working in the areas of transparency and accountability, such as the Institute for Development of Freedom of Information, Transparency International–Georgia, Open Society Georgia Foundation (OSGF), and Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (GYLA). It should

be noted that the Forum does not include nongovernmental organizations with specific thematic expertise for some policy areas covered under the action plan.

Within the MoJ leadership, the Forum met once every two months, in the MoJ building in Tbilisi. While the Forum has no rules to ensure the gender balance of its members, in practice, there is a balance. In contrast to their availability for the first two action plans, the meeting minutes for the development of the third and fourth action plans are not publicly available on the MoJ website.

The Forum's Guiding Principles[13] do not specify the formal procedures for the Forum's decision-making process. In practice, decisions are made by a majority vote of present members. According to an interviewed GYLA representative,[14] the majority voting system is problematic, because CSOs are outnumbered in the Forum. Thus, even if a majority of CSOs on the Forum do not endorse the action plan, the Forum can approve the plan, as the government representation outnumbers that of CSOs. Since the Administration of the Government of Georgia took over OGP coordination, it has pledged to update the Forum's procedures and Guiding Principles and to expand the Forum's role as the decision-making mechanism.[15]

CSOs also noted that government agencies in the Forum are mostly represented by mid-level civil servants who lack decision-making authority.[16] This limits the scope of decisions government representatives can make on behalf of their agencies without first consulting their superiors, making the process inefficient. In the absence of another mechanism to engage high-level decision makers at the ministerial or deputy ministerial level, it is difficult to include topics in the action plans that need higher political buy-in from the government.

Parliament has a separate multi-stakeholder forum called the Open Governance Permanent Parliamentary Council. The Council has 12 Parliamentarians and is assisted by the multi-stakeholder Consultation Group, which consists of 17 international and local organizations.[17] The Consultation Group[18] provides feedback and recommendations during the parliamentary action plan development. The group also monitors implementation of the Open Parliament commitments. Participation is open, and CSOs are encouraged to engage in the process, though interested parties must submit a statement of interest and their reasoning to the Council in writing.[19] The Consultation Group plays an advisory role and has the opportunity to actively participate in the final decision-making process.[20] Following the quarterly in-person Council and Consultation Group meetings, the Council regularly publishes notes, minutes, and/or proceedings on the Parliament's website.[21] By doing this, Parliament updates civil society members on the progress of OGP-related activities and generates discussion between Parliament and civil society.

Participation and engagement throughout action plan development

Georgia's co-creation process reached "involve" for the level of public influence. This rating was lower than that for the previous action plan's process (which reached "collaborate"). During the development of the fourth action plan, the OGP Forum served as the main mechanism for stakeholder participation and engagement. As stated by the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) representative, during the elaboration of the action plan, participation was open. The government provided opportunities for any interested stakeholders to engage in the action plan development process.[22]

The MoJ, with the support of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Good Governance Initiative (GGI), conducted nationwide public consultations for the fourth action plan. Between April and May 2018, 13 public consultation meetings were held in 10 cities,[23] with nearly 500 individuals in attendance. The major parties involved in the OGP delegation included the MoJ, civil society organizations (CSOs), and donor organizations.[24] While the composition of the OGP delegation varied from one meeting to another, at least one government representative and one civil society representative participated in each meeting.

The information about the prospective meetings, along with background information on OGP, was disseminated publicly in advance, with the help of the Centers for Civic Engagement (CCE).[25] CCE also encouraged the participation of local nongovernmental organizations, academia, and other interested stakeholders.[26] According to USAID GGI, local participants were encouraged to voice their ideas and

recommendations on how to improve good governance at the local level during the in-person meeting, by email, or the online link "OGP Idea," available on the MoJ website.[27] Mutual efforts of the Government of Georgia (GoG) and USAID GGI finally resulted in an increased number of municipalities involved in the OGP process, from five in the previous action plan to 11 in the current plan.[28]

Overall, participating civil society stakeholders identified several shortcomings in the co-creation process. For example, CSOs reported that the secretariat did not present a summary report on suggestions and ideas that surfaced during the public consultations. Civil society also noted that the MoJ did not explain which commitments in the final action plan, if any, were identified as a result of the nationwide public consultations.[29] According to the Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI), the commitments were discussed only between the MoJ's Analytical Department and responsible agencies. The draft commitments were shared with CSOs only one day prior to the 29 June 2018 Forum meeting thus leaving limited time for CSOs to provide meaningful feedback on the draft commitments.

Since Georgia's participation in OGP, the OGP Forum has served as an important mechanism for consultations and co-creation. However, the consultation process for the fourth action plan was assessed as a "different experience" compared to the previous action plan's development.[30] CSOs criticized the procedure to develop the fourth action plan as well as the government's lack of response to civil society proposals. Interviewed CSO representatives noted that the process seemed "very tense" and that the government was "unwilling to compromise."[31]

In addition, CSOs argued that the action plan lacks ambitious and innovative commitments for Georgia's year as OGP co-chair.[32] In July 2018, Forum CSOs addressed the prime minister of Georgia regarding challenges related to the process.[33] These developments coincided with civil society's growing dissatisfaction with the government and concerns related to reported cases of high-level corruption and risks to democratic institutions in the country.[34] Following dissatisfaction over the government's response to the joint letter to the prime minister, CSOs officially withdrew from the Forum and requested that OGP activate a Rapid Response Mechanism in November 2018.[35] After public statements were made by the MoJ and CSOs,[36] the prime minister of Georgia wrote a letter addressed to OGP's chief executive officer promising to, in close cooperation with the OGP Support Unit, the Parliament of Georgia, and international organizations, take remedial actions to restore the dialogue with civil society.[37]

The government's reasoning for the shortened time frame for developing the action plan involved the country's tasks hosting the OGP Global Summit in Tbilisi 17–19 July 2018. Because the country was co-chair, it was important to the government to submit its action plan prior to the Summit.[38] Nevertheless, according to a former IDFI representative,[39] Georgia's commitments in the adopted action plan were unambitious.

Eventually, to reinvigorate the OGP process, the decision was made to transfer Forum secretariat functions to the Administration of the Government of Georgia (AoG) under the prime minister of Georgia. CSOs on the Forum considered this decision an improvement to the government's commitment to cooperate on OGP.

As stated by an interviewed representative of the Georgian Young Lawyers' Association, the process showed that the government was preconditioned to dismiss civil society initiatives. According to an interviewed CSO representative, the government rejected initiatives verbally and showed no attempt to compromise.[40] Some CSO proposals were included as commitments, such as Commitment 10 (increasing the transparency of the Ministry of Internal Affairs) and Commitment 14 (developing a housing policy document and action plan). However, the government rejected all initiatives proposed by IDFI. An Open Society Georgia Foundation representative pointed out that three out of their six proposals were declined, with the government justifying the rejections verbally during the meetings.[41] Furthermore, the government declined the joint initiative to establish an independent anti-corruption agency, even though it was supported by all active CSO members in the Forum.[42] Civil society argued that since Georgia had prioritized increasing transparency and fighting corruption and was the OGP co-chair,[43] a new anti-corruption agency provided an opportunity for Georgia to lead by example. However, the government rejected this proposal. It argued that existing anti-corruption institutions had

been performing well and there was no need to establish a new independent agency.[44] To acknowledge persisting civil society concerns, the GoG included a commitment to strengthen existing anti-corruption institutions (Commitment 6). However, this commitment was not endorsed by civil society.

Civil society representatives interviewed for this report argued that since the government rejected all major CSO initiatives and submitted the action plan without civil society's endorsement, the GoG did not adequately follow OGP's co-creation recommendations or requirements.[45] Furthermore, according to an interviewed Transparency International–Georgia representative, after CSOs withdrew from the Forum, instead of trying to reach consensus with them, the government invited other nonprofit organizations to join, to retain the legitimacy of the Forum.[46]

The Open Parliament action plan was co-created in a separate process from the rest of the action plan. The Open Governance Permanent Parliamentary Council and its Consultation Group ensured active engagement and participation throughout the process. The charter of the Open Governance Permanent Parliamentary Council clearly lays out all the formal procedures.[47] The consultation process was carried out in March and April 2018 in seven municipalities,[48] with over 300 participants representing local government, civil society, the private sector,[49] academia, youth,[50] and media. The consultation was conducted by the Parliament of Georgia, with the support of the European Union, the United Nations Development Programme, and IDFI. Based on the results of the consultations, the Parliament of Georgia, together with its Consultative Group, developed a draft action plan. Parliament broadly discussed this plan at a two-day meeting in Borjomi (13–14 April 2018)[51] arranged for finalization and final endorsement.

The final Open Parliament action plan includes five commitments with 37 milestones, four of which were proposed by citizens. According to participating stakeholders, the Open Parliament action plan was developed in a highly collaborative manner that was well aligned with OGP principles.

Co-creation and participation recommendations throughout development
Georgia showed evidence of achievement and strong performance in areas of stakeholder and public outreach during the development of the fourth action plan. For example:

- The Ministry of Justice (MoJ), with support of the USAID Good Governance Initiative, engaged the Centers for Civic Engagement in regions outside the capital to disseminate information about prospective meetings, along with information about OGP.

- Outreach activities by the MoJ and Parliament to develop the national action plan and Open Parliament action plan combined covered 11 cities[52] and over 800 participants nationwide.

- Regional outreach and cooperation with municipalities resulted in an increased number of municipalities, from five in the previous action plan to 11 in the current plan.

Some areas where Georgia can improve include the Open Government Forum's mandate, composition, and way of working during action plan development. To improve performance on these areas the IRM researcher suggests that moving forward, the following actions be taken:

- The Administration of the Government of Georgia (AoG) could develop new, transparent procedures for involving new members in the Open Government Forum. It could also integrate these procedures into the Forum's Guideline Principles.

- AoG could maximize its efforts to map and invite different stakeholders, such as civil society organizations, academia, the private sector, youth, and regional organizations. It could also map and invite nonprofits with targeted thematic expertise. This outreach could bring more diverse perspectives to the co-creation process, facilitate the inclusion of bottom-up initiatives, increase the scope of participation, and raise awareness about OGP nationwide.

- The Forum could ensure collaboration on both working and representative levels. This could be achieved by establishing thematic working groups aligned with OGP policy challenge areas.

These groups would cooperate on a regular basis through various working channels but also maintain high-level representation during regular Forum meetings.

- The Forum should establish formal procedures for taking meeting minutes and integrate those procedures into its Guiding Principles. Such rules could be useful for tracking action plan development and implementation.

- The Forum could develop clear rules for voting on an action plan and put them in its Guiding Principles to ensure indorsement of the plan from government and civil society organizations.

- The Forum could develop guidelines on dissemination of information. They could lay out the rules for publishing information about the key stages, concepts, deadlines, consultation events, and procedures for the development process. The guidelines could also cover the publishing of progress updates on the development of the action plan, including the draft commitments and meeting minutes. In addition, those guidelines could outline rules for publishing overviews of public and civil society contributions and government' responses, among other elements.

- AoG could ensure that civil society is involved in the process and is enabled to set the agenda by selecting thematic priorities, identifying problems and priorities, and suggesting specific commitments.

- AoG should publish a draft action plan for additional public comments, reflections, and input.

- AoG should create an official online repository that will accumulate all open government initiatives and activities in one easy-to-access and user-friendly interface for government, Parliament, and municipalities. The repository should be updated on a regular basis. When this report was being written, AoG was in the process of developing the online repository.

- Finally, AoG could develop an OGP communication strategy and conduct a nation-wide public awareness campaign to raise the visibility of the commitments that have been and are currently being implemented within OGP action plans. For that purpose, AoG could review and give new impetus to an OGP communications strategy developed with the USAID GGI support back in 2017.

[1] Open Government Partnership, "Georgia National Action Plan 2018–2019," https://bit.ly/2XLXiju.

[2] Nino Sarishvili, Head of Policy Analysis, Strategic Planning and Coordination Department, and Ketevan Tsanava, Senior Policy Adviser at Administration of the Government of Georgia, interview with IRM researcher, 16 April 2019.

[3] Open Government Partnership, *IRM: Georgia Progress Report 2016–2017,* https://bit.ly/2XKZWpP.

[4] Parliament of Georgia, "Declaration on Parliamentary Openness," July 2019, https://bit.ly/2GhLRtU.

[5] Parliament of Georgia, "Decrees of the Chairperson of the Parliament (Rules of Procedure of the Parliament of Georgia, Article 283)," https://bit.ly/2JPZt0D.

[6] Parliament of Georgia, "Charter of the Open Governance Permanent Parliamentary Council (28.05.2018 №121/3)," https://bit.ly/2PgLrdh.

[7] "Open Government National Action Plan, 2018–2019," https://bit.ly/2JNE87P.

[8] Parliament of Georgia, "Charter of the Open Governance Permanent Parliamentary Council (28.05.2018 №121/3)," https://bit.ly/2PgLrdh.

[9] Acting Contrary to Process = Country did not meet (1) "involve" during the development or "inform" during implementation of the NAP, and (2) government fails to collect, publish, and document a repository on the national OGP website/webpage in line with IRM guidance.

[10] "IAP2's Public Participation Spectrum," IAP2, 2014, https://bit.ly/2WhwyIE.

[11] Open Government Partnership, *IRM Georgia Progress Report 2016–2017*, https://bit.ly/2XKZWpP.

[12] Ministry of Justice, Georgia OGP Forum, *Guiding Principles*, http://bit.ly/1xnGePV.

[13] Ministry of Justice, Georgia OGP Forum, *Guiding Principles*, http://bit.ly/1xnGePV.

[14] Sagaradze, Interview, May 2019.

[15] Ketevan Tsanava, Senior Policy Adviser at Administration of the Government of Georgia, Nino Sarishvili, Head of Policy Analysis, Strategic Planning and Coordination Department, interview with IRM researcher, April 2019.

[16] Anano Tsintsabadze, Participatory Democracy Program project coordinator, Open Society Georgia Foundation, interview with IRM researcher, 15 May 2019.

[17] Parliament of Georgia, "The Consultative Group," 17 July 2019, https://bit.ly/2XSgY5r.

[18] Parliament of Georgia, "Charter of the Open Governance Permanent Parliamentary Council (28.05.2018 №121/3)," https://bit.ly/2PgLrdh.

[19] Parliament of Georgia, "Charter of the Open Governance Permanent Parliamentary Council (28.05.2018 №121/3)," https://bit.ly/2PgLrdh.

[20] Irina Pruidze, Chairperson of the Open Governance Permanent Parliamentary Council, interview with IRM researcher, 22 April 2019.

[21] Parliament of Georgia, "Minutes of the Council Meetings" (available in Georgian), https://bit.ly/2JPa4Jj.

[22] Zurab Sanikidze, Head of the Analytical Department of the Ministry of Justice of Georgia, interview with IRM researcher, 3 May 2019.

[23] Tbilisi, Mtskheta, Rustavi, Telavi, Gori, Akhaltsikhe, Batumi, Ozurgeti, Zugdidi, and Kutaisi.

[24] Ministry of Justice of Georgia, Data Exchange Agency, State Audit Office, IDFI, GYLA, TI–Georgia, Rustavi City Hall, USAID, and USAID GGI.

[25] Centers for Civic Engagement, http://cce.ge/.

[26] Mariam Gorgadze, Deputy Chief of Party and Mikheil Darchiashvili, Governance Manager at USAID Georgia Good Governance Initiative, interview with IRM researcher, 14 May 2019.

[27] Tbilisi, Mtskheta, Rustavi, Telavi, Gori, Akhaltsikhe, Batumi, Ozurgeti, Zugdidi, and Kutaisi.

[28] Mariam Gorgadze, Deputy Chief of Party and Mikheil Darchiashvili, Governance Manager at USAID Georgia Good Governance Initiative, interview with IRM researcher, May 2019.

[29] Institute for Development of Freedom of Information, "IDFI's Assessment of the Open Government Partnership (OGP) National Action Plan for 2018–2019, Georgia, 2018," https://bit.ly/2uukwOt.

[30] Open Government Partnership, *IRM Georgia End-of-Term Report 2016–2018*, https://bit.ly/2XN8Oix.

[31] Salome Sagaradze, Project Coordinator, Georgian Young Lawyers' Association, interview with IRM researcher, 17 May 2019.

[32] IDFI, "IDFI's Assessment of the Open Government Partnership (OGP) National Action Plan for 2018–2019," https://bit.ly/2uukwOt.

[33] The statement of the CSO members of multi-stakeholder forum can be found at IDFI, "Address of the Open Government Georgia's Forum Members NGOs to the Prime-Minister of Georgia," 13 July 2018, https://bit.ly/2Li5xP6.

[34] Major Georgian NGOs joint statement: Transparency International–Georgia, "Informal Rule Has Triggered Crisis of Democratic Institutions," 1 October 2018, https://bit.ly/2ReWa62.

[35] *Request for the Activation of the Rapid Response Mechanism from the Civil Society Members of the Open Government Georgia's Forum*, 1 November 2018, https://bit.ly/2M5uGzN.

[36] *Letter of the Government of Georgia in Response of the Request by the Civil Society members of the Open Government Georgia's Forum for the Activation of the Rapid Response Mechanism*, 8 November 2018, https://bit.ly/2O38qsN. Civil society's response to the government, dated 12 November 2018, can be found at https://bit.ly/2LVCuDX.

[37] The Government of Georgia's follow-up letter, dated 20 November 2019, can be found at https://bit.ly/2xN86DA.

[38] Zurab Sanikidze, Head of the Analytical Department of the Ministry of Justice of Georgia, interview with IRM researcher, 3 May 2019.

[39] Saba Buadze, former Anti-Corruption Direction Lead, Institute for Development of Freedom of Information, interview with IRM researcher, 22 May 2019.

[40] Salome Sagaradze, Project Coordinator, Georgian Young Lawyers' Association, interview with IRM researcher, 17 May 2019.

[41] Anano Tsintsabadze, Participatory Democracy Program project coordinator, Open Society Georgia Foundation, interview with IRM researcher, 15 May 2019.

[42] Institute for Development of Freedom of Information, "IDFI's Assessment of the Open Government Partnership (OGP) National Action Plan for 2018–2019," 13 July 2018, https://bit.ly/2uukwOt.

[43] Open Government Partnership, "Georgia and Mukelani Dimba Co-chair Vision for the Open Government Partnership, October 2017–October, 2018," 18 July 2018, https://bit.ly/36Yyycl

[44] Zurab Sanikidze, Head of the Analytical Department of the Ministry of Justice of Georgia, interview with the IRM researcher, 3 May 2019.

[45] *Request for the Activation of the Rapid Response Mechanism from the Civil Society Members of the Open Government Georgia's Forum*, 1 November 2018, https://bit.ly/2M5uGzN.

[46] Giorgi Oniani, Deputy Executive Director at Transparency International–Georgia, interview with the IRM researcher, 30 May 2019.

[47] Parliament of Georgia, "Regulation of the Standing Parliamentary Council on Open Government (28.05.2018 №121/3)," https://bit.ly/2PgLrdh.

[48] Telavi, Rustavi, Marneuli, Akhaltsikhe, Kutaisi, Batumi, and Tbilisi.

[49] IDFI, "Parliament of Georgia and Private Sector Discussed Commitments for Parliamentary Openness in Georgia," July 2019, https://bit.ly/2GskbF7.

[50] IDFI, "Meeting with Students to Talk about OGP," 10 May 2018, https://bit.ly/2Z5Rlzs.

[51] IDFI, "Promoting Citizen Involvement in Parliamentary Openness: Information Campaign for Elaborating the 2018–2019 Action Plans Has Ended," 20 April 2018, https://bit.ly/2jt2VSa.

[52] These cities include Mtskheta, Gori, Ozurgeti, Zugdidi, Telavi, Rustavi, Marneuli, Akhaltsikhe, Kutaisi, Batumi, and Tbilisi.

IV. Commitments

All OGP-participating governments develop OGP action plans that include concrete commitments over a two-year period. Governments begin their OGP action plans by sharing existing efforts related to open government, including specific strategies and ongoing programs.

Commitments should be appropriate to each country's/entity's unique circumstances and challenges. OGP commitments should also be relevant to OGP values laid out in the OGP Articles of Governance and Open Government Declaration signed by all OGP-participating countries.[1] The indicators and method used in the IRM research can be found in the IRM Procedures Manual.[2] A summary of key indicators the IRM assesses is below:

- **Verifiability:**
  - Not specific enough to verify: As written in the commitment, do the objectives stated and actions proposed lack sufficient clarity and specificity for their completion to be objectively verified through a subsequent assessment process?
  - Specific enough to verify: As written in the commitment, are the objectives stated and actions proposed sufficiently clear and specific to allow for their completion to be objectively verified through a subsequent assessment process?
- **Relevance:** This variable evaluates the commitment's relevance to OGP values. Based on a close reading of the commitment text as stated in the action plan, the guiding questions to determine the relevance are:
  - **Access to Information**: Will the government disclose more information or improve the quality of the information disclosed to the public?
  - **Civic Participation**: Will the government create or improve opportunities or capabilities for the public to inform or influence decisions or policies?
  - **Public Accountability**: Will the government create or improve public facing opportunities to hold officials answerable for their actions?
  - **Technology & Innovation for Transparency and Accountability**: Will technological innovation be used in conjunction with one of the other three OGP values to advance either transparency or accountability?
- **Potential impact:** This variable assesses the *potential impact* of the commitment, if completed as written. The IRM researcher uses the text from the action plan to:
  - Identify the social, economic, political, or environmental problem;
  - Establish the status quo at the outset of the action plan; and
  - Assess the degree to which the commitment, if implemented, would impact performance and tackle the problem.
- **Completion:** This variable assesses the commitment's implementation and progress. This variable is assessed at the end of the action plan cycle, in the *IRM Implementation Report.*
- **Did It Open Government?:** This variable attempts to move beyond measuring outputs and deliverables to looking at how the government practice, in areas relevant to OGP values, has changed as a result of the commitment's implementation. This variable is assessed at the end of the action plan cycle, in the *IRM Implementation Report.*

What makes a potentially starred commitment?

A potentially starred commitment has more potential to be ambitious and to be implemented. A good commitment is one that clearly describes the:

1. **Problem:** What is the economic, social, political, or environmental problem? Rather than describing an administrative issue or tool (e.g., 'Misallocation of welfare funds' is more helpful than 'lacking a website.').
2. **Status quo:** What is the status quo of the policy issue at the beginning of an action plan (e.g., "26 percent of judicial corruption complaints are not processed currently.")?
3. **Change:** Rather than stating intermediary outputs, what is the targeted behavior change that is expected from the commitment's implementation (e.g., "Doubling response rates to information requests" is a stronger goal than "publishing a protocol for response.")?

Starred commitments

One measure, the "starred commitment" (✪), deserves further explanation due to its particular interest to readers and usefulness for encouraging a race to the top among OGP-participating countries/entities. Starred commitments are considered exemplary OGP commitments. To receive a star, a commitment must meet several criteria:

- Potential star: the commitment's design should be **verifiable**, **relevant** to OGP values, and have **transformative** potential impact.
- The government must make significant progress on this commitment during the action plan implementation period, receiving an assessment of **Substantial** or **Complete** implementation.

This variable is assessed at the end of the action plan cycle, in the *IRM Implementation Report*.

General Overview of the Commitments

Georgia's fourth action plan for 2018–2019 includes 28 commitments developed by the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government. The action plan brings together 15 commitments from government agencies and eight from 11 municipal self-governments. The commitments focus on five key areas: 1) improving public services, 2) increasing public integrity, 3) more effectively managing public resources, 4) creating safe communities, and 5) increasing corporate accountability. The Open Parliament commitments respond to the challenges of 1) improving public services and 2) improving citizen engagement.

The English and Georgian versions of Georgia's fourth action plan included different start and end dates for several commitments. For this Design Report, the IRM has maintained the dates provided in the English version of the action plan.

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[1] Open Government Partnership, "Open Government Partnership: Articles of Governance," June 2012 (updated March 2014 and April 2015), https://www.opengovpartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/OGP_Articles-Gov_Apr-21-2015.pdf.
[2] "IRM Procedures Manual," OGP, https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/irm-procedures-manual.

Theme 1: Improving Public Services

Commitment 1: Improved Public Services for All

Language of the commitment as it appears in the action plan:

"The LEPL Public Service Hall (PSH) is aimed at increasing and simplifying access of citizens to public services. The PSH is the largest supplier of public services in Georgia. Therefore, hundreds of persons with disabilities (PWDS) make use of its services annually, throughout the country. In spite of improvement of the quality of servicing the persons with disabilities, they still face definite challenges in this process.

In order to cope with these challenges, it is necessary that:

- The PSH would develop clear-cut procedures for its personnel in connection with servicing the PWDS
- The skills and competences of the PSH personnel would improve

Within the framework of this Plan and with the direct participation of PWDS, a quality standard of serving PWDS, gesture language tutorial will be developed.

By meeting this commitment, the PSH will become the first public institution in Georgia having introduced the standard of serving the PWDS.

It is noteworthy that the language of gestures lacks denotations of the specific terminology used in public structures when providing public services. Additionally, the lack of standards and guides conditions low competence of the personnel of public service providers, which constitutes a serious barrier for PWDS."

Milestones
1. Study of needs (with direct participation of PWDS in the focus group and round table format)
2. Developing for PWDS a standard of serving tutorial
3. (1) Developing in the course of serving PWDS a training module suited to their needs; (2) Conduct of training trainers and other training courses for the PSH personnel
4. Development of necessary terminology in the language of gestures for communicating with public institutions and a relevant tutorial for PWDS and the PSH personnel
5. Personnel retraining for mastering the language of gestures
6. Raising awareness of the public, particularly of PWDS and their family members about the services adapted to PWDS available in the PSH

Start Date: June 2018
End Date: December 2018

Editorial note: For the full text of this commitment, please see https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/georgia-action-plan-2018-2019/.

Commitment Overview	Verifiability		OGP Value Relevance (as written)				Potential Impact				Completion				Did It Open Government?				
	Not specific enough to be verifiable	Specific enough to be verifiable	Access to Information	Civic Participation	Public Accountability	Technology & Innovation for Transparency & Accountability	None	Minor	Moderate	Transformative	Not Started	Limited	Substantial	Completed	Worsened	Did Not Change	Marginal	Major	Outstanding

1. Overall		✔		✔			✔		Assessed at the end of action plan cycle.	Assessed at the end of action plan cycle.

Context and Objectives

Persons with disabilities (PWDs) in Georgia, particularly citizens who are blind and visually impaired or deaf and hard of hearing, often face challenges accessing public services. According to recent civil society reports, public spaces, government buildings, and public transportation are often not adapted to the needs of PWDs.[1] Moreover, there is limited information about available services for PWDs.[2][3]

This commitment continues the aims of Commitment 1 from Georgia's third action plan (2016–2017). That commitment required Public Service Hall (PSH) to add special navigation systems with tactile paths and braille maps to its buildings.[4] This current commitment aims to further improve PSH's service delivery to PWDs by developing a specific service-related terminology guide in consultation with PWDs and through focus groups. It also calls for PSH personnel to be trained in accordance with the new guidelines. The commitment seeks to raise the quality of service delivery and raise awareness about available services among PWDs and their families.

For Milestone 1, the government will conduct a needs assessment through focus groups and roundtable discussions with PWDs, to collect data to improve services. This element makes the commitment relevant to the OGP value of civic participation. The milestones are verifiable. The action plan provides specific indicators for the activities, such as the number of focus groups to be held and the number of PSH employees to be trained.

If fully implemented, this commitment could lead to PWDs-specific service standard guidelines. It would create a sign language handbook and improve the competence of PSH personnel regarding provision of services to PWDs. Interviewed civil society representatives, PWDs, and focus group participants unanimously told the IRM researcher that these activities could improve existing accessibility standards in the country. For example, according to an interviewed representative from ANIKA, a leading Georgian nongovernmental organization serving PWDs,[5] this commitment could help PWDs to access public services more independently. Such independence is essential for their integration into their communities.[6]

PSH provides access to 400 public and private sector services through 22 branches nationwide. If this commitment is fully implemented, PSH would become the first government agency in Georgia to develop and incorporate a PWDs-specific service methodology into the service delivery in its nationwide branches.[7] According to the action plan, Georgia currently lacks unified guidelines on PWDs-specific standards across all service providers. Therefore, PSH's efforts for this commitment might provide a valuable example for other service providers in the country. However, the action plan does not specify if the planned PSH activities might be mainstreamed in all the relevant state policies and programs across the country. Therefore, the overall potential impact is considered minor.

Next steps

If the government carries this commitment forward to the next action plan, the IRM researcher recommends strengthening its link to OGP values by conducting a more extensive needs assessment, with the broader coverage. The next needs assessment would incorporate more quantitative measures and involve all relevant stakeholders, persons with disabilities (PWDs), and their family members. This assessment could help better plan and prioritize the improvement of service delivery. It could also help form a unified approach to service delivery standards for PWDs statewide.

ANIKA recommends that the government continue working on the permanent improvement of accessibility by adapting infrastructure to ensure safe access to public services. Thus far, special navigation systems with tactile paths and braille maps have been built in PSH facilities as part of the 2016–2017 action plan. However, these facilities still lack fully functioning voice-assisted navigation systems. Thus, ANIKA recommends integrating a voice-assistance module into the entire navigation

system. This change would drastically improve the ability of PWDs to access public services independently.[8]

[1] Institute for Development of Freedom of Information, "Analysis of Statistics on Persons with Disabilities," 16 March 2018, https://bit.ly/2pfTrMo.

[2] Public Service Hall, *Guidelines for Service Delivery for People with Special Needs,* 2018, p. 11, https://bit.ly/2GfaCqS.

[3] Charity Humanitarian Center Abkhazeti, *Barrier Free Environment—Adaptation of Buildings and Infrastructure in Georgia and International Experience,* 2017, https://bit.ly/2Dj0euD.

[4] Open Government Partnership, *IRM: Georgia Progress Report 2016–2018*, https://bit.ly/2XKZWpP.

[5] ANIKA is a local association that works to create equal opportunities and conditions for persons with disabilities, http://anika.ge/?lang=en.

[6] Irakli Seperteladze, Member of Board at ANIKA, interview with the IRM researcher, 6 June 2019.

[7] Irakli Seperteladze, Member of Board at ANIKA, interview with the IRM researcher, 6 June 2019.

[8] Irakli Seperteladze, Member of Board at ANIKA, interview with the IRM researcher, 6 June 2019.

Commitment 2: Innovative Platform for Citizen Engagement

Language of the commitment as it appears in the action plan:

"Within the framework of OGP, the PSH plans to introduce into the Georgian reality a completely new, innovative platform of citizen engagement. The platform's concept is based on the principles of accountability, openness and transparency and implies the engagement of wide public through three different modules in the process of introduction of new services, perfecting the existing ones, making new service delivery channels, and the serving quality improvement.

Citizen participation in the decision-making process shall be ensured by the following modules:
- **Electronic public opinion survey** – the process of implementation of new projects in the PCH shall be based on the electronic survey results. The consumers will select themselves new services and sequence of their introduction in the PSH. Surveys will also be used for planning other important projects.
- **Electronic voting system** – the PSH clientele will be able to assess initiatives received as a result of different feedback channels and studies and vote for the most priority ones. The consumer will be able to lobby any initiative himself/herself and work by the voting process for arising society's interest, for the initiative having gathered a majority of votes will be considered as a priority one;
- **Electronic feedback system** – the consumer will be able to fix feedback without leaving home by using novel technologies. Once entered, the feedback will be reflected in a relevant program and the PSH will be able to promptly respond thereto. Such electronic feedback system will reduce the existing one-month response time to 24 hours.
- **Electronic accounting system** – the openness and transparency of processes will be ensured by a specialized electronic accounting system, which will familiarize any interested person with comprehensive information in relation with any process taking place within the framework of the given project.

The following communication channels will be introduced within the framework of the project:
- **Mobile application** – in any branch of the PSH, on every operator's desktop, QR codes will be installed readable by a mobile application. On completion of assessment, the consumer will be provided with an electronic questionnaire or voting functional, wherein he/she can participate in the case of wish.
- **Web-page application** – the customer will be able to use the PSH platform without leaving home, which shall be integrated on the official web-page of the PSH.
- **Sensor monitors** – any PSH branch will be equipped with sensor monitors, enabling to use the web-platform. Sensor monitors could be freely used by PWDS: the software will be equipped with a sound function; in addition, the equipment will be adapted to blind and visually impaired persons. At that, the sensor monitor-built program will allow the customer leave an auditory message."

Milestones:
1. Development of software for the webpage and mobile application.
2. Purchase of sensor monitors and necessary equipment; initiation of the project.
3. Public informing about the platform.
4. Survey/voting process administration, organizing focus groups, accountability.

Start Date: September 2018
End Date: August 2019

Editorial note: For the full text of this commitment, please see
https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/georgia-action-plan-2018-2019/.

Commitment Overview	Verifiability		OGP Value Relevance (as written)				Potential Impact				Completion				Did It Open Government?				
	Not specific enough to be verifiable	Specific enough to be verifiable	Access to Information	Civic Participation	Public Accountability	Technology & Innovation for Transparency & Accountability	None	Minor	Moderate	Transformative	Not Started	Limited	Substantial	Completed	Worsened	Did Not Change	Marginal	Major	Outstanding
2. Overall		✔	✔	✔		✔		✔			Assessed at the end of action plan cycle.				Assessed at the end of action plan cycle.				

Context and Objectives

This commitment builds on Commitment 2 from Georgia's second action plan (2014–2016).[1] Under that commitment, Public Service Hall (PSH) created a paper-based, standardized form (Voice of the Consumer) for users to provide feedback on the services they received at any PSH facility. Users could check the status of their feedback by contacting a PSH call center. However, when the 2016 *IRM End-of-Term Report* was published, PSH had not launched a campaign to promote this new communication mechanism across the country. At that time, PSH also had not published regular statistics on how many citizens submitted feedback, what the relevant issues were, and what PSH's response was.[2]

The commitment in the current action plan addresses the findings from the 2014–2015 *IRM Progress Report*.[3] The report discussed the need to create an electronic feedback mechanism on PSH services in addition to the paper-based mechanism. Accordingly, this commitment aims to develop and introduce various electronic platforms (web-based, mobile, and sensor monitors) enabling citizens to select, request, and vote for newly proposed services. The platforms would also allow citizens to electronically provide feedback on existing services. Compared to the previous paper-based mechanism, the new e-system will provide a few additional benefits, including

- Reduced response time for PSH Internal Audit Departments (24 hours instead of the 30-day time frame under the paper-based feedback system),
- New electronic mechanisms for the public to leave feedback on PSH services, and
- A special electronic accountability system that entails documenting all the steps taken within this project in the electronic system. This will allow users to receive comprehensive information about implemented activities.

This commitment is relevant to the OGP values of civic participation. It plans to improve opportunities for citizens to have their voices heard on PSH service delivery—for example, they can vote for a specific service to prioritize in the future. The commitment is also relevant to access to information. It would create 1) an electronic feedback system that requires PSH to respond to citizens within 24 hours and 2) an electronic accounting system that ensures that PSH publishes comprehensive information on the implementation process within the framework of this project. The commitment's indicators, as set out in the full text of the commitment, are specific enough to be verified. They include the number of feedbacks expected through the new electronic system in the first six months of the project (500), the number of surveys and focus groups that will be held (three each), and the expected number of survey and focus group participants (5,000).

If fully implemented, this commitment could lead to a minor improvement to PSH's existing feedback mechanisms by creating various electronic platforms and reducing the response time to feedback. It would also build tools for increased public involvement in PSH's decision making regarding service delivery. Furthermore, according to an interviewed representative of the nongovernmental organization ANIKA, the introduction of sensor monitors with sound functions and special built-in systems could help to engage people with disabilities in the process.[4]

This commitment could make it easier for citizens to leave feedback on PSH services and could lead to a better quality of services offered by PSH. However, it remains limited in scope. As stated by a public service expert,[5] it does not envisage tools for citizens to initiate new services. Rather, it focuses on mechanisms to choose between the services that have already been proposed by PSH.

Next steps

If the commitment is carried forward to future action plans, the IRM researcher recommends the following:

- Currently, no formal mechanisms or procedures exist that allow citizens to propose a new service to be delivered to the public.[6] Consequently, the IRM researcher recommends adding a tool that would enable citizens to propose new services. This tool would provide an opportunity to generate new ideas from citizens and increase public participation in service delivery. Later, Public Service Hall (PSH) could transform the ideas into new service opportunities and allow citizens to select, request, vote, and prioritize the introduction of those services, as described in the current commitment.

- While the introduction of sensor monitors is a positive step for PSH in providing feedback opportunities for persons with disabilities, ANIKA recommends that PSH also adapt web and mobile channels for people with special needs. With these tools, people with disabilities could provide feedback with more comfortable and widely used equipment.[7]

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[1] Open Government Partnership, "Georgia National Action Plan 2016–2018," https://bit.ly/2YRRUN7.
[2] Open Government Partnership, *Georgia: 2014–2016 End of Term Report,* p. 20, https://bit.ly/3cLCly1 .
[3] Open Government Partnership, *IRM Progress Report 2014–15: Georgia,* https://bit.ly/2GZI9X5
[4] Irakli Seperteladze, Member of Board at ANIKA, interview with the IRM researcher, 6 June 2019.
[5] Tinatin Kuprashvili, Public Service Expert, interview with the IRM researcher, 18 June 2019.
[6] Focus group discussion, June 2019.
[7] Seperteladze interview, June 2019.

Commitment 3: Increasing Access to Public Services through Introduction of UAS

Language of the commitment as it appears in the action plan:

"The purpose of a Unified Authentication System (UAS) is to give any public (and private in perspective) institution a wide choice of personal identification tools in the online space and to get over thus one of the most serious barriers in the way of their service digitization process. The UAS shall be managed by the Public Service Development Agency, which is the public registry maintenance body in Georgia and has competence for reliable personal identification. In this case, other public institutions will be able to concentrate generally on completion of own databases and online accessibility of the information kept therein and save thus significant resources.

The prevention of unauthorized disclosure of information stored in public databases has different criticality. The UAS will allow public institutions define themselves the critical level of the publishable information and suit accordingly the personal identification difficulty thereto. This will release the user from the necessity of using the card and PIN code for accessing less critical information.

The UAS ensures existence of a reliable and protected online authentication in the country, which will contribute to an increase in accessibility of public services, information openness and simplicity of accessing it, because:
- In all switched on systems (whether private or public), the user will need the same user's name and password or ID card and PIN code (as well as Mobile ID in the future);
- Organizations will easily digitize own services."

Milestones:
1. Launching the UAS in the operating mode and integration with the PSDA share-point or other system of nonpublic use
2. The UAS integration into distant services of the PSDA
3. Preparation and initiation of legislative amendments for delivery of the UAS to other agencies
4. The UAS integration into systems of other organizations

Start Date: June 2018
End Date: December 2019

Editorial note: For the full text of this commitment, please see
https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/georgia-action-plan-2018-2019/.

Commitment Overview	Verifiability		OGP Value Relevance (as written)				Potential Impact				Completion				Did It Open Government?				
	Not specific enough to be verifiable	Specific enough to be verifiable	Access to Information	Civic Participation	Public Accountability	Technology & Innovation for Transparency & Accountability	None	Minor	Moderate	Transformative	Not Started	Limited	Substantial	Completed	Worsened	Did Not Change	Marginal	Major	Outstanding
3. Overall		✔	Unclear					✔			Assessed at the end of action plan cycle.				Assessed at the end of action plan cycle.				

Context and Objectives

With this commitment, Georgia's Public Service Development Agency (SDA) plans to introduce the Unified Authentication System (UAS) into its services. By introducing UAS, SDA aims to address several issues related to delivering public services electronically. For example, the UAS system will allow citizens

to use the same log-in information (username and password) for all government webpages that offer public services. It will also allow citizens to receive online services that otherwise would require an in-person visit (such as the issuance of a passport) or a video call for authentication. For service providers, UAS can help direct their resources on the development of services, rather than having them individually develop and administer authentication systems.

While the development of UAS might improve public service delivery, this commitment is not directly relevant to OGP values. The commitment provides verifiable activities, as well as a clearly stated objective (the development and introduction of UAS nationwide). Although this initiative could improve procedural accessibility to public services, the commitment will likely represent only an incremental improvement to online public service delivery.[1]

Next steps

Although the introduction of UAS might have a positive impact on public service delivery, the IRM researcher does not recommend carrying this commitment forward to future action plans.

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[1] Institute for Development of Freedom of Information, "IDFI's Assessment of the Open Government Partnership (OGP) National Action Plan for 2018–2019," https://bit.ly/2uukwOt.

Commitment 4: Innovative Platform for Economic Governance

Language of the commitment as it appears in the action plan:

"The Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia commits itself to create an interactive portal, which shall ensure maximum engagement of society and the private sector in the economic policy development process, effective decision making, transparency of processes and the business environment predictability growth.

The portal will place:
- Brief description of each economic reform, justification of necessity and international experience;
- Draft laws;
- Reform progress and implemented work;
- Questionnaire to be filled out for fixing an opinion about the reform.

The user will have a possibility:
- To fix own view in connection with the priority of different reforms.
- To present an initiative that could be supported by voting in its favor; in case the issue gains a sufficient number of supporters, it will be considered by the Economic Analysis and Reforms Department under the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development."

Milestones:
1. Interactive web-portal YOU. Conceptual perfection of GOV platform
2. Interactive web-portal YOU. Promotion of platform GOV

Start Date: May 2018
End Date: June 2019

Editorial note: For the full text of this commitment, please see
https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/georgia-action-plan-2018-2019/.

Commitment Overview	Verifiability		OGP Value Relevance (as written)				Potential Impact				Completion				Did It Open Government?				
	Not specific enough to be verifiable	Specific enough to be verifiable	Access to Information	Civic Participation	Public Accountability	Technology & Innovation for Transparency & Accountability	None	Minor	Moderate	Transformative	Not Started	Limited	Substantial	Completed	Worsened	Did Not Change	Marginal	Major	Outstanding
4. Overall		✓	✓	✓		✓		✓			Assessed at the end of action plan cycle.				Assessed at the end of action plan cycle.				

Context and Objectives

With this commitment, the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia (MoESD) aims to consolidate information on economic reforms and processes implemented by MoESD and its subordinate legal entities into a single repository. Currently, information on economic reforms can be found on different webpages of government institutions, such as parliament.ge and economy.ge. However, various other organizations publish economic information relevant to their work. This makes it difficult to acquire comprehensive information about ongoing reforms. The new interactive web portal will include brief descriptions of each economic reform, justification for the reform, international experiences, draft laws, progress updates on reform implementation, and a questionnaire for the public

to provide feedback on the reforms. Additionally, the new web portal will allow citizens to vote and prioritize aspects of economic reform packages. Citizens will also be able to propose initiatives that will be considered by the ministry if they gain enough votes by other users.

By creating this web portal, the ministry plans to ensure access to information and transparency on ongoing and prospective economic reforms that directly link to access to information. It also aims to engage society and the private sector in discussion and decision making through the participation mechanisms. Thus, this commitment is relevant to the OGP values of access to information, civic participation, and technology and innovation for openness and accountability. The commitment clearly explains what kind of information will be placed on the web portal and what participation options users will have, which makes its implementation verifiable. However, it does not explain in detail the intentions of the two milestones.

According to interviewed stakeholders,[1] the interactive portal is a timely step forward, considering that public interest in economic reforms increases each day. The portal might be especially useful in helping the government to receive feedback from citizens who do not represent civil society organizations but are interested in reforms and in providing their viewpoints.

However, as stated during the IRM researcher's focus group discussion,[2] the commitment does not specify how public involvement on the platform will affect the decision-making processes regarding economic reforms. The commitment states that citizen proposals will be "considered" by the Economic Analysis and Reforms Department under the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development. However, the commitment does not explain what this consideration will involve.

Also, the commitment does not specify what mechanisms will be strengthened or created to allow citizens to track the results of their participation in economic policy making. Thus, while the commitment provides tools for participation, it is unclear how the government will ensure that this participation has an actual impact on policy making. Accordingly, the potential impact is considered minor.

Next steps

Based on feedback from stakeholders, and because that this commitment responds to an area of high public interest (economic reforms), the IRM researcher recommends carrying it forward, but with specific improvements in its design:

- Stakeholders recommend developing specific rules and procedures for how the Economic Analysis and Reforms Department will consider public proposals and voting into relevant decision-making processes. Stakeholders also recommend that the government require that citizens be notified that their feedback has been received. Citizens should also be provided a clear, well-reasoned response, in case they have questions and/or clarification is needed.[3] Submissions to the website should be considered by expert working groups, including civil society stakeholders, to ensure wider expert consideration of the proposals. Furthermore, care should be given to ensure that the online proposals function complements—and does not replace—other stakeholder engagement mechanisms.

- The IRM researcher recommends extending the initiative beyond economic reforms to gather all major political-administrative reforms that are of public interest on a single portal. This could boost public interest and participation levels.

- The IRM researcher recommends improving the commitment design by creating a robust awareness-raising and promotional strategy to ensure that citizens are aware of the availability of the you.gov.ge platform and the opportunities it provides. The strategy could entail a massive outreach campaign, active utilization of social media, and other types of awareness-raising activities nationwide.

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[1] IRM researcher's focus group discussion with experts, researchers, and master's students of public administration, 18 June 2019.
[2] Focus group, 18 June 2019.
[3] IRM researcher's focus group discussion with master's students of public administration, 18 June 2019.

Commitment 5: Activation of an Electronic Portal for Meeting the Environmental Assessment Code Requirements

Language of the commitment as it appears in the action plan:

"To fulfill the commitment provided for by the OGP Action Plan for 2016-2017 (Commitment #16), Parliament of Georgia on June 1, 2017 adopted an 'Environmental Assessment Code' (EAC). The Code regulates the decision-making procedure of a competent body concerning implementation of activities having a serious influence on the environment and human health. In addition, the Code has also introduced tools of making different decisions by competent bodies, which are absolutely new for Georgia. These tools will be activated at a stage-by-stage basis in Georgia.

Since the EAC establishes new decision-making rules, the Ministry's purpose is to change approaches and practice and find a technical instrument for full-value introduction of new requirements. Accordingly, within the framework of this plan, the government aims at introducing such technical instrument, which will ensure timely and unimpeded access to information and effective participation of society at all the decision-making stages."

Milestones:
1. Identification the possibilities of creating a new portal or of using the existing portals
2. Correct identification of the information to be placed and functions; the portal structure development
3. Activation of the portal; functional loading
4. State-by-stage placement of taken decision before activation of the portal

Start Date: October 2018
End Date: September 2019

Editorial note: For the full text of this commitment, please see
https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/georgia-action-plan-2018-2019/.

Commitment Overview	Verifiability		OGP Value Relevance (as written)				Potential Impact				Completion				Did It Open Government?				
	Not specific enough to be verifiable	Specific enough to be verifiable	Access to Information	Civic Participation	Public Accountability	Technology & Innovation for Transparency & Accountability	None	Minor	Moderate	Transformative	Not Started	Limited	Substantial	Completed	Worsened	Did Not Change	Marginal	Major	Outstanding
5. Overall		✔	✔	✔		✔			✔		Assessed at the end of action plan cycle.				Assessed at the end of action plan cycle.				

Context and Objectives

This commitment continues the goals of Commitment 16 from Georgia's third action plan (2016–2018).[1] The previous commitment called for the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection of Georgia (MENRP) to adopt the Environmental Assessment Code (EAC). The goal was to bring activities with potential environmental effects under the ministry's regulation. The previous commitment also aimed to inform citizens about and engage them in the decision-making process for approving these projects. By the end of the third action plan (2018), the ministry had adopted the EAC, but civil society noted several shortcomings in the legal norms around the EAC and its practical implementation.[2]

Building on the activities under the previous commitment and following an Open Society Georgia Foundation (OSGF) initiative,[3] this current commitment aims to further improve access to information about and civic participation in the environmental assessment process. More specifically, it calls for

introducing a new web platform for publishing information on the potential environmental impact of planned projects. The new platform will also provide information about the dates and venues for public hearings. The commitment also plans to provide opportunities for citizens to give feedback for each project proposed and thus simplify public involvement in environmental impact assessment processes.[4]

According to OSGF,[5] information by the MENRP on the environment is currently scattered among its different webpages and the webpage of the Environmental Information and Education Center. Accordingly, the information about construction permits and various project proposals is not easily accessible to citizens or environmental organizations. This often results in a public outcry over disorganized construction and development projects.

Therefore, to meet the requirements of the EAC and to ensure public involvement in environmental assessments and decision making, the new platform will allow citizens to easily learn about the environmental impact of government initiatives and the feedback opportunities at earlier stages.

The commitment includes four milestones, namely identification of the need to create a new webpage versus utilizing existing platforms, development of the platform structure and identification of functions and types of information that will be published, gradual placement of the information, and activation of the portal. The commitment is slightly ambiguous in the sequence of activities, outlining "activation of the portal" in Milestone 3 and "stage-by-stage placement of decisions before activation of the portal" in Milestone 4. The commitment does not provide measurable indicators for each planned activity. However, as the planned activities cumulatively entail a tangible product, they are specific enough to be verified.

If fully implemented, the commitment could have a positive practical impact on how the ministry publishes information and engages interested groups, civil society organizations, and citizens in the decision-making process. As stated by an OSGF representative, this commitment might not transform the status quo, but it provides a practical solution to the existing problems. For example, if citizens can easily find out about an unfavorable construction initiative in their neighborhood and object officially on time,[6] this engagement will create legal ground for relevant administrative agencies to react accordingly. Such engagement can also provide legal ground for a court appeal.

The implementation of this commitment could also mitigate the associated issues outlined by environmental experts, such as insufficient disclosure of information and frequent change of public hearing dates without prior notice to the stakeholders and interested parties.[7] According to the interviewed expert,[8] the platform could help address the existing deficiency in publicly available information about infrastructure projects and their potential impact on the environment. The platform could also encourage greater civic engagement in the decision-making processes around infrastructure projects. Furthermore, it could serve as a tool for evidence-based decision making for relevant administrative agencies.[9]

Next steps
Once the portal is activated and fully functional, the IRM researcher recommends the government promote its utilization and carry out an awareness-raising campaign to ensure that citizens are familiar with the availability of the web portal and its functionality.

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[1] Open Government Partnership, "Georgia National Action Plan 2016–2018," https://bit.ly/2YRRUN7.
[2] Open Government Partnership, *End-of-Term Report 2016-2018,* p. 52. https://bit.ly/2SgvPFO
[3] The OSGF-proposed commitment to be considered for the 2018–2019 OGP national action plan.
[4] Anano Tsintsabadze, Participatory Democracy Program Project Coordinator, Open Society Georgia Foundation, interview with the IRM researcher, 15 May 2019.
[5] Tsintsabadze interview, 15 May 2019.
[6] Tsintsabadze interview, 15 May 2019.
[7] Open Government Partnership, *IRM: Georgia End-of-Term Report 2016–2018*, https://bit.ly/2XN8Oix.
[8] Natia Gobejishvili, Advisor at GIZ South Caucasus (Programme-Integrated Biodiversity Management), phone interview with the IRM researcher, 22 October 2019.
[9] Tsintsabadze interview, 15 May 2019.

Theme II: Increasing Public Integrity

Commitment 6: Strengthening the Existing Major Anti-Corruption Institution

Language of the commitment as it appears in the action plan:

"Pursuant to the Corruption Perceptions Index prepared by Transparency International, Georgia, according to the 2017 data, is ranked 46th among 180 countries. As for the World Justice Project (WJP) Rule of Law Index, Georgia is ranked the first in Central Europe and East Asia Region and 38th in the world among 113 countries (2017-2018 Edition). The political will of the GoG for the drive to combat corruption has been expressed in the commitments undertaken by the government on the international arena, new strategic documents and purposeful anti-corruption policy.

The GoG is aware that the combat against corruption cannot be a single reform or a process restricted in time. The prevention of corruption requires constant and continuous efforts for establishing an honest and accountable public service.

For the purpose of promoting the effective implementation of a common anti-corruption policy, an Anti-corruption Interdepartmental Coordination Council has been established. The Council operates based on the basic anti-corruption policy implementation principles: complexity, corruption reduction and result-targeted approach, law rule protection, coordination among state agencies, civil sector engagement, accountability and consideration of foreign experience, process transparency, etc. The key structures in terms of fighting corruption are the Division of the Criminal Prosecution of Corruption Crimes of the Chief Prosecutor's Office and the Anti-Corruption Agency under the State Security Service of Georgia. The former is responsible for investigating and prosecuting especially serious corruption crimes, while the latter — for the fight against public offences committed by persons employed in the public sector and implementation of the measures for investigating, identifying and preventing such crimes

In spite of recent significant efficiency of the ACC, the priority of the GoG is the constant improvement of corruption combat mechanisms. At that, according to international recommendations and views of the non-governmental sector representatives, the ACC and other anti-corruption bodies need to be further strengthened. Under this plan, the GoG commits itself to identify the effective corruption combat means, to strengthen the respective anti-corruption bodies based on the appropriate assessment and analysis.

Given the above, the government's aim is to minimize all the forms of corruption, including the corruption of complex form. The GoG shall hold respective consultations with the civil sector."

Milestones:
1. Elaboration by the Secretariat of the Anti-Corruption Council (ACC) in cooperation with the Anti-Corruption Council and OGP Forum members of a Corruption Risk Assessment Methodology
2. According to the Corruption Risk Assessment Methodology, assessment of corruption risks in anti corruption divisions (informing the corruption risk assessment progress to the Forum and consideration at the Forum)
3. Enhancing accountability of the ACC Council (ACC shall submit an annual report to Parliament of Georgia)
4. According to the corruption risk assessment results and needs, strengthening of the Anti-Corruption Agency under the State Security Service of Georgia Division of the Criminal Prosecution of Corruption Crimes of the Chief Prosecutor's Office.
5. Periodical trainings of persons engaged in the investigation of corruption crimes and criminal prosecution in the direction of specialization, including the matters of corruption crimes committed by legal persons and international corruption crimes investigation and criminal prosecution.

Start Date: October 2018
End Date: December 2019

Editorial note: For the full text of this commitment, please see
https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/georgia-action-plan-2018-2019/.

Commitment Overview	Verifiability		OGP Value Relevance (as written)				Potential Impact				Completion				Did It Open Government?				
	Not specific enough to be verifiable	Specific enough to be verifiable	Access to Information	Civic Participation	Public Accountability	Technology & Innovation for Transparency & Accountability	None	Minor	Moderate	Transformative	Not Started	Limited	Substantial	Completed	Worsened	Did Not Change	Marginal	Major	Outstanding
6. Overall		✔		✔	✔			✔			Assessed at the end of action plan cycle.				Assessed at the end of action plan cycle.				

Context and Objectives

Currently, there are three major anti-corruption governmental institutions in Georgia: the Intergovernmental Anti-Corruption Council (ACC), which is a consultative body under the Ministry of Justice; a division of the Criminal Prosecution of Corruption Crimes under Chief Prosecutor's Office; and the Anti-Corruption Agency of the State Security Service. This commitment envisages the elaboration of a corruption risk assessment methodology by Georgia's ACC, in collaboration between the ACC and the OGP multi-stakeholder forum.

The ACC is responsible for developing anti-corruption policies and for monitoring the implementation of relevant strategies and action plans. Currently, the ACC consists of 55 members, 17 of which represent local and international nongovernmental organizations, international organizations, donors, and business associations.[1]

The government also plans to institutionalize the submission of ACC annual reports to the Parliament as well as the periodic conducting of trainings for persons engaged in the investigation of corruption and criminal prosecution. The commitment is relevant to the OGP value of civic participation because it calls for the development of an ACC corruption risk assessment methodology in collaboration with civil society organizations (CSOs). The commitment is relevant to the OGP value of public accountability because the ACC is meant to strengthen the accountability and anti-corruption framework in Georgia.

Many civil society members of Georgia's multi-stakeholder forum did not endorse this commitment's inclusion in the action plan during the co-creation process. Instead, civil society advocated for the establishment of an independent anti-corruption agency. Key civil society argued that the existing institutional framework for anti-corruption does not provide effective mechanisms for investigating and preventing high-level corruption. According to key civil society stakeholders, the creation of an independent anti-corruption agency could guarantee more political independence.[2]

Instead of considering the creation of a separate, independent anti-corruption agency,[3] the government argued for strengthening existing anti-corruption institutions. It reasoned that existing anti-corruption institutions have been performing well and there was no need to establish a separate, independent agency, nor sufficient argumentation presented to prove the effectiveness of creating a new agency. Government and civil society members of the multi-stakeholder forum could not reach a compromise, and the government included this commitment in the action plan without the endorsement of key anti-corruption CSOs.

Milestones 6.1, 6.2, and 6.3 are verifiable. They describe particular actions and outputs, such as, respectively, development of methodology, assessment of corruption risks, and institutionalization of annual reporting to the Parliament. However, Milestone 6.4 and 6.5 do not provide information on particular steps, quantified outputs, or specific indicators.

Despite Georgia's significant achievements in fighting against corruption over the past decades,[4] Georgia still faces challenges. As recognized by several international organizations and institutions—such as the European Parliament and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development[5]—elite corruption remains a major challenge in Georgia.[6] In a recent resolution on Georgia,[7] the European Parliament also noted the country's challenges in terms of high-level corruption and pointed to the need to establish an anti-corruption service as an independent body

Given the success in recent decades and Georgia's ambition to become an exemplary country for fighting corruption regionally and globally, it is difficult to consider this commitment a step toward fighting corruption. This statement is supported by most of the stakeholders, as well as Forum member CSOs.[8] Stakeholders point out that the commitment will not be effective in mitigating corruption, since a major contributor to corruption in Georgia is government red tape and structural problems.[9] They note that the absence of political will perpetuates corruption in public procurement tenders. Instead, this commitment intends to strengthen the existing flawed system.

Next steps

Considering the large gap between this commitment's planned activities and the expectations of most civil society stakeholders during the co-creation process, the IRM researcher recommends future action plans require an independent, objective, and politically neutral comprehensive assessment of the country's anti-corruption needs and the effectiveness of current institutional frameworks to address the same. This could involve experts from various international organizations. The parties could conduct an independent analysis of any shortcomings of the current institutional framework and assess whether an independent agency could address those shortcomings.

[1] http://justice.gov.ge/Ministry/Index/170.
[2] Giorgi Oniani, Deputy Executive Director at Transparency International–Georgia, interview with the IRM researcher, 30 May 2019.
[3] Zurab Sanikidze, Head of the Analytical Department of the Ministry of Justice of Georgia, interview with the IRM researcher, 3 May 2019.
[4] Examples of reports and international indexes assessing corruption-related achievements include, but are not limited to
- Transparency International, "Corruption Perception Index 2018," https://bit.ly/2B7SAEu
- The World Bank, "Worldwide Governance Indicators," https://bit.ly/2YTusPI
- World Justice Project, *Rule of Law Index: 2017–2018*, https://bit.ly/2yb8izE
- Freedom House, "Nations in Transit 2018: Georgia," https://bit.ly/2GOKgy1
[5] Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *Anti-Corruption Reforms in Georgia: 4th Round of Monitoring of the Istanbul Anti-Corruption Action Plan*, 2016, https://bit.ly/2Lhk8O8; and Greco, *Fourth Evaluation Round Georgia: Corruption Prevention in Respect of Members of Parliament, Judges and Prosecutors*, 17 January 2017, https://bit.ly/2LhkjJi.
[6] Examples of media articles reporting the situation related to elite corruption include, but are not limited to
- Dato Parulava "EU Criticises Elite Corruption, Lack of Skilled Staff and More in Georgia AA Report," OC Media, 15 November 2018, https://bit.ly/2oayc1Y
- IDFI, "The Georgian National Anti-Corruption System Is Ineffective against High Level Corruption," 12 October 2018, https://bit.ly/2AaWbkN
- Georgia Today, "The Fight against Elite Corruption Remains a Challenge for Georgia," 15 October 2018, https://bit.ly/2BBnYuO.
- "Survey: Most Georgians Believe Officials Are Corrupt," JAM News, 5 April 2019, https://bit.ly/2MJUnFV.
- Vano Chkhikvadze, "The Eastern Partnership: What's Next for Georgia," Heinrick Boll Stiftung, 12 September 2019, https://bit.ly/2N78Uuh.
- "Elite Corruption: Money and Interest," 12 October 2018, https://bit.ly/2MM07z3.
- "Nino Lomjaria: Signs of Elite Corruption in Business Must Be Answered," 18 September 2018, https://bit.ly/2qGTO7c.
[7] European Parliament, *"EU Association Efforts: MEPs Praise Georgia and Criticise Moldova,"* 9 October 2018, https://bit.ly/2XHVTzd.
[8] IDFI proposed commitments for the 2018–2019 OGP national action plan, https://bit.ly/2J25icT.
[9] Giorgi Meladze, Director of Constitutional Research Center and Associate Professor in the Law School at Ilia State University, interview with the IRM researcher, 8 June 2019.

Commitment 7: Public Monitoring of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Language of the commitment as it appears in the action plan:

"Administration of the GoG in cooperation with partner agencies shall develop and introduce in 2018 a new electronic system (SDG Tracker), the purpose of which will be the effective and transparent conduct of monitoring of the UN Sustainable Development Goals - SDGs). By means of said system any stakeholder will have a possibility to retrieve information online about the progress achieved in accordance with specific goals.

The SDG Tracker will ensure at a national scale the gathering of the newest information about the activities carried out by the public agencies for meeting the SDGs in once space and its citizen accessibility.

The UN SDGs are a constituent part of the internal reforms of the GoG. The goals' nationalization and introduction process started in 2015, while the direct implementation phase continues since 2018. This process involves 11 ministries and many other governmental organizations. The monitoring and accountability goals require the creation of a common electronic platform, which will simplify interagency coordination and make the goals implementation process and outcomes transparent in the country. The system will link the UN goals and tasks with the country's internal policy documents and provide information about the public financial resources in a specific direction. All this will enable citizens and stakeholders to familiarize themselves with the government aspirations of the next year, to see the planned and conducted activities and assess the progress."

Milestones:
1. Activation of the internal electronic system (the internal operations system will be accessible only for governmental agencies)
2. Activation/functional setup of the SDG web-page, including SDG Tracker and other components, where the internal system data are generated
3. Promoting the SDG Tracker as the governmental policy monitoring and assessment possibility
4. Activation of the information part of SDG Tracker web-page — placement of a schedule/information related to all the projects, ongoing or planned activities at a national scale

Start Date: September 2018
End Date: December 2019

Editorial note: For the full text of this commitment, please see
https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/georgia-action-plan-2018-2019/.

Commitment Overview	Verifiability		OGP Value Relevance (as written)				Potential Impact				Completion				Did It Open Government?				
	Not specific enough to be verifiable	Specific enough to be verifiable	Access to Information	Civic Participation	Public Accountability	Technology & Innovation for Transparency & Accountability	None	Minor	Moderate	Transformative	Not Started	Limited	Substantial	Completed	Worsened	Did Not Change	Marginal	Major	Outstanding
7. Overall		✔	✔			✔			✔		Assessed at the end of action plan cycle.				Assessed at the end of action plan cycle.				

Context and Objectives

This commitment aims to establish a new electronic system to track Georgia's progress in implementing its United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), known as the SDGs Tracker. The government of Georgia has partnered with Geostat to set baseline indicators for each SDG-aligned national target. However, there are several challenges associated with the monitoring process, such as the lack of statistical data to identify reliable quantitative indicators.[1] Also, according to the Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI), the existing practice of collecting SDG-related data manually from the responsible agencies is ineffective, due to a lack coordination between the responsible organizations.[2]

Along with the internal e-system that would allow data collection and reporting within government agencies, this commitment plans to develop a national SDG webpage to integrate the aggregated data and make it available publicly.[3] This webpage would provide access to up-to-date national SDG information, the performance of public agencies, and implementation of national SDG targets. It could also enable effective and transparent monitoring of the entire national SDGs agenda, which is not currently available publicly.[4]

The commitment is specific enough to be verified. If fully implemented, the SDGs Tracker could have a moderate impact on improving public access to Georgia's progress in implementing its SDGs. Namely it could help provide a more accessible space for the public to monitor progress toward the SDGs and government policies and activities. As explained during the IRM researcher's focus group discussion with stakeholders,[5] the new tracking system could allow government representatives, civil society organizations (CSOs), and citizens to track progress on major policy areas. Such areas might include environmental protection, education, poverty reduction, economic development, inclusive environment, and democratic governance.[6] Additionally, according to a former IDFI representative,[7] this tracking system could serve as a valuable tool for collecting data. Hence, it could encourage evidence-based policy making. It could also promote governmental reforms and achievements and attract donor funds for both government and CSOs.

Next steps

Given the importance of this commitment to stakeholders, the IRM researcher recommends carrying it forward to the next action plan. Once the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Tracker becomes operational, the IRM researcher recommends the following:

- Execute an outreach campaign to inform a wider range of citizens, representatives of the private sector, representatives of local governance, and other governmental agencies. This effort would increase awareness regarding the United Nations SDGs and the role of SDGs in national policy making.

- Enable the SDGs Tracker to integrate a tool that allows civil society to participate in the planning of indicators on the national level. This tool should also enable civil society to assess key performance indicator completion levels. It will, thus, encourage their participation in the overall SDG monitoring process.

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[1] Sustainable Development Goals, Knowledge Platform, "Georgia," https://bit.ly/32pAhGx.
[2] Institute for Development of Freedom of Information, "Supporting the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goals in Georgia," 13 January 2017, https://bit.ly/2xdVcgF.
[3] Saba Buadze, former Anti-Corruption Direction Lead, Institute for Development of Freedom of Information, interview with the IRM researcher, 22 May 2019.
[4] IRM researcher's focus group discussion with experts, researchers, and master's students of public administration, 18 June 2018.
[5] IRM researcher's focus group discussion with experts, researchers, and master's students of public administration, 18 June 2018.
[6] Tamar Tatishvili, MPA Nonprofit Management and Head of Nonprofit Management Program at Consulting and Training Center, interview with the IRM researcher, 18 June 2019.
[7] Buadze interview, May 2019.

Commitment 8: Development of Legislative Acts Based on Citizen Engagement and Data Analysis

Language of the commitment as it appears in the action plan:

"Within the framework of the OGP Action Plan of Georgia for 2016-2017, the administration of the GoG, in cooperation with the MoJ, initiated the development of a Unified Regulatory Impact Assessment and Monitoring System (RIA).

The system serves the establishment of an evidence-based decision-making process and implies the making of a situational analysis on the basis of ex-ante assessment. The ex-ante assessment makes it possible to identify specific problems and develop and plan legislative acts adapted thereto.

The government's purpose is to make the preparation of the RIA report mandatory under the current plan. It is of importance that a consultation with both the relevant experts and wide public is an integral part of ex-ante assessment. In this way the government constantly ensures citizen participation in the drafting of laws or strategic documents and, accordingly, the making of decisions adapted to their needs"

Milestones:
1. Drafting a law on regulatory assessment and monitoring of legislative acts
2. Developing a unified framework and methodology for assessing and monitoring of legislative acts.

Start Date: September 2018
End Date: December 2019

Editorial note: For the full text of this commitment, please see
https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/georgia-action-plan-2018-2019/.

Commitment Overview	Verifiability		OGP Value Relevance (as written)				Potential Impact				Completion				Did It Open Government?				
	Not specific enough to be verifiable	Specific enough to be verifiable	Access to Information	Civic Participation	Public Accountability	Technology & Innovation for Transparency & Accountability	None	Minor	Moderate	Transformative	Not Started	Limited	Substantial	Completed	Worsened	Did Not Change	Marginal	Major	Outstanding
8. Overall		✔	✔	✔					✔		Assessed at the end of action plan cycle.				Assessed at the end of action plan cycle.				

Context and Objectives

This commitment builds on Commitment 8 from Georgia's third action plan (2016–2017).[1] That commitment aimed to develop a unified system for monitoring government policy documents and legislative acts on the basis of ex ante and ex post assessments. However, when the *IRM End-of-Term Report* was written, this monitoring system had not been launched.[2] With the current commitment, the government plans to incorporate the Unified Regulatory Impact Assessment and Monitoring System (RIA) into the lawmaking process as a mandatory assessment tool for certain types of bills. These bills will be defined in the Law of Georgia on Normative Acts. Incorporating the RIA into law- and policy-making processes is an effort tied to the European Union–Georgia Association Agreement.[3] That agreement outlines the introduction of a regulatory and supervisory framework in accordance with internationally agreed-to regulatory standards.[4]

The utilization of RIA could increase transparency through the entire lawmaking process. In addition, access to published impact assessment reports could provide an opportunity for citizens to gain information on possible outcomes of prospective regulations. This access could also encourage participation, as the process entails consultation with stakeholders. Therefore, the commitment is relevant to the OGP values of access to information and civic participation. This commitment provides verifiable deliverables, such as 1) a law on regulatory assessment and the monitoring of legislative acts and 2) a unified framework and methodology for assessing and monitoring legislative acts.

If fully implemented, this commitment could establish a new tool (RIA) in the lawmaking process, which would lead to better and more transparent policy making. The RIA will contribute to higher-quality design in policy making,[5] and it will result in well-reasoned and more transparent policy solutions and bills.[6] Therefore, the potential impact is considered moderate.

Next steps

Given the importance of having the Unified Regulatory Impact Assessment and Monitoring System (RIA), the IRM researcher recommends carrying this commitment forward to the next action plan, with the following modifications:

- Ensure an optimum range of legislative acts is defined as subject to the RIA. Acknowledging its benefits for shifting policy makers' attitudes from procedure-oriented to a more result-oriented mind-set. Establishing the RIA as a major tool for policy planning and assessment nationwide might have a significant impact.

- Develop an impact assessment report dissemination and communication strategy and include it in the overall RIA methodology. This will aid in proper communication of RIA goals and assessment results to stakeholders and citizens.

- Stakeholders recommend the building of relevant capacities and resources in the municipalities, to incorporate the RIA at the local level and raise overall policy-making quality in the municipalities.

- AoG could develop guidelines and specific tools for public consultations for different types of policies and decisions at the national and local levels. This will strengthen the stakeholder engagement component of RIA.

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[1] Open Government Partnership, "Georgia National Action Plan 2018–2019," https://bit.ly/2XLXiju.
[2] Open Government Partnership, *IRM: Georgia End-of-Term Report 2016–2018,* https://bit.ly/2XN8Oix.
[3] *Association Agenda between the European Union and Georgia, 2017–2020,* https://bit.ly/2u5v0DP.
[4] European Commission, *Association Implementation Report on Georgia,* 2017, https://bit.ly/2J3IVkO f.
[5] Mariam Gorgadze, Deputy Chief of Party and Mikheil Darchiashvili, Governance Manager at USAID Georgia Good Governance Initiative, interview with the IRM researcher, 14 May 2019.
[6] Giorgi Meladze, Director of Constitutional Research Center and Associate Professor in the Law School at Ilia State University, interview with the IRM researcher, 8 June 2019.

Commitment 9: Publishing Court Decisions in a Unified Database and Creation of a Retrieval System

Language of the commitment as it appears in the action plan:

"Publishing court decisions in a unified database and ensuring their accessibility serve the improvement of the court system's transparency, accountability and efficiency. The Supreme Court of Georgia started to work on the above within the framework of the OGP Georgia Action Plan 2016-2017.

Today, court decisions in Georgia are published by the Supreme Court of Georgia on own web-page. As regards common courts, a special web-page (http://info.court.ge) has been created for them, which, according to a decision by the High Council of Justice, shall function in the future as a unified registry of court decisions (the first and second court instances, as well as the Supreme Court).

The creation of a unified platform is important, although the quality of information accessibility placed thereon is more important. In this regard and taking into account the international experience, Georgia can introduce additional functions in the newly established registry. This primarily implies the placement of information about the participants in the process and proactive publishing of more information related to bookkeeping.

Under the given commitment, a united system with the following modules will be created:
- A module for searching cross-hatched/shaded court decisions and final documents;
- A module for publishing and searching of public announcements;
- The litigant's web-space;
- A module for searching of scheduled sessions."

Milestones:
1. Development of a performance specification of a retrieval system for the unified database of court decisions.
2. Development and introduction of a retrieval system for a unified database
3. Publication of court decisions in a unified database
4. Activation of a search module for (1) public announcements (2) court litigant's web-space and (3) scheduled sessions

Start Date: July 2018
End Date: December 2019

Editorial note: For the full text of this commitment, please see
https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/georgia-action-plan-2018-2019/.

Commitment Overview	Verifiability		OGP Value Relevance (as written)				Potential Impact				Completion				Did It Open Government?				
	Not specific enough to be verifiable	Specific enough to be verifiable	Access to Information	Civic Participation	Public Accountability	Technology & Innovation for Transparency & Accountability	None	Minor	Moderate	Transformative	Not Started	Limited	Substantial	Completed	Worsened	Did Not Change	Marginal	Major	Outstanding
9. Overall		✔	✔			✔			✔		Assessed at the end of action plan cycle.				Assessed at the end of action plan cycle.				

Context and Objectives

This commitment continues the goals of Commitment 10 from Georgia's third action plan (2016–2018).[1] Under the previous commitment, the Supreme Court aimed to develop key directions and unified standards for publishing court decisions of all three instances (Supreme, Appellate, and District Courts) online, to allow easy reuse of this data. However, due to the lack of funds and complexity of refining technical procedures for publishing decisions online, the unified portal was not launched by the conclusion of the third action plan period.[2]

Currently, the decisions of common courts (first and second instances) are published at http://info.court.ge The Supreme Court publishes its own decisions on its webpage. However, according to representatives from Transparency International (TI)–Georgia and Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI), increasing access to court decisions still remains a challenge in Georgia.[3]

First, the fact that no unified registry of court decisions exists, and that common courts and Supreme Court decisions are published on different webpages, limits accessibility to these decisions. In addition, as outlined during interviews, the http://info.court.ge webpage has several technical flaws that render it difficult to use.[4]

Through this new commitment, the Supreme Court aims to upgrade the recently created electronic registry that will function as the unified registry for the decisions of common courts and the Supreme Court. To do this, the Supreme Court will create modules for 1) searching for redacted ("cross-hatched/shaded") court decisions and final documents; 2) publishing and searching for public announcements, 3) creating the litigant's web space, and 4) searching for scheduled sessions.

This is relevant to the OGP values of access to information and technology and innovation. It employs web technologies to proactively publish information and provides a tool for monitoring court decisions by establishing a mechanism for analyzing big data. This commitment is specific enough to be verified. It has four clearly stated deliverables, including deliverables to develop specifications for the retrieval system and deliverables addressing the functionality of each of the prospective modules.

This commitment could have a moderate impact on improving the accessibility of court decisions. IDFI believes this commitment could substantially improve access to court decisions, a problem it previously identified as a major transparency challenge in Georgia.[5] Further, according to a former IDFI representative,[6] this commitment addresses the bottleneck of the existing system and solves several technical issues. In addition, TI noted that improved accessibility to court decisions would be beneficial for lawyers who have had difficulties dealing with the existing system.[7]

Next steps

Based on feedback from stakeholders, and considering that this commitment responds to the high public interest in access to court decisions, the IRM researcher recommends continuing this commitment, with specific improvements in its design. Specifically, once the portal is activated and fully functional, the government should carry out a wide awareness-raising campaign to ensure that all the interested parties and citizens are familiar with the availability of the online registry and the opportunities it provides.

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[1] Open Government Partnership, "Georgia National Action Plan 2016–2018," https://bit.ly/2YRRUN7.
[2] Open Government Partnership, *IRM End-of-Term Report*, p. 35. 2019, https://bit.ly/2OJW5HQ
[3] Information for Development of Freedom of Information proposed commitments for the 2018–2019 OGP national action plan. See https://bit.ly/2J25icT.
[4] Saba Buadze, former Anti-Corruption Direction Lead, Institute for Development of Freedom of Information, interview with the IRM researcher, 22 May 2019.
[5] Information for Development of Freedom of Information, *Study on Best International Practice on Proactively Publish on Court Decisions,* 2017, https://bit.ly/2G9qYRS.
[6] Saba Buadze interview, 22 May 2019.
[7] Giorgi Topuria, Senior Analyst at Transparency International–Georgia, interview with the IRM researcher, 22 May 2019.

Commitment 10: Increasing Transparency of the Ministry of Internal Affairs

Language of the commitment as it appears in the action plan:

"The Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) is the most important part of the executive power, the principal functions of which include safeguarding of public safety and protection of public order. To ensure public trust force-enforcement bodies, the MIA shall, according to a recommendation of the Forum member NGOs, take important steps for improving accountability and transparency

- The MIA has actively worked for improving public access to public information lately: Since 2018 statistics of complaints/applications has been maintained. The motive of an alleged offence communicated by the applicant and other parameters are registered. Engagement of the alleged offender(s) in disciplinary proceedings is ensured. The applicant is notified in writing of the disciplinary proceedings' results carried out by the General Inspection on the basis of a written application, whereas in case the information is received through the hot line (126), the initiator is informed by telephone. In practice, a report concerning the official check-up conducted by the General Inspection and signed by the General Inspection chief has never been revoked by the Minister, as well as in no case the disciplinary liability measure has been changed. Today, the statistical data maintenance by the MIA is not based on a systematized procedure and is not governed by a bylaw and/or memorandum, which in some cases interferes with information accessibility. However, the work to regulate the process is underway.

- The MIA also commits to follow a transparent manpower policy, so that the issues of policeman recruitment, promotion, disciplinary liability or discharge shall be free from any ambiguity"

Milestones:
1. Clear writing out of statistical maintenance procedures, terms and responsible bodies through making a standard consolidated document
2. Proactive publication of complaints/applications, as well as of the official checkup results
3. Development of disciplinary proceedings conduct guidelines within the framework of reforming the General Inspection of MIA
4. Analysis of official transfer, encouragement and discharge procedures and making relevant regulatory amendments where necessary

Start Date: August 2018
End Date: December 2019

Editorial note: For the full text of this commitment, please see
https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/georgia-action-plan-2018-2019/.

Commitment Overview	Verifiability		OGP Value Relevance (as written)				Potential Impact				Completion				Did It Open Government?				
	Not specific enough to be verifiable	Specific enough to be verifiable	Access to Information	Civic Participation	Public Accountability	Technology & Innovation for Transparency & Accountability	None	Minor	Moderate	Transformative	Not Started	Limited	Substantial	Completed	Worsened	Did Not Change	Marginal	Major	Outstanding
10. Overall		✔	✔					✔			Assessed at the end of action plan cycle.				Assessed at the end of action plan cycle.				

Context and Objectives

This commitment aims to improve the transparency of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA), in particular around its human resources and statistical data collection policies. According to an Open Society Georgia Foundation report,[1] although human resources policies are regulated by the Law of Georgia on Police, the detailed procedures and exceptional cases fall under the Minister's Order on service and internal normative acts, which in most cases are vague.[2][3] For example, the predefined criteria for internal promotion are either nonexistent or ambiguous, leaving room for politically motivated human resources decisions. As for the statistical data collection, the processes for collecting statistics are not predefined and systemized. Furthermore, since the law does not require the collection of specific types of statistical data, the MIA often declines requests to disclose or provide certain kinds of data when requested by civil society organizations.[4]

To improve its transparency, the MIA plans to develop a consolidated document that will define and systemize the procedures, types of data, responsible bodies, and timelines for data collection. The ministry will also collect and proactively publish data on citizens' complaints, as well as internal general inspection results. This disclosure could increase access to information. Statistical data, such as public complaints, internal official checkup results, and relevant administrative proceedings, will become available publicly. In addition, the MIA will define criteria for disciplinary proceedings (promotion, demotion, etc.), which could increase organizational transparency.

All four milestones under this commitment are verifiable and linked to specific indicators. The commitment activities could bring positive, but minor, improvements to the existing practices of MIA. Namely, it could affect statistical data collection, the publishing of statistical data, and human resources policies.[5]

Next steps

Since this commitment plans to systemize the MIA's statistical data collection practices and proactively publish statistical data, the IRM researcher recommends publishing these data in an open-data format (which allow users to run cross-tabulation analysis).

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[1] OSGF proposed commitment to be considered for the 2018–2019 OGP action plan.
[2] Anano Tsintsabadze, Participatory Democracy Program Project Coordinator, Open Society Georgia Foundation, interview with the IRM researcher, 15 May 2019.
[3] Transparency International–Georgia, Human Rights Education and Monitoring Centre, *Transparency of the Ministry of Internal Affairs,* 2017 *https://bit.ly/2w10lMu*
[4] Tsintsabadze interview, May 2019.
[5] Giorgi Topuria, Senior Analyst at Transparency International–Georgia, interview with IRM researcher, 22 May 2019.

Theme III: More Effectively Managing Public Resources

Commitment 11: Increasing Citizen Participation in Oversight of Public Finance

Language of the commitment as it appears in the action plan:

"Within the framework of the OGP Georgia Action Plan 2016-2017, the State Audit Office (SAO) an innovative analytical platform 'Budget Monitor', by means of which wide public has a unique possibility to obtain comprehensive information about the state budget, public resources management issues, audit findings, issued recommendations and the state of their implementation. In addition, the platform will enable every citizen to address the SAO in connection with existing shortcomings in the management of public finances and to participate in the next year's audit plan completion.

For increasing citizen participation in this process and the platform efficiency, the SAO shares the recommendation of the OGP's Independent Reporting Mechanism (IRM) and aims to introduce a feedback mechanism for citizen addresses and notifications. This will make it possible to constantly track the status of responding to citizen address and notifications (including anonymous)".

Milestones:
1. Creation and introduction by the Budget Monitor of a feedback mechanism for citizen notifications
2. Organization by the SAO of 5 working meetings at least with different focus groups for raising awareness.

Start Date: May 2018
End Date: December 2018

Editorial note: For the full text of this commitment, please see https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/georgia-action-plan-2018-2019/.

Commitment Overview	Verifiability		OGP Value Relevance (as written)				Potential Impact				Completion				Did It Open Government?				
	Not specific enough to be verifiable	Specific enough to be verifiable	Access to Information	Civic Participation	Public Accountability	Technology & Innovation for Transparency & Accountability	None	Minor	Moderate	Transformative	Not Started	Limited	Substantial	Completed	Worsened	Did Not Change	Marginal	Major	Outstanding
11. Overall		✔		✔		✔		✔			Assessed at the end of action plan cycle.				Assessed at the end of action plan cycle.				

Context and Objectives

This commitment builds on Commitment 14 from Georgia's third action plan (2016–2017). During the third action plan, the State Audit Office of Georgia (SAO) launched the online platform budgetmonitor.ge. The platform consolidates previously dispersed information on state and municipal budgets. It also includes a "Citizen" page, where the public can suggest government bodies for auditing, and a "Fight Corruption" page, where citizens can report cases of corruption. Those reported cases are then reviewed by an auditor.[1] The *IRM End-of-Term Report* for the third action plan found that, despite providing the public with opportunities to participate, public participation remained low. Accordingly, to improve public participation in the audit process, SAO has committed to introduce a new feature for tracking and responding to citizen input received through budgetmonitor.ge. SAO also plans to conduct

five focus groups to raise awareness of the new feedback feature. The commitment is relevant to the OGP value of civic participation. It employs web technologies for citizens to submit feedback and track the status of their feedback.

This commitment provides two verifiable milestones: the creation and introduction of a feedback mechanism for citizen notifications and the organization of five focus groups to raise awareness. However, providing more detailed information about the purpose and composition of working groups would make the commitment more specific and measurable. If fully implemented, the new feedback mechanism could result in a minor but positive improvement to the existing feedback feature on budgetmonitor.ge. The commitment could also result in improvement to participation in the auditing process more broadly. In particular, the new feature would allow citizens to track the status of their feedback via budgetmonitor.ge platform, even if they provide feedback anonymously. It is worth noting that the 2016–2017 *IRM Progress Report* recommended that SAO conduct a widespread awareness-raising campaign for budgetmonitor.ge. However, this commitment's text refers to organizing five focus groups meetings, which are limited in scale.

Next steps

Although the budgetmonitor.ge platform significantly improved access to budget information during the previous action plan, this commitment represents a minor upgrade to the existing platform. Accordingly, the IRM researcher recommends that the government continue raising awareness about the platform, but not as part of the next OGP action plan.

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[1] Open Government Partnership, *IRM: Georgia End-of-Term Report 2016–2018*, pp. 44–45, https://bit.ly/2vZMQ00

Commitment 12: Increasing Transparency of the Public Grant Funding System

Language of the commitment as it appears in the action plan:

"Administration of the GoG will, together with partner agencies, start in 2018 work on reforming the existing grant funding system of state/public institutions in order to ensure transparency and efficiency of the given sphere.

To date, Georgian legislation does not provide for general principles and procedures for allocation of grants by ministries and legal entities of public law. No uniform regulatory standard for allocation of grants by public institutions exists.

Under this commitment, standards of financing for public agencies will be established and detailed principles will be written out. Administration of the GoG will, together with partner agencies, draft amendments to the Law on Grants to be considered with stakeholders and will submit it to Parliament of Georgia before the end of 2019

To date, Georgian legislation does not provide for general principles and procedures for allocation of grants by ministries and legal entities of public law. Additionally, a number of public institutions, including self-governments are not included in the public granting system.

One of the components of the present initiative implies regulatory establishment of basic standards and principles (including unbiased and participatory decision making, preliminary identification and publication of selection criteria, avoidance of conflict of interest, process transparency, etc.). These should be sufficiently clear for making the grant funding a reliable and transparent process. At that, according to these standard-principles, individual state agencies will have a possibility of a detailed arrangement of the process.

The initiative incidentally implies authorization of local self-government with the use of the grant allocation mechanism, which shall, in a number of cases, facilitate better fulfillment of functions, encouragement of inter-municipal initiatives, active citizen participation in this process and on-site encouragement of different initiatives."

Milestones:
1. Holding consultations with different public institutions, CSOs, and experts for drafting legislative amendments
2. Drafting amendments to the Law of Georgia on Grants.
3. Submission of the draft amendments to the law to stakeholders
4. Initiation of the draft amendments to the law in Parliament of Georgia

Start Date: December 2018
End Date: September 2019

Editorial note: For the full text of this commitment, please see https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/georgia-action-plan-2018-2019/.

Commitment Overview	Verifiability	OGP Value Relevance (as written)	Potential Impact	Completion	Did It Open Government?

	Not specific enough to be verifiable	Specific enough to be verifiable	Access to Information	Civic Participation	Public Accountability	Technology & Innovation for Transparency & Accountability	None	Minor	Moderate	Transformative	Not Started	Limited	Substantial	Completed	Worsened	Did Not Change	Marginal	Major	Outstanding
12. Overall		✔		✔					✔		Assessed at the end of action plan cycle.				Assessed at the end of action plan cycle.				

Context and Objectives

Currently, Georgia lacks uniform procedures for issuing governmental grants, despite an increased number of new government grant opportunities in recent years.[1] Without uniform regulations, individual agencies will provide grant funds based on internal procedures, which might differ greatly among agencies and projects. According to a representative of Transparency International (TI) Georgia, this ambiguity regarding grant applications can create a lack of transparency and corruption risks.[2]

This commitment, therefore, aims to introduce a national regulatory standard for issuing governmental grants. To do this, the Administration of Government will collaborate with stakeholders (such as public agencies, civil society organizations, and experts) to draft amendments to the Law of Georgia on Grants and introduce these amendments in Parliament. The preparation of the amendments in consultation with nongovernmental stakeholders makes the commitment relevant to the OGP value of civic participation.

This commitment consists of specific and verifiable steps, such as consulting stakeholders while drafting the amendments to the Law of Georgia on Grants and submitting the amendments to Parliament. However, the scale and scope of the consultations for the amendments are not entirely clear.

According to an interviewed TI–Georgia representative, introducing unified regulations could help provide municipal governments with the legal basis for issuing grants at the local level. That representative noted the regulations could possibly help reduce corruption associated with grant funding.[3] Furthermore, grant recipient stakeholders argued that a unified regulatory standard could improve the management and transparency of government spending for grants.[4] The introduction of the unified regulatory standard would be more reasonable if the government had a practice of providing grant opportunities to nonprofit organizations that work on social issues, for example, those regarding elderly persons, homelessness, and the environment. But currently, grant opportunities are available only for scientific research, educational scholarships, and start-up projects, which limits the scope of this commitment. The implementation of this commitment can be assessed as an important step forward in the overall governmental grant management system in Georgia. Thus, it is considered to have a moderate potential impact.

Next steps

Stakeholders and grant recipients assess the commitment as an important step toward improving the governmental fund system nationwide. Accordingly, the IRM researcher recommends continuing this commitment but strengthening it through the following recommendations:

- Add a tool for monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of the unified standard regulations. This tool could not only provide a unified M&E standard and guideline for public agencies that issue grants, but also enable grant recipients to monitor and evaluate subgrantees and report back to public agencies. The tool could also allow the Administration of the Government of Georgia and public agencies to create an internal control system, assess pre-award process, and ensure results through performance monitoring and cost-effectiveness analysis (and other criteria). Those parties could also use the tool to evaluate and identify shortcomings and provide evidence for successful projects.

- Stakeholders recommend creating a unified website that will serve as a repository for all the governmental grant opportunities and unified standard regulations. (This website cold include links to detailed information webpages.) Such a portal could strengthen the link to access to information. It would provide information on all governmental grant opportunities in one easily accessible portal with a user-friendly interface.

[1] Examples of public grant-funding opportunities include, but are not limited to, Enterprise Georgia, https://bit.ly/2LXzyGK; projects funded within Georgia's Innovation & Technology Agency, https://bit.ly/2YSSLNu; and projects funded within the Agricultural and Rural Development Agency, https://bit.ly/2Sd6MDe.

[2] Giorgi Topuria, Senior Analyst at Transparency International–Georgia, interview with IRM researcher, 22 May 2019.

[3] Topuria interview, May 2019.

[4] Natia Goliadze, Chairwoman at Export Development Association and Head of Business Administration Department at the University of Georgia, interview with IRM researcher, 19 June 2019.

Commitment 13: Electronic Innovations for More Transparency and Efficiency of Public Procurement

Language of the commitment as it appears in the action plan:

"The Public Procurement Agency (PPA), with the support of the World Bank (WB) and the Department of International Development (DFID), also in cooperation with the Open Contracting Partnership (OCP) actively works on the introduction of the Open Contracting Data Standard (OCDS). It should be noted that the OCDS implies introduction of an open data standard for publication of structured information on all stages of a contracting process: from planning to implementation.

OCDS sets out 4 levels for disclosure (3 main and 1 additional: 1) basic; 2) intermediate; 3) advanced; and 4) additional. The PPA intends to meet the standards of the 3rd and 4th levels in accordance with OCDS.

Currently, the works of the Stage 1 have been completed to ensure the OCDS introduction, which implies regular disclosure of the available information about both the aggregate and individual purchases in the special machine-readable format (JSON) on a specially made new webpage.

At the Stage 2, the PPA plans further extension of the OCDS, which implies disclosure annual purchase plan of purchasing organizations in a special machine readable format, also the creation for the authorized users for direct access to the direct database the application program interface (API) and creation of web-page of new visualization"

Milestones:
1. Transfer of the current year information available in the module of public procurement electronic annual plans built in the e-procurement system and disclosure on the web-page - opendata.spa.ge
2. Creation of a web-page of new visualization on the database generated by OCDS (the new web-page will assist users in retrieving desired information in any correlation
3. Creation of an API for accessing OCDS-based database
4. Ensuring rather detailed (minimum of the second level) instructions of the CPV codes in electronic tenders of the E-Procurement system.
5. OCDS-based database update; complete coverage of historical data created since 2011 and systemic update of current data

Start Date: December 2018
End Date: December 2019

Editorial note: For the full text of this commitment, please see
https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/georgia-action-plan-2018-2019/.

Commitment Overview	Verifiability		OGP Value Relevance (as written)				Potential Impact				Completion				Did It Open Government?				
	Not specific enough to be verifiable	Specific enough to be verifiable	Access to Information	Civic Participation	Public Accountability	Technology & Innovation for Transparency & Accountability	None	Minor	Moderate	Transformative	Not Started	Limited	Substantial	Completed	Worsened	Did Not Change	Marginal	Major	Outstanding
13. Overall		✔	✔			✔			✔		Assessed at the end of action plan cycle.				Assessed at the end of action plan cycle.				

Context and Objectives

This commitment continues the goals of Commitment 15 from Georgia's third action plan (2016–2017). During the third action plan, the State Procurement Agency (SPA) launched the www.opendata.spa.ge portal, where it published aggregated and detailed data on tenders in an open data format. This portal was designed to better comply with open contracting requirements and make tender data more easily accessible to the public.

With the fourth action plan's commitment, the SPA plans to integrate the e-Plan modules and annual procurement plans of procuring entities into the opendata.spa.ge portal and publish this information in an open data format. It also aims to publish more details on the tenders, add more filters for deeper analysis, and provide complete historical data (from 2011 to the present). Finally, the SPA plans to provide an application programming interface (API) to registered users of its opendata.spa.ge portal and redesign the portal to align it better with the Open Contracting Data Standard.[1]

This commitment responds to civil society critiques of the new database that surfaced during the previous action plan. They noted insufficient filters to allow for deeper analysis of the content and the lack of an API for interested organizations to link their portals to the new SPA webpage. Several stakeholders also called for transferring and publishing procurement data in a machine-readable and open data format to enable users to disaggregate data by different variables.[2] [3] The goal of improving the availability and usability of procurement data makes the commitment relevant to the OGP value of access to information. This commitment is specific enough to be verified. It provides measurable milestones and outputs that are aligned with the commitment's objective.

As one more step taken toward opening procurement data to the public, this commitment can be considered a progressive and incremental improvement to the well-functioning system. The full implementation of this commitment could help improve the accessibility and transparency of procurement information. It could also improve the ability of the public and civil society organizations to monitor government spending.[4] In particular, procurement information could become more accessible for the public—regular citizens—and not only for the organizations and experts who have relevant expertise.[5]

However, an interviewed Transparency International–Georgia representative pointed out that although publishing data in a machine-readable format is a step forward, there are many important issues that this commitment does not address. For example, the annual procurement plan is currently not detailed enough to provide specific information of interest, such as detailed CPV codes. More importantly, annual plans change often and thus make the business process unpredictable for interested parties.[6]

Next steps

Moving forward, the IRM researcher recommends that the State Procurement Agency (SPA) continue publishing more detailed information to the www.opendata.spa.ge platform. For example, the Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI) has recently recommended that SPA publish detailed CPV codes of the specific goods or services procured.[7] The IRM researcher also reiterates another IDFI recommendation to amend Georgia's public procurement legislation to include publishing information on subcontractors. This would help close loopholes in the existing information and prevent blacklisted companies from participating in procurement.

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[1] Open Contracting Partnership, *Guide to Defining Open Contracting Data Standard Functional Requirements for Electronic Government Procurement Systems,* 2018, https://bit.ly/32iny8C.

[2] Open Government Partnership, *IRM: Georgia Progress Report 2016–2017*, https://bit.ly/2XKZWpP.

[3] Institute for Development of Freedom of Information, *Implementation Assessment of the Georgian Public Procurement Legislation*, 2017, https://bit.ly/2GdAjl6.

[4] Saba Buadze, former Anti-Corruption Direction Lead, Institute for Development of Freedom of Information, interview with IRM researcher, 22 May 2019.

[5] IRM researcher's focus group discussion with experts, researchers, and master's students of public administration, 18 June 2018.

[6] Giorgi Topuria, Senior Analyst at Transparency International–Georgia, interview with IRM researcher, 22 May 2019.

[7] IDFI, "Implementation Assessment of the Georgian Public Procurement Legislation," 15 May 2017, https://bit.ly/2O8mgZg

Theme IV: Creating Safer Communities

Commitment 14: Developing Housing Policy Document and Action Plan

Language of the commitment as it appears in the action plan:

"The homelessness problem handling, given its complexity, requires from the State the identification of both short-term and long-term priorities. Accordingly, the government aims at creating within the open government framework an interagency commission/council, which will analyze the current state, challenges, and develop a housing policy document and action plan

To date, the country lacks a unified vision and strategy, which would serve as a basis for stage-by-stage handling of the problem locally. Legislative regulations, including a correct homeless status establishment methodology, are vague in the part of the distribution of the rights and functions of the central and local governments. Accordingly, the conduct of unified, complex activities, which will be continuous in time and regularly ensures the elimination of defects, is necessary."

Milestones:
1. Establishment of an interagency commission/council
2. Development of the housing policy document and action plan by engagement of different groups.
3. Submission of the housing policy document and action plan for approval

Start Date: January 2019
End Date: September 2021

Editorial note: For the full text of this commitment, please see
https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/georgia-action-plan-2018-2019/.

Commitment Overview	Verifiability		OGP Value Relevance (as written)				Potential Impact				Completion				Did It Open Government?				
	Not specific enough to be verifiable	Specific enough to be verifiable	Access to Information	Civic Participation	Public Accountability	Technology & Innovation for Transparency & Accountability	None	Minor	Moderate	Transformative	Not Started	Limited	Substantial	Completed	Worsened	Did Not Change	Marginal	Major	Outstanding
14. Overall		✔	✔	✔				✔			Assessed at the end of action plan cycle.				Assessed at the end of action plan cycle.				

Context and Objectives

According to a 2016 report from a local nongovernmental organization, the Human Rights Education and Monitoring Center,[1] there is no state policy that would address the problem of homelessness in Georgia on a national level. The Open Society Georgia Foundation (OSGF) has been working on homelessness since 2016 and proposed including a commitment on this area in Georgia's fourth OGP action plan. This commitment envisages developing an interagency council for homelessness, a state policy document on housing, and an action plan that will outline particular steps for reaching the goals of the policy. The United States Agency for International Development's Good Governance Initiative (USAID GGI) will provide support to the interagency commission/council to analyse the current status and challenges and develop an evidence-based housing policy document (strategy and action plan). These documents will be developed in order to comply with the Government of Georgia (GoG) policy planning manual requirements and through conducting a regulatory impact assessment (RIA). This commitment is relevant to the OGP value of access to information. Also, the development of a housing

policy strategy through engagement with "different groups" makes this commitment relevant to the OGP value of civic participation.

The main outputs of this commitment are verifiable, namely the interagency council, the housing policy document, and action plan. However, the composition of the council and the groups that will be engaged while developing the housing policy document are not specified. The potential impact of this commitment on the issue of homelessness is difficult to assess, because that effect will depend heavily on the contents of the policy document and action plan. Therefore, the potential impact is coded as minor. However, representatives from OSGF[2] and USAID GGI.[3] noted that the commitment could represent an important first step toward addressing the problem of homelessness in Georgia.

Next steps

Although this commitment addresses an important issue in the country (homelessness and the right to adequate housing), the IRM researcher recommends continuing this work outside of the framework of future OGP action plans. The IRM researcher further recommends focusing on establishing and promoting awareness of the rights of homeless people and the obligations of authorities on this issue.

[1] Human Rights Education and Monitoring Center, *Homelessness: Analysis of State Policies*, 2016, https://bit.ly/31Szvkb.
[2] Anano Tsintsabadze, Participatory Democracy Program Project Coordinator, Open Society Georgia Foundation, interview with IRM researcher, 15 May 2019.
[3] Mariam Gorgadze, Deputy Chief of Party and Mikheil Darchiashvili, Governance Manager at USAID Good Governance Initiative, interview with IRM research, 14 May 2019.

Theme V: Increasing Corporate Accountability

Commitment 15: Openness and Accountability of State-Owned Enterprises

Language of the commitment as it appears in the action plan:

"An important direction of the LEPL — National Agency of State Property (NASP) represents the management/disposal of state-owned enterprises (SOEs). The major objective of management of enterprises by the State is the effective implementation of the functions important for the State. Also, the State tries to develop business rather than act as its competitor. The NASP continues the policy of minimization in relation to state-owned enterprises.

Such enterprises provoke a special public interest. Studies published by different organizations speak on lack of transparency of SOEs and on the necessity of introducing information accessibility standards therein. In this respect, of importance is the existence of information concerning the enterprises with 100% state sharing under the management of the NASP. At that, the enterprises were committed to proactively publish reports, including both the financial and conceptual parts.

For the purpose of increasing accountability and corporate responsibility of enterprises, it is important that the Agency would develop a corporate management guide, which will define the general enterprise management principles and directions. It is important that the Agency-developed guide would be based on the best relevant international practice"

Milestones:
1. Development by the Agency for state-owned enterprises of a unified template containing the name of enterprise, contact data, information about its establishment, management, capital, activity, state share in its capital; at that, the template shall also indicate the financial standing and outcomes of the enterprise. Information shall be published on the Agency's web-page nasp.gov.ge
2. Drafting a state-owned enterprises corporate management guide

Start Date: June 2018
End Date: December 2019

Editorial note: For the full text of this commitment, please see
https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/georgia-action-plan-2018-2019/.

Commitment Overview	Verifiability		OGP Value Relevance (as written)				Potential Impact				Completion				Did It Open Government?				
	Not specific enough to be verifiable	Specific enough to be verifiable	Access to Information	Civic Participation	Public Accountability	Technology & Innovation for Transparency & Accountability	None	Minor	Moderate	Transformative	Not Started	Limited	Substantial	Completed	Worsened	Did Not Change	Marginal	Major	Outstanding
15. Overall		✔	✔					✔			Assessed at the end of action plan cycle.				Assessed at the end of action plan cycle.				

Context and Objectives

This commitment aims to address the current lack of transparency related to state-owned enterprises (SOEs) in Georgia. Important information on SOEs—such as annual financial reports, audit reports,

administrative expenses, procurement, management policies, and number of employees—is not available publicly. Moreover, according to civil society research from 2015,[1] Georgia lacks specific regulations for minimum transparency standards for SOEs in Georgia. Most SOEs either do not have a webpage or the information published is limited and outdated. SOEs operate under the general management of LEPL.

The National Agency of State Property (NASP) provides information limited to SOE titles, identification codes, fields of operation, equity shares, addresses, and director names. The 2019 updated list on the NASP webpage counts 92 SOEs,[2] while only 28 provide contact information for the person responsible.

According to Transparency International (TI) Georgia, the lack of transparency around SOEs poses challenges in fighting corruption. For example, the procedures for appointing SOE directors or board members are not transparent, and the legislation does not regulate the criteria or the legitimate goals for the establishment of SOEs. This absence of standards entails high risks of conflicts of interest, nepotism, and corruption, as well as decisions being motivated by personal and/or political interests. According to TI–Georgia, anti-corruption mechanisms must be strengthened through the introduction of transparency, accountability, and integrity standards for SOEs.[3] They suggest the introduction of mechanisms for proactive disclosure of various types of information and the extension of freedom of information standards to SOEs.[4]

NASP aims to enhance transparency of SOEs (i.e., those established with 100 percent state contribution) by first creating a standard template with basic information about the enterprise. Such information would include data on the director, capital, projects, and more. NASP would publish this data on nasp.gov.ge. Secondly, NASP would draft a corporate management guide for such enterprises. Accordingly, this commitment is relevant to the OGP value of access to information. The main activities (the standards, SOE information, and corporate management guide) are verifiable.

If fully implemented as written, this commitment could represent a minor but important preliminary step toward improving transparency of SOEs. Namely, the introduction of unified standards could trigger disclosure of more detailed information that is currently not publicly available, such as administrative expenses, number of employees, and financial and audit reports. The commitment could also encourage more SOEs to publish information proactively.

According to stakeholders, this initiative is an important first step, as SOEs are perceived to be the "nest" for nepotism and corruption in Georgia.[5] However, this commitment is limited in scope, due to its encouraging nature. That is, it does not mandate disclosure of information that would be institutionalized by specific transparency and accountability legal norms. In addition, the commitment is limited in scale. It focuses only on 100 percent state sharing, which represents only 53 of 98 SOEs (54 percent). The state holds the control stock in 73 percent of SOEs. Thus, the commitment leaves out 19 percent of the enterprises with control stock owned by the state.[6]

Next steps

The IRM researcher recommends carrying this commitment forward to the next action plan, provided that disclosure of detailed and up-to-date information is institutionalized through relevant legal norms and will extend to all state-owned enterprises (SOEs). Furthermore, a future commitment could clarify if SOEs' own procurement tenders will be made available.

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[1] Institute for Development of Freedom of Information and Georgian Young Lawyers' Association, *Management Transparency and Accountability of State-Owned Enterprises in Georgia,* 2016, https://bit.ly/2YTzcVk.
[2] National Agency of State Property, "List of State-Owned Enterprises," https://bit.ly/30xTOTK.
[3] Ilia State University, *Study: State-Owned Enterprises in Georgia*, 2018, https://bit.ly/2NSmVj2.
[4] Transparency International–Georgia, *State-Owned Enterprises in Georgia: Transparency, Accountability and Prevention of Corruption,* 2016, https://bit.ly/2Y4rF95.
[5] IRM researcher's focus group discussion with experts, researchers, and master's students of public administration, 18 June 2019.
[6] National Agency of State Property, "List of State-Owned Enterprises," https://bit.ly/30xTOTK.

Theme VI: Municipalities

Commitment 16: Strengthening Transparency and Good Governance in Municipalities

Language of the commitment as it appears in the action plan:

"Municipalities annually dispose of significant budgetary funds. Transparent and fair use of budgetary funds is the major priority of municipalities.

In connection with the above, one of the principal challenges for a number of municipalities is that they lack a strategic document to analyze the challenges/threats faced by the good governance, identify the ways of their solution and activities for enhancing the good governance standards.

Based on the above, the Forum-member municipalities will develop a medium-term strategy for increasing transparency and integrity, wherein the integrity and transparency guiding standards will be established. For introducing the standards, a biennial action plan will be developed.

The introduction of transparency and integrity standards will essentially facilitate the improvement of the democratic governance quality in these municipalities."

Milestones:
1. Preparation of a situational analysis of transparent and good governance
2. Preparation of an initial release version of the transparency and building integrity strategy and action plan
3. Public consideration of the initial release versions of the transparency and building integrity strategy and action plan.
4. Approval of the Transparency and Building Integrity Strategy (2019-2022), Action Plan (2019-2020) and monitoring framework

Start Date: September 2018
End Date: September 2019

Editorial note: For the full text of this commitment, please see
https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/georgia-action-plan-2018-2019/.

Commitment Overview	Verifiability		OGP Value Relevance (as written)				Potential Impact				Completion				Did It Open Government?				
	Not specific enough to be verifiable	Specific enough to be verifiable	Access to Information	Civic Participation	Public Accountability	Technology & Innovation for Transparency & Accountability	None	Minor	Moderate	Transformative	Not Started	Limited	Substantial	Completed	Worsened	Did Not Change	Marginal	Major	Outstanding
16. Overall		✔	✔	✔					✔		Assessed at the end of action plan cycle.				Assessed at the end of action plan cycle.				

Context and Objectives

In 2016, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development recommended that Georgia develop anti-corruption actions for local governments to improve integrity and the enforcement of conflict-of-interest policies and anti-corruption restrictions.[1] Under this commitment, the United States Agency for International Development Good Governance Initiative (USAID GGI) ,[2] the United Nations

Development Programme (UNDP),[3] and the German Corporation for International Cooperation (GIZ)[4] will partner with local organizations and experts to support eight Georgian municipalities in developing strategies for transparency and integrity, along with relevant implementation action plans.[5]

First, this commitment calls for carrying out a situational analysis to help develop the first drafts of the strategies and action plans. Next, the first drafts will be released for public consultation. Finally, the drafts will be submitted for approval to the municipalities. According to stakeholders, these strategies will be used to identify potential anti-corruption risks in local government and develop specific mechanisms for promoting integrity and transparency.

UNDP[6] will partner with Khoni, Rustavi, Tskaltubo, Dusheti, and Bolnisi to incorporate the Islands of Integrity methodology, which was launched in Kutaisi in 2018.[7] USAID GGI will partner with Akhaltsikhe and Ozurgeti, and GIZ will provide support to Dedoplistskaro to facilitate their needs analyses, strategy developments, and public consultations. According to USAID GGI and GIZ,[8] the strategic documents will involve publishing information proactively, introducing timelines for responding to citizen requests, and consulting with interested parties, among others. Thus, this commitment is relevant to the OGP values of access to information and civic participation.

The milestones presented in the commitment are verifiable. The entire process is divided into four distinct and measurable steps: 1) performing a situational analysis, 2) developing first draft documents, 3) ensuring public consultation and feedback, and 4) submitting drafts for approval.

According to USAID GGI and GIZ, the strategic documents will address issues related to ethics and integrity mechanisms, human resources management system, transparency standards, civic engagement and oversight mechanisms, state procurement transparency, and integrity standards of subordinate legal entities.[9] However, according to an interviewed UNDP representative, the development of strategic documents alone will not immediately lead to improved transparency and accountability in the eight municipalities. Rather, the improvements will depend on how the strategies are implemented.[10] Similarly, according to an interviewed Georgian Young Lawyers' Association representative,[11] proper implementation of mechanisms provided in strategic documents will ultimately determine the long-term impact of the projects.

However, stakeholders also pointed out that the implementation of these strategies could have some immediate benefits to the municipalities, such as fostering the engagement and participation of local residents and civil society organizations in the elaboration process. This could not only boost their interest and capacities to monitor government activities closely,[12] but also increase the accountability and the quality of service delivery on the part of governments.[13] [14] In addition, the elaboration process could raise general awareness about and strengthen the capacities of local public servants on anti-corruption, integrity, and transparency-related issues. Such conditions are prerequisites for better internal management and higher quality in the delivering services to citizens.

Overall, this commitment could have a moderate potential impact by introducing new standards of integrity, transparency, and accountability in the selected municipalities.

Next steps

During the drafting of the strategies, the IRM researcher recommends that the eight municipalities engage with a wide range of local civil society or interest groups and residents in identifying the priorities to be addressed. Once the strategies are adopted, the local government bodies could develop relevant accountability monitoring mechanisms that include local civil society organizations and residents.

Currently, there is no permanent coordination between municipalities and partners that are involved in the process. Accordingly, the IRM researcher recommends that stakeholders establish a permanent coordination platform to avoid isolated decision making; share experiences about their approaches, priorities, and methodologies; and ensure coordinated efforts for achieving successful strategies, action plans, and monitoring of frameworks for all municipalities.

The IRM researcher also recommends the development of evaluation mechanisms to assess success in each partner municipality. Such mechanisms would allow step-by-step replication of successful experiences in other municipalities nationwide.

[1] Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *Anti-Corruption Reforms in Georgia: 4th Round of Monitoring of the Istanbul Anti-Corruption Action Plan*, 2016, https://bit.ly/2JyfuJN.

[2] Tetra Tech, "Georgia Good Governance Initiative," https://bit.ly/2XKANLJ.

[3] UNDP, "Fostering Decentralisation and Good Governance at the Local Level," https://bit.ly/2XEwoyW.

[4] GIZ, "Good Local Governance in South Caucasus," https://bit.ly/2LheTOJ.

[5] The eight municipalities are 1) Akhaltsikhe, 2) Dedoplistskharo, 3) Khoni, 4) Ozurgeti, 5) Rustavi, 6), Tskaltubo, 7) Dusheti, and 8) Bolnisi.

[6] Nino Kakubava, Project Manager, and Giorgi Nasrashvili, Good Governance Expert, at UNDP project: Fostering Decentralization and Good Governance at the Local Level in Georgia, interview with IRM researcher, 10 June 2019.

[7] UNDP, "Kutaisi—The Island of Integrity," 27 February 2018, https://bit.ly/2YPudoR.

[8] Mariam Gorgadze, Deputy Chief of Party and Mikheil Darchiashvili, Governance Manager at USAID GGI, interview with IRM research, 14 May 2019.

[9] Information provided to the IRM by USAID GGI during the pre-publication review of this report.

[10] Kakubava and Nasrashvili interview, June 2019.

[11] Nino Tsukhishvili, Parliamentary Secretary, Georgian Young Lawyers' Association, interview with IRM researcher, 5 July 2019.

[12] Tsukhishvili interview, 2019.

[13] Giorgi Meladze, Director of Constitutional Research Center and associate professor at the Law School of Ilia State University, interview with IRM researcher, 8 June 2019.

[14] Kakubava and Nasrashvili interview, June 2019.

Commitment 17: Improving the Open Data Collection and Publishing Process in Akhaltsikhe and Kutaisi Municipalities

Language of the commitment as it appears in the action plan:

"The open data concept holds a special place in the open government process. The GoG maintains open data at both the central and local levels on a daily basis.

The open data publication in a regular and proper form enables citizens, the business sector and any stakeholder to familiarize with the state data and make using them innovative applications, business projects and electronic services.

For regular and effective use of open data, the LEPL — Data Exchange Agency under the Ministry of Justice, within the framework of the OGP Georgia Action Plan 2014–2015, created an open data portal www.data.gov.ge. Since the creation of the portal up to this day, the placement of data thereon is carried out with a low frequency and intensity, and especially on the part of local government.

The Kutaisi City Municipality with the support of UNDP has developed and approved an anti-corruption strategy and action plan. The anti-corruption activity will be conducted using an innovative model *Islands of Integrity*. A part of the anti-corruption action plan represents the proactive publication of open data. However, one of the major challenges for Akhaltsikhe and Kutaisi municipalities is shortage of necessary capabilities for collecting and processing open data in the appropriate formats (XML, CSV).

Based on the above, the Akhaltsikhe and Kutaisi municipalities shall work out an Open Data Action Plan 2019-2020, the effective implementation of which will significantly improve the open data collection, processing and publishing capabilities in Akhaltsikhe and Kutaisi municipalities."

Milestones:
1. Preparation of a situational analysis in connection with open data collection, processing and publication.
2. Preparation of an initial version of the Open Data Action Plan (2019-2020)
3. Public considerations of the initial version of the Open Data Action Plan (2019-2020)
4. Approval of the Open Data Action Plan (2019-2020) and monitoring framework

Start Date: September 2018
End Date: June 2019

Editorial note: For the full text of this commitment, please see https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/georgia-action-plan-2018-2019/.

Commitment Overview	Verifiability		OGP Value Relevance (as written)				Potential Impact				Completion				Did It Open Government?				
	Not specific enough to be verifiable	Specific enough to be verifiable	Access to Information	Civic Participation	Public Accountability	Technology & Innovation for Transparency & Accountability	None	Minor	Moderate	Transformative	Not Started	Limited	Substantial	Completed	Worsened	Did Not Change	Marginal	Major	Outstanding
17. Overall		✔	✔	✔				✔			Assessed at the end of action plan cycle.				Assessed at the end of action plan cycle.				

Context and Objectives

This commitment calls for Kutaisi and Akhaltsikhe municipalities to develop Open Data Action Plans and monitoring frameworks. Kutaisi municipality approved an Integrity Strategy in 2018 that included proactive publishing municipal data. Akhaltsikhe municipality committed to approve an Integrity Strategy within Georgia's current national action plan. The Open Data Action Plans will define specific steps to improve data collection and management processes and enable municipalities to publish government data in an open data format.[1]

The implementation of the commitment is supported by the United States Agency for International Development's Good Governance Initiative. That initiative contracted the Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI) to provide technical assistance to the municipalities.[2] Specifically, IDFI will provide expertise for the development of detailed methodologies and work plans, conduct situational analyses with recommendations, develop open data strategies and action plans, and conduct capacity building for municipal government personnel. The commitment and its activities are directed toward the improvement of internal data management and better data disclosure. Thus, it is relevant to the OGP value of access to information. The commitment is also relevant to civic participation. It encourages public discussions on the initial drafts of action plans.

The commitment provides verifiable, measurable milestones, such as performing situational analyses, preparing first drafts of documents, and conducting public consultations on the drafts. The development of the Open Data Action Plans could improve data management and proactive disclosure in the two municipalities. Also, the plans could increase the accessibility of local government datasets, enabling stakeholders, civil society organizations, private sector actors, media, and academics to utilize this data. Accordingly, this commitment could represent a minor but positive a first step toward improving open data management in these municipalities. However, the actual impact of these action plans will depend on their content as implemented.

Next steps

The IRM researcher recommends the following:

- The published data should be continuously updated. This could raise the reliability of the provided data and increase its utilization by interested parties.

- To generate maximum impact from publishing in an open data format, public organizations could raise awareness among communities about both the concepts of open data and how such data can be used. Those organizations could also promote what they have accomplished in this regard.

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[1] Institute for Development of Freedom of Information project: "Develop Open Data Strategies and Action Plans (2019–2020)," 2019, https://bit.ly/2GcWrSY.
[2] Mariam Gorgadze, Deputy Chief of Party and Mikheil Darchiashvili, Governance Manager at USAID Good Governance Initiative USAID Good Governance Initiative, interview with IRM researcher, 14 May 2019.

Commitment 18: Improving the Full-Scale Engagement and Participation of People with Disabilities in the Political and Social Life of Akhaltsikhe and Kutaisi Municipalities

Language of the commitment as it appears in the action plan:

"The protection of rights of people with disabilities (PWDS) is the priority task of the GoG. Frequently, the full-value engagement and participation of the PWDS in the political and social life is interfered with the absence of necessary infrastructure, because of which they fail to attend sessions and meetings held in administration buildings. Said challenge is particularly felt at a local level. The Akhaltsikhe and Kutaisi municipalities attach great importance to the adequate and inclusive engagement of population in the decision-making or service receipt process. The municipalities mentioned here ensure adaptation of their administration buildings to the PWDS needs."

Milestones:

1. Analysis of the municipality administration building facilities regarding the Georgian legislation requirements
2. Identification of needs and development of TOR (terms of reference) necessary for adapting the building
3. Adaptation of the building to PWDS needs

Start Date: September 2018
End Date: December 2019

Editorial note: For the full text of this commitment, please see https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/georgia-action-plan-2018-2019/.

Commitment Overview	Verifiability		OGP Value Relevance (as written)				Potential Impact				Completion				Did It Open Government?				
	Not specific enough to be verifiable	Specific enough to be verifiable	Access to Information	Civic Participation	Public Accountability	Technology & Innovation for Transparency & Accountability	None	Minor	Moderate	Transformative	Not Started	Limited	Substantial	Completed	Worsened	Did Not Change	Marginal	Major	Outstanding
18. Overall		✔	Unclear					✔			Assessed at the end of action plan cycle.				Assessed at the end of action plan cycle.				

Context and Objectives

Under this commitment, the municipalities of Akhaltsikhe and Kutaisi aim to make their administration buildings more accessible to people with disabilities (PWDs). The lack of infrastructure adapted to the needs of PWDs remains a major challenge across Georgia and impedes their inclusion in society and their ability to receive municipal services.[1] For example, as stated by an interviewed United States Agency for International Development Good Governance Initiative (USAID GGI) representative, a person in a wheelchair cannot attend the council meeting because they are often not able to physically enter the plenary hall.[2] According to Georgian law,[3] the development of appropriate infrastructure for PWDs at local facilities falls under the self-government responsibilities. Consequently, with this commitment, Kutaisi and Akhaltsikhe municipalities, with the support of GGI, plan to perform infrastructural analyses of their administrative buildings, identify needs, develop terms of reference (ToRs), and ultimately adapt buildings to the needs of PWDs.

This commitment could provide better opportunities to PWDs to independently enter municipal buildings, receive services, and participate in local government. However, as the infrastructural adaptation of the buildings does not by itself ensure an increase in participation, this commitment is not directly relevant to OGP values and, specifically, the value of civic participation.

Overall, this commitment's planned activities are specific enough to be verified. While this commitment addresses an important contemporary issue in Georgian municipalities—namely the physical accessibility of government buildings[4]—it does not provide any institutional mechanisms to encourage greater participation of PWDs. Therefore, the commitment is limited in scope and scale and thus could have a minor potential impact.

Next steps

While this commitment potentially addresses an important issue in Georgia, the IRM researcher recommends continuing it outside the framework of future OGP action plans, due to the lack of direct relevance to open government. If carried forward, the commitment could be expanded to include additional support to persons with disabilities for their participation in council meetings, public consultations, and other assemblies. These supports could include sign language interpretation and other aides to enhance understanding and capacity to actively participate.

[1] IDFI, *Statistical Analysis of PWDS in Georgia,* 2018, https://bit.ly/2FJX74i.
[2] Mariam Gorgadze, Deputy Chief of Party and Mikheil Darchiashvili, Governance Manager at USAID Good Governance Initiative, at USAID Good Governance Initiative, interview with IRM research, 14 May 2019.
[3] Organic Law of Georgia, "The Local Self-government Code of Georgia," Article 16, https://bit.ly/32vsx66.
[4] Darchiashvili and Gorgadze interview, May 2019.

Commitment 19: Improving Citizen Engagement in Budgetary Processes in Batumi City through Introduction of an Institutional Mechanism of Participatory Budgeting

Language of the commitment as it appears in the action plan:

"The transparent and purposeful planning of the local budget with wide citizen engagement is the priority task of Batumi Municipality City Hall.

For improving citizen engagement in the budgetary processes, Batumi Municipality City hall shall develop and introduce an institutional mechanism of participatory budgeting.

A significant part of a new wave of the local self-government reform represents the introduction of new mechanisms of citizen engagement in the decision-making process at a local level and the creation of real facilities.

The lack of institutional mechanisms necessary for participatory budgeting is a serious challenge for Batumi Municipality City Hall. A problematic issue is also the low motivation of citizen engagement in the budgetary processes, which seriously affects the engagement intensity and quality."

Milestones:

1. Establishment of district contacts in the Batumi City Municipality Budget according to the city's administration units
2. Approval of the relevant legislative framework for introducing an institutional mechanism of participatory budgeting
3. Promotion of the system of participatory budgeting; raising citizen awareness.
4. Conduct of the participatory budgeting process
5. Allocation of respective amounts in the 2019 Batumi City Municipality Budget for implementing a project/projects identified during the participatory budgeting
6. Promotion of the participatory budgeting results

Start Date: January 2018
End Date: March 2019

Editorial note: For the full text of this commitment, please see
https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/georgia-action-plan-2018-2019/.

Commitment Overview	Verifiability		OGP Value Relevance (as written)				Potential Impact				Completion				Did It Open Government?				
	Not specific enough to be verifiable	Specific enough to be verifiable	Access to Information	Civic Participation	Public Accountability	Technology & Innovation for Transparency & Accountability	None	Minor	Moderate	Transformative	Not Started	Limited	Substantial	Completed	Worsened	Did Not Change	Marginal	Major	Outstanding
19. Overall		✔	✔	✔				✔			Assessed at the end of action plan cycle.				Assessed at the end of action plan cycle.				

Context and Objectives

Under Commitment 24 from Georgia's third action plan (2016–2018), the municipalities of Akhaltsikhe , Batumi, Kutaisi, and Ozurgeti aimed to introduce an electronic mechanism for local budget planning.[1]

Specifically, the four municipalities committed to establish electronic "Plan City Budgets" to help identify local budget priorities and plan accordingly.[2] In 2019, Batumi Municipality Town Hall created the web platform idea.batumi.ge, which enables citizens to register their ideas and vote for their preferred projects. The United States Agency for International Development's Good Governance Initiative (USAID GGI) has been actively supporting these municipalities in successfully implementing the commitment through a joint grant with the Estonian Foreign Ministry. The grant was issued for the e-Governance Academy of Estonia and its local partner, the Institute for Development of Freedom of Information.[3]

With this current commitment, Batumi Municipality Town Hall, with the support of USAID GGI, aims to enhance civic participation in budgetary planning processes through institutionalizing the participatory planning mechanisms. To promote idea.batumi.ge and support participative mechanisms, the municipality will create district unions in each of its administrative units. District unions will organize residents in each district and represent a structural unit for their participation. Secondly, the municipality will institutionalize participation mechanisms through relevant legislation and define Town Hall's obligations for ensuring citizen participation. Lastly, with USAID GGI's support, the municipality will conduct an awareness-raising campaign to promote the opportunities for participatory budgeting and disseminate the results. The goal of this commitment is to raise public awareness about participatory budgeting opportunities and institutionalize participatory mechanisms. Thus, it is relevant to the OGP values of access to information and civic participation.

The commitment's activities are specific enough to be verified. However, it is unclear from the commitment and milestones how the participatory budgeting will take place and in what form citizens will be able to participate. If fully implemented, this commitment could provide a new mechanism through which Batumi residents can allocate the municipal budget according to their preferences. The creation of district unions could also contribute to higher levels of citizen engagement in self-governance processes. The district unions will serve as liaisons between the public and the municipality, and those unions will support popularization of participatory budget mechanisms.[4] However, it should be noted that opposition political parties see the creation of district unions as a potential tool for the governing party to utilize unions for its political goals, such as employing party activists and promoting the party's interests.[5]

If fully implemented, this commitment cumulatively, with the launch of the idea.batumi.ge platform, could help institutionalize public participation in the budget processes in Batumi Municipality. However, as the commitment is limited in budget and scale—allowing only 120.000 GEL total allocation for up to three citizen-proposed projects—this commitment could have a minor potential impact.

Next steps

The IRM researcher recommends that Batumi Municipality clarify the process for conducting the participatory budgeting exercise. Specifics should include how the municipality intends to organize the public consultations, collect feedback, and translate that information into concrete budget proposals. The IRM researcher also recommends ensuring the elaboration of a mechanism that allows locals to be involved throughout the whole cycle of the budget planning, to define the priority setting and budgeting decisions. Furthermore, the IRM researcher recommends requiring the municipal government to analyze the results of priorities identified by the citizens and publish publicly the comparison between the citizen-prioritized budget and the final approved budget. If differences between the priorities identified by citizens and the thematic priorities in the actual budget are identified, the regulation should clearly define the steps to be taken by the municipality to ensure the voices of citizens are heard and considered.

To further increase citizen engagement in the budgetary planning processes, the IRM researcher recommends increasing the amount of allocated budget as well as the number of projects. Also, the IRM researcher recommends the government continue conducting an awareness-raising campaign through media, public discussions, and social networks to maximize public engagement. The IRM researcher also recommends that the electronic participatory platform not only provide space for citizen-prompted

discussions, crowdsourcing ideas, and comments but also ensure there is a mechanism for local government response to the issues raised during the discussion.

On the national level, the IRM researcher recommends applying a more unified approach in implementing participatory budgeting mechanisms in all municipalities in Georgia. Development of a unified participatory budgeting approach for all municipalities could contribute to sustainable participatory budgeting practices. This recommendation emphasizes the importance of the previous IRM recommendation on the development of a unified approach across the country.

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[1] Open Government Partnership, "Georgia National Action Plan 2016–2018," https://bit.ly/2YRRUN7.
[2] Open Government Partnership, *IRM: Georgia End-of-Term Report 2016–2018*, https://bit.ly/2XN8Oix.
[3] Open Government Partnership, *IRM: Georgia Progress Report 2016–2018*, https://bit.ly/2XKZWpP.
[4] Akaki Gvianidze, Head of Department of Municipal Services at Agency of Municipal Services, Batumi City Hall, interview with IRM researcher, 11 June 2019.
[5] Grass Fact-Check, "District Unions—New Partners of the Local Governance?" 17 July 2019, https://bit.ly/2Lpas4j.

Commitment 20: Your Idea for Zugdidi Mayor

Language of the commitment as it appears in the action plan:

"The project 'Your Idea for the Zugdidi Mayor' implies the creation of an electronic portal, through which the Zugdidi population will communicate with the Town Mayor by proposing a specific idea/initiative. This will facilitate the deepening of cooperation between the local self-government and citizens and raising the civic responsibility. The Town Hall commits to be more accountable to citizens and to respond the entered ideas, even if, due to some restrictions, they are not implementable"

Milestones:
1. Approval of regulations on the making of an e-portal
2. E-portal making and activation
3. Informing population about the e-portal

Start Date: June 2018
End Date: December 2019

Editorial note: For the full text of this commitment, please see
https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/georgia-action-plan-2018-2019/.

Commitment Overview	Verifiability		OGP Value Relevance (as written)				Potential Impact				Completion				Did It Open Government?				
	Not specific enough to be verifiable	Specific enough to be verifiable	Access to Information	Civic Participation	Public Accountability	Technology & Innovation for Transparency & Accountability	None	Minor	Moderate	Transformative	Not Started	Limited	Substantial	Completed	Worsened	Did Not Change	Marginal	Major	Outstanding
20. Overall		✔		✔				✔			Assessed at the end of action plan cycle.				Assessed at the end of action plan cycle.				

Context and Objectives

Georgia's previous action plan (2016–2017) included a commitment to introduce an electronic portal for petitions in Zugdidi Municipality. While the new petitions portal was incorporated on the municipality's new website, the petitions mechanism was not functional by the end of the action plan.[1] Currently, Zugdidi residents are able to submit petitions as hard copies to the Municipal Assembly. This commitment aims to create an electronic portal called Your Idea to the Zugdidi Mayor, which would provide an official mechanism for residents to propose their ideas to the mayor of the municipality.

According to the commitment, the municipality also plans to respond to all citizen proposals, even those that it deems not administratively feasible. The Municipality of Zugdidi will approve the legislative framework for this kind of communication, develop and launch the portal, and promote it to residents. Consequently, this commitment is relevant to the OGP value of civic participation. The e-portal is verifiable, but the milestone to "inform" the public on the new e-portal is not explained in detail.

The portal is expected to provide a new opportunity for citizens to communicate their ideas to the municipal government, but it is unclear how the initiatives will be considered and/or implemented and what will be the selection process. According to the IRM researcher's focus group discussion participants, the success of the portal greatly depends on how the government considers the petitions from citizens and which decisions it decides to carry out.[2] Therefore, the overall potential impact is minor.

Next steps

To improve engagement, the IRM researcher recommends that the Zugdidi Municipality Town Hall explore ways for offline citizen engagement, particularly in villages where internet penetration is lower.

The commitment text currently lacks general information about how the web portal is supposed to work and what kind of ideas it will support. Accordingly, the IRM researcher advises the government to provide more details about the selection criteria and process, and specifics related to each of the milestones.

The IRM researcher also recommends that Zugdidi Municipality refer to the similar project of Tbilisi City (idea.tbilisi.gov.ge) as a good example to emulate. Many ideas can be generated and incorporated, such as a public voting and a sectoral filtering function.

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[1] Open Government Partnership, *IRM: Georgia End-of-Term Report 2016–2018*, pp. 66–67, https://bit.ly/2U7yxyt
[2] IRM researcher's focus group discussion with students in Zugdidi, 15 June 2019.

Commitment 21: Introduction and Development of Electronic Services in Batumi and Rustavi Municipalities

Language of the commitment as it appears in the action plan:

"The improvement of access to municipal services for local population is one of the major goals of the Batumi Municipality City Hall's activity. The Batumi Municipality City Hall understands that electronic services are the cheapest, comfortable and rapid services deliverable by the State. Within the framework of this plan, the Batumi Municipality City Hall commits to introduce and develop five (5) electronic services."

Milestones:
1. Analysis of key business processes related to municipal services in the system of Batumi Municipality City Hall
2. Introduction of a participatory budgeting module
3. Introduction of e-petitions module
4. Introduction of a spatial arrangement and architecture module
5. Introduction of a property management services module
6. Introduction of a healthcare and social welfare services module

Start Date: Third quarter 2018
End Date: September 2019

Editorial note: For the full text of this commitment, please see https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/georgia-action-plan-2018-2019/.

Commitment Overview	Verifiability		OGP Value Relevance (as written)				Potential Impact				Completion				Did It Open Government?				
	Not specific enough to be verifiable	Specific enough to be verifiable	Access to Information	Civic Participation	Public Accountability	Technology & Innovation for Transparency & Accountability	None	Minor	Moderate	Transformative	Not Started	Limited	Substantial	Completed	Worsened	Did Not Change	Marginal	Major	Outstanding
21. Overall		✔	✔	✔		✔			✔		Assessed at the end of action plan cycle.				Assessed at the end of action plan cycle.				

Context and Objectives

In recent years, municipal governments in Georgia have been trying to make their service deliveries more accessible to the public. Under this commitment, the municipalities of Batumi and Rustavi have committed to introduce five new electronic services to their residents. They list the following services: 1) participatory budgeting, 2) e-petitions, 3) spatial arrangement and architecture, 4) property management services, and 5) healthcare and social welfare modules. Electronic access to these services will cover the entire spectrum of services provided by the municipalities. At a later stage, the government will put all the services on a single platform in both municipalities. It should be noted that the introduction of an electronic module for participatory budgeting in Batumi Municipality overlaps with Commitment 19 from this action plan.

As stated by the representative of Batumi Municipal Services Agency,[1] the agency will engage business analytics to study and describe all the service-related processes. This exercise will provide a good knowledge base for transforming existing services into electronic services. The representative of the United States Agency for International Development's Good Government Initiative (USAID GGI), which

provides technical assistance to Batumi Municipality, also stated that USAID GGI plans to develop a strategy document to identify three pilot services that will be made available online.

The introduction of the five services online in both municipalities is verifiable. However, it is unclear exactly what services will be put online. Likewise, for each of the milestones, it is unclear how many signatures will be required to initiate petitions, what the government's obligation is to respond to issues raised through petitions, or what the indicators of success are.

If fully implemented as written, this commitment could significantly improve business as usual by introducing an entire spectrum of electronic services to citizens. Further, incorporation of service modules on a single platform could significantly change the public's attitude toward and perceptions of local governance. This commitment could improve access to and the quality of public services and increase civic participation in the two municipalities.[2]

However, the potential impact is somewhat mitigated because the milestones, while ambitious, lack key details about each of the proposed modules. Furthermore, according to USAID GGI, local governments first plan to develop a strategy document that will identify three pilot services to put online. The electronification of services is a costly and time-consuming process, so the municipalities of Batumi and Rustavi will likely have to prioritize which service modules they will introduce. This commitment does not provide information that would enable assessment of the implementation process in the future, nor does it specify the scale, details, accountability mechanisms, and indicators for any of the modules and milestones.

As stated above, stakeholders assess the commitment as ambitious and stress the importance of clarification and prioritization via development of the strategy document to outline what is to be done, when, and how.[3] Thus, although this commitment has the capacity to develop into a transformative set of actions in the future, with the current commitment text, and based on the interviews, it is more likely that the commitment could have a moderate potential impact.

Next steps

Considering that the commitment milestones describe a service area rather than a specific service that will become available electronically, the IRM researcher recommends that Batumi and Rustavi municipalities consider providing specifications and indicators while designing an action plan, to make the milestones measurable and the commitment verifiable. For example, Milestone 21.6 ("Introduction of a healthcare and social welfare services module") does not specify exactly what healthcare and welfare services will be introduced electronically. If the commitment implies all the existing services in this area, the commitment text should specify and frame the milestone as "all six existing services." It should also provide the relevant quantified indicators that would signal commitment completion if all six services are introduced. This will not only make the commitment specific but also make it more administratively feasible to implement.

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[1] OGP intermunicipal meeting in Ozurgeti: Akaki Gvianidze, Head of Department of Municipal Services at Agency of Municipal Services, Batumi City Hall, interview with IRM researcher, 11 June 2019.
[2] Gvianidze interview, June 2019.
[3] Mariam Gorgadze, Deputy Chief of Party and Mikheil Darchiashvili, Governance Manager at USAID Good Governance at USAID Good Governance Initiative, interview with IRM research, 14 May 2019.

Commitment 22: I.Gov.Zugdidi

Language of the commitment as it appears in the action plan:

"For improving citizen engagement, in addition to regulatory mechanisms, Zugdidi Town Assembly shall, using modern technologies, facilitate enhancement of citizen engagement in the local-government activities, also the introduction and development of the accountability and publicity principles.

Within the framework of this plan, the Municipality Assembly will generate a multifunctional mobile application - I.Gov.Zugdidi. The application will contain:

- Municipality timetable, for example, regular sessions and agenda;
- Dates of holding in the town of various cultural or sport events;
- Tentative start and end dates of implementable infrastructural projects, etc.

The application will enable a citizen to obtain information about the municipal healthcare and social welfare programs, the terms of using a specific and a list of documents to be submitted to the Town Hall for the purpose. The same principle can be applied for getting information about a building permit. The application also provides for the introduction of a feedback. Citizens would also communicate to the self-government information about the existing infrastructural problems or other urgent issues. The application will be provided with a function of sending figures and textual data."

Milestones:

1. Generating the application
2. Information campaign about the application
3. Enabling the application.

Start Date: January 2019
End Date: December 2019

Editorial note: For the full text of this commitment, please see https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/georgia-action-plan-2018-2019/.

Commitment Overview	Verifiability		OGP Value Relevance (as written)				Potential Impact				Completion				Did It Open Government?				
	Not specific enough to be verifiable	Specific enough to be verifiable	Access to Information	Civic Participation	Public Accountability	Technology & Innovation for Transparency & Accountability	None	Minor	Moderate	Transformative	Not Started	Limited	Substantial	Completed	Worsened	Did Not Change	Marginal	Major	Outstanding
22. Overall		✔	✔	✔		✔		✔			Assessed at the end of action plan cycle.				Assessed at the end of action plan cycle.				

Context and Objectives

Under Commitment 22 from Georgia's third action plan (2016–2017), Zugdidi Municipality created the mobile app Zugdidi-INFO, allowing residents to receive regular announcements for Assembly meetings. With this current commitment, the Zugdidi Municipality Assembly plans to develop a mobile application called I.Gov.Zugdidi, which will provide residents with information about planned and ongoing processes in the city, such as municipal events, tentative infrastructural projects, ongoing tenders, and background and contact information of council members.[1] The application will also have a feedback mechanism for users, though this is not clearly defined in the action plan.[2] This commitment is therefore relevant to the

OGP values of access to information, civic participation, and technology and innovation. The creation of the mobile app is verifiable, though the "information campaign" for the app under Milestone 2 is unclear.

The I.Gov.Zugdidi app could provide users with information about ongoing government activities in the municipality. Currently, citizens can obtain municipal information by going to the municipality's official Facebook page, which is updated daily, or by visiting the official municipality website, which is not updated regularly.[3] Also, Zugdidi residents often depend on informal networking to acquire information from the local government.[4] These ways of getting information were discussed during the IRM researcher's focus group discussion. Participants outlined that the app could help improve current practices.

Since the commitment emphasizes development of a mobile application, its success largely depends on the extent to which citizens are equipped with smartphones and internet access. In fact, the commitment requires such infrastructure. According to an E-readiness nationwide survey in Georgia, the younger generation is more likely to regularly use mobile internet compared to the older generation.[5] This reality limits the scope of potential application users. The survey results were supported by focus group participants, who believe that this application will not be used widely.

Thus, the commitment will have no considerable impact on the status quo. Updated information on upcoming events, news, and infrastructural projects is published on the municipality's official Facebook page. Therefore, the creation of a mobile application that provides the same types of information represents a minor improvement to the existing practice of disseminating information.

Next steps

The IRM researcher recommends integrating Your Idea to the Zugdidi Mayor into Commitment 20 of this action plan, under its mobile application platform and all the online and distant services that are available in the municipality. Incorporation of all the services on one platform could increase the cumulative impact of Commitment 20.

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[1] OGP Intermunicipal Meeting in Ozurgeti: Mirian Kalisonia, Head of Public Relations Department at Zugdidi City Council, interview with IRM researcher, 11 June 2019.
[2] Kilasonia interview, June 2019.
[3] Nika Baramaia, Business Analyst, Municipal Service Development Agency, interview with IRM researcher, 3 October 2019.
[4] IRM researcher's focus group discussion with students in Zugdidi, 15 June 2019.
[5] Georgia Good Governance Initiative, USAID, *E-readiness Study in Georgia*, 2016, https://bit.ly/2KInsgS.

Commitment 23: Introduction of a System of Assessment of Services and Citizens Satisfaction Level Measurement in Ozurgeti Municipality

Language of the commitment as it appears in the action plan:

"The Ozurgeti Municipality Assembly and Town Hall actively work on the perfection of services rendered to their citizens and the introduction of a system of monitoring of the indicators presented in the program budget. This commitment aims at introducing a system of assessment of services rendered by the local self-government to the population and measurement of the citizen satisfaction level, which is to raise the citizen awareness and engagement in the decision-making process."

- Lack of a system of assessing the service rendered to population and measuring the citizen satisfaction level;
- Low awareness of the modern technology possibilities;
- Shortage of modern methods and innovative technologies;
- Low interest of citizens in the engagement in the decision-making process."

Milestones:
1. Setting up a planning group for identifying the service delivery assessment indicators.
2. Setting up a working group of skilled observers for measuring the indicators.
3. Collection of service delivery data
4. Comparing the results with the indicators and adjusting the service management
5. Introduction of the project "Self-government for Education" — promotion of the self-government importance and encouragement of the youth engagement in the decision-making process (conduct of awareness raising activities)

Start Date: September 2018
End Date: September 2019

Editorial note: For the full text of this commitment, please see
https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/georgia-action-plan-2018-2019/.

Commitment Overview	Verifiability		OGP Value Relevance (as written)				Potential Impact				Completion				Did It Open Government?				
	Not specific enough to be verifiable	Specific enough to be verifiable	Access to Information	Civic Participation	Public Accountability	Technology & Innovation for Transparency & Accountability	None	Minor	Moderate	Transformative	Not Started	Limited	Substantial	Completed	Worsened	Did Not Change	Marginal	Major	Outstanding
23. Overall		✔		✔					✔		Assessed at the end of action plan cycle.				Assessed at the end of action plan cycle.				

Context and Objectives

Ozurgeti Municipality is a hub for using technology to increase the transparency and effectiveness of local governance. For example, under Commitment 23 from Georgia's third action plan (2016–2017), Ozurgeti Municipality introduced the live broadcasting of Assembly meetings. This allowed residents to follow agenda items. The municipality also started sending SMS notifications and emails on upcoming Assembly meetings.[1]

Under this current commitment, the Ozurgeti Municipality Assembly and City Hall aim to develop evaluation standards to assess public services and citizen satisfaction with these services. The

government can use this data to identify gaps and plan relevant actions to address them, including communication and outreach. According to an interviewed representative of Ozurgeti Municipality, the municipality plans to collaborate with the National Parliamentary Library of Georgia and local civil society organizations in an initiative called "Local government for Education".[2] These collaborations will involve holding meetings with locals in all villages of the municipality to deliver information. They will also raise awareness about self-government functions, advantages, rights, opportunities, and available participation mechanisms. Milestone 23.5 generally plans to encourage greater youth engagement in decision-making processes. Therefore, the commitment is relevant to the OGP value of civic participation.

While this commitment presents a set of activities that are verifiable, some activities of the commitment lack specificity. For example, the "planning group" and "working group" under Milestones 23.1 and 23.2, respectively, are not well defined, nor is the introduction of "Self-Government for Education" among youth under Milestone 23.5.

Overall, the potential impact of the commitment could be moderate, if fully implemented. The achievement of the first four milestones, in particular, would, for the first time in Ozurgeti, create an evaluation standard to assess public services in the municipality and explore citizens' experiences. Transformative reform, though, would entail introducing tools to ensure citizens' role in the process of the service identification and design. Such reform would also require the self-government to respond to the results of the assessment and propose changes accordingly.

Next steps

The IRM researcher recommends that Ozurgeti Municipality introduce citizen participatory tools. It should also ensure that the findings of the assessment of public services are published and that they keep the government legally accountable to reflect on the assessment results.

[1] Open Government Partnership, *IRM: Georgia End-of-Term Report 2016–2018*, pp 72, https://bit.ly/3cSaJHp
[2] OGP intermunicipal meeting in Ozurgeti: Davit Darchia, Chairman of Ozurgeti Municipal Assembly, interview with IRM researcher, 11 June 2019.

Theme VII: Open Parliament

Commitment 24: Promoting and Monitoring the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the Parliament of Georgia

Language of the commitment as it appears in the action plan:

"Since joining the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Government of Georgia defined country-adjusted targets and indicators to implement the Goals at the national level. The Sustainable Development Agenda 2030 unequivocally recognizes the significant role of Parliaments in the implementation of SDGs, which includes the implementation of the SDG 16 (16.6 – *'Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels'*; 16.7 – *'Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels'*). Simultaneously, ensuring maximum openness, transparency and accountability of the process is crucial for ultimate success in this endeavor. The first steps were taken with the support of the European Union and UNDP:

- A new component was added to the action plans of Parliamentary Committees, which determines the compliance of the activities defined by the Committees' action plans with the respective SDGs and demonstrates close connection between the national policy and the global agenda, thus also increasing the awareness of various stakeholders on SDGs in the process;
- A number of Committees have already committed through their action plans to hear the reports of relevant Ministries on the progress made towards implementing the SDGs.

Besides, in June 2018, with the support of the Swedish Government, UNDP and Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), and based on the IPU/UNDP methodology, the Parliament conducted a self-assessment exercise to check SDG readiness. The Exercise defined the role of the Parliament in the fulfillment of 2030 Agenda and outlined possible actions for SDGs implementation.

At this stage, the Parliament shall elaborate an action plan based on the results of the above self-assessment which shall include the introduction of parliamentary mechanisms and activities related to the Parliament's lawmaking, oversight and citizen engagement functions. This will increase the involvement of the Parliament in SDG implementation and monitoring and ensure the institutionalization of this process in the Parliament."

Milestones:
1. Elaboration of the SDGs Strategy/Action Plan of the Parliament
2. Implementation of the SDGs Action Plan of the Parliament

Start Date: June 2018
End Date: December 2019

Editorial note: For the full text of this commitment, please see https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/georgia-action-plan-2018-2019/.

Commitment Overview	Verifiability		OGP Value Relevance (as written)				Potential Impact				Completion				Did It Open Government?				
	Not specific enough to be verifiable	Specific enough to be verifiable	Access to Information	Civic Participation	Public Accountability	Technology & Innovation for Transparency & Accountability	None	Minor	Moderate	Transformative	Not Started	Limited	Substantial	Completed	Worsened	Did Not Change	Marginal	Major	Outstanding
24. Overall		✔	✔						✔		Assessed at the end of action plan cycle.				Assessed at the end of action plan cycle.				

Context and Objectives

In 2015, Georgia adopted its United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), to be implemented by 2030.[1] To advance the implementation and monitoring of the SDGs, the Government of Georgia established the Sustainable Development Goals Council.[2] It also committed to develop an Electronic Monitoring System and an SDGs Tracker.[3] These tools would be used for internal and public monitoring of the implementation progress.

Under this commitment, the Parliament of Georgia, with the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Georgia,[4] plans to introduce a parliamentary strategy and an action plan for monitoring and supporting implementation of the SDGs. As stated by an interviewed UNDP representative, the SDGs strategy and action plan will utilize all the available parliamentary mechanisms, such as policy making and lawmaking, oversight, budget, and citizen engagement. The action plan would be based on the results of the Parliament's self-assessment.[5] That assessment was developed with the financial support of Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), the United States Agency for International Development's Good Government Initiative (USAID GGI), and UNDP and it was carried out according to IPU/UNDP methodology to measure Parliament's capacities, gaps, and opportunities for supporting Georgia in achieving its national SDGs goals.[6]

Overall, the commitment aims to increase parliamentary involvement in the SDG implementation and monitoring through its legislative, oversight, budgetary, and representative competences. This participation will contribute to greater government accountability to the Parliament for the national SDGs goals it has identified. However, the link to public accountability and civic participation remains unclear, as the commitment text does not specify how Parliament plans to engage citizens in SDG monitoring. The link to the OGP value of access to information is observable. Some of the parliamentary committees that have already made SDG monitoring part of their action plans will be involved in proactively publishing implementation reports on the new parliamentary webpage as part of Commitment 26 in this OGP action plan.

As stated by the UNDP representative,[7] elaboration of the parliamentary strategy and the action plan could make the SDGs a priority in the legislative body and foster Parliament's role in overseeing SDG implementation across government branches. In addition, the UNDP representative believes that emphasis on budgeting in the SDG strategy can strengthen Parliament's role in reviewing government-proposed expenditures and ensure that adequate financial resources are allocated to achieve the nationally aligned goals. For example, according to the State Audit Office's 2019 *Efficiency Audit Report,*[8] SDG indicators and relevant budgetary data are only partially represented in the Basic Data and Directions (BDD) document of the country. Prioritizing SDG monitoring in the Parliament could contribute to more comprehensive reflection of SDG-related budgetary data into BDD documents.

Overall, this commitment could provide a more in-depth assessment of policies, laws, and programs. It could also provide recommendations on how to improve SDG implementation based on the findings. This assessment is in line with the judgment of an interviewed National Democratic Institute representative,[9] who noted that the institutionalization of these mechanisms in Parliament could improve government accountability to the Parliament and mainstream SDGs into the policy making agenda. According to stakeholders, this commitment could also contribute to increased awareness about SDGs in general among members of Parliament and Parliament staff. Thus, the commitment could strengthen parliamentary oversight of SDG implementation.[10] Stakeholders also believe that this commitment could bring positive benefits for every resident, as strong parliamentary monitoring could improve implementation of the policies and thus increase the quality of life entailed in the 2030 SDGs.

Next steps

Stakeholders recommend that to fully utilize the Parliament's oversight potential in monitoring Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) implementation on the national level, it is important that the Explanatory Note of a bill, along with the budgetary implications and compliance with the European legislation, provide information about the relevance to the SDGs and the national adjusted targets. This note could provide important information if the specific draft-law aligns with the SDGs' adjusted targets

on a national level. By including such a note, Parliament could increase its monitoring capacity and contribute to mainstreaming the SDGs in the policy-making agenda.

Although the Parliament of Georgia is actively engaged in the implementation of the SDGs adjusted agenda, the IRM researcher advises that Parliament maximize its efforts. It can do this by raising the competence of members of Parliament and committees' staff regarding the SDGs and the overall implementation processes. This capacity building could have a significant positive impact on Parliament's capacity to work successfully toward the SDGs' national implementation. Parliament's training center could be engaged to provide relevant workshops, seminars, trainings, and more.

To strengthen civic participation and bring external expertise to the SDGs' monitoring and implementation, the IRM researcher also recommends engaging civil society in parliamentary strategy development and the implementation process.

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[1] United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, "About the Sustainable Development Goals," https://bit.ly/2jHjQmD.
[2] UNDP, "Georgia Marks Progress Towards Sustainable Development," 13 July 2019, https://bit.ly/2NP3Eif.
[3] Open Government Partnership, "Georgia National Action Plan 2018–2019," https://bit.ly/2XLXiju.
[4] UNDP, "Strengthening Parliamentary Democracy in Georgia," https://bit.ly/2LkIPdT.
[5] *Parliament of Georgia: Self-Assessment Report,* 22 October 2018, https://bit.ly/2JElEqz.
[6] Sopo Guruli, Project Manager, UNDP Project: Strengthening Parliamentary Democracy in Georgia, interview with IRM researcher, 10 June 2019.
[7] Guruli interview, June 2019.
[8] State Audit Office of Georgia, *Performance Audit Report—SDGS,* 2019, https://bit.ly/31Vxzaq.
[9] Tamar Sartania, Deputy Chief of Party, National Democratic Institute, interview with IRM researcher, 11 July 2019.
[10] Sartania interview, July 2019.

Commitment 25: Increasing Involvement in the Elaboration and Approval of the Budget

Language of the commitment as it appears in the action plan:

"In order to establish efficient, effective and accountable budget system, it is crucial to ensure citizen involvement in budgetary processes.

According to the Open Budget Survey conducted within the framework of International Budget Partnership (IBP) in 2017, Georgia took the fifth place. Despite receiving high rating in accordance with a number of criteria (80 Points/OBI 2017), the country is still challenged with a low rating (22 Points/OBI 2017) for the criterion of Citizen Involvement in Budgetary Processes.

The nature of the budget process requires that certain activities involve joint effort of key organizations that participate in the process, including coordination and implementation of Parliamentary control on performed activities."

Milestones:

1. Elaboration of Policy and Guidance Documents (in accordance with OBS and GIFT Recommendations) on Citizen Involvement in the budgetary processes by the Parliament, the Ministry of Finance and the State Audit Office with the participation of civil society, international and donor organizations.
2. Ensuring accessibility of simple, easy and visually processed information about the state budget / draft budget on the website of the Parliament (GGI)
3. Review of the Annual Report on activities carried out in order to ensure the transparency of the state budget and citizen involvement in budgetary processes submitted by the Ministry of Finance to the Finance and Budget Committee of the Parliament
4. Holding civil society consultations with the participation of Parliamentary Committees, the Budget Office, the State Audit Office and CSOs from the day of submission of information on key macroeconomic forecasts and main directions of the Ministries of Georgia to the Parliament of Georgia until the final hearing by the Finance and Budget Committee
5. Holding civil society consultations with the participation of Parliamentary Committees, the Budget Office, and the State Audit Office from the day of submission of the draft law on state budget to the Parliament until its final hearing by the Finance and Budget Committee
6. Elaboration and proactive disclosure of the Finance and Budget Committee Report on civil society involvement in the Committee hearing of the main documents on key macroeconomic forecasts, main directions of the Ministries of Georgia and the State Budget Draft Law
7. Elaboration and proactive disclosure of the Parliamentary Recommendations document by the Finance and Budget Committee of the Parliament of Georgia

Start Date: September 2018
End Date: December 2019

Editorial note: For the full text of this commitment, please see
https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/georgia-action-plan-2018-2019/.

Commitment Overview	Verifiability		OGP Value Relevance (as written)				Potential Impact				Completion				Did It Open Government?				
	Not specific enough to be verifiable	Specific enough to be verifiable	Access to Information	Civic Participation	Public Accountability	Technology & Innovation for Transparency & Accountability	None	Minor	Moderate	Transformative	Not Started	Limited	Substantial	Completed	Worsened	Did Not Change	Marginal	Major	Outstanding

25. Overall		✔	✔	✔					✔		Assessed at the end of action plan cycle.	Assessed at the end of action plan cycle.

Context and Objectives

In its 2017 Open Budget Survey, the International Budget Partnership recommended that the Government of Georgia provide more opportunities for the public to participate in budget design and implementation processes. It also recommended holding legislative hearings on the formulation of the annual budget, during which any member of the public or civil society organization could testify.[1]

As part of these efforts, the Parliament of Georgia, plans to develop a public participation policy document and guidelines. It will work with development partners and with the Ministry of Finance, the State Audit Office, and civil society organizations (CSOs). The document will follow the Open Budget Survey and the Global Initiative for Fiscal Transparency recommendations.[2] It also aims to institutionalize mechanisms for increasing public participation in budgetary processes.

The commitment also calls for the development of an online module that will be integrated into the new parliamentary webpage.[3] That webpage will present budget-related information in an easy-to-understand manner, compared to the current practice of publishing the budget draft-law in its original form. According to stakeholders, this module will differ from the existing budgetmonitor.ge. It will provide information about the budget draft-law and not the actual national budget.[4]

Lastly, this commitment also aims to introduce several mechanisms regarding civic participation in the budget process. These include holding consultations with CSOs on key macroeconomic forecasts for ministries, holding committee hearings and consultations with CSOs on the state budget bill, and elaborating and publishing committee reports and recommendations. The aforementioned activities are relevant to the OGP values of access to information and civic participation. The commitment provides specific milestones and indicators and is thus verifiable.

According to an interviewed National Democratic Institute representative,[5] public participation largely depends on the support of donor organizations to Parliament in raising awareness through public outreach campaigns, both in the capital and the regions. Parliament has now committed to disseminate information about the prospective budget, which is a timely and positive step forward. Participants in the IRM researcher's focus group noted that this commitment includes important activities for increasing transparency and informing the public,[6] Though they were skeptical regarding the citizen participation component. Involving citizens in the budgeting process could be challenging, because they often do not possess specific understanding of this process.

Overall, this commitment includes positive steps for increasing the participation of CSOs in the entire process, including consultations with CSOs from budget submission to the final hearing. The commitment also increases the accountability of the government to the Parliament. However, the mechanisms for engaging citizens in budgeting processes are not explicitly defined, which somewhat limits the potential impact of the commitment. Considering the cumulative effect of all the activities, this commitment could represent a moderate improvement regarding involvement in elaboration and approval of the national budget.

Next steps

The Parliament could improve the scale and the scope of the commitment. This could be done by increasing the number of and expanding consultations about the key macroeconomic forecasts and main directions of the state budget bill to the regions (Milestones 25.4 and 25.5). By widening its consultations, the Parliament could expand limited participation and possibly increase the impact of the commitment.

To stimulate public interest and participation in budgetary processes, the Budget and Finance Committee could promote and hold a public hearing of the Ministry and Finance "annual report about the activities carried out in order to ensure the transparency of the state budget and citizen involvement

in budgetary processes" (Milestone 25.3). This hearing would go beyond the regular committee review, creating stronger public accountability links and extending the scope of the commitment.

The Budget and Finance Committee should elaborate a monitoring mechanism to ensure that the government follows the recommendations developed under Milestone 25.7 for the next budget bill cycle.

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[1] International Budget Partnership, Open Budget Survey 2017, "Georgia," https://bit.ly/2E1hNTE.

[2] Global Initiative for Fiscal Transparency, "Mechanisms of Public Participation," https://bit.ly/2LW7yU5.

[3] The launch of the new webpage of the Parliament of Georgia is envisaged as part of Commitment 26 of the 2018–2019 OGP national action plan.

[4] Tamar Sartania, Deputy Chief of Party, National Democratic Institute, interview with IRM researcher, 11 July 2019.

[5] Sartania interview, 11 July 2019.

[6] IRM researcher's focus group discussion with experts, researchers, and master's students of public administration, 18 June 2018.

Commitment 26: Strengthen Effectiveness and Transparency of the Parliament by Implementing Innovative Technologies

Language of the commitment as it appears in the action plan:

"Innovative technologies are being actively implemented in the Parliament of Georgia in order to ensure effectiveness and transparency of parliamentary activities. As of today, any stakeholder is entitled to leave his/her opinion on draft laws available on the website of the Parliament. Mobile application and Public Information Module of the Parliament of Georgia have been elaborated and they offer information in an easily editable format and any stakeholder is able to electronically request public information. However, in order to ensure even more active citizen involvement and ensure accessibility of information, it is necessary to implement modern e-governance standards and refine already existing mechanisms by using new innovative approaches."

Milestones:

1. Elaboration and launch of a new website of the Parliament (GGI)
2. Development and proactive disclosure of special online forms for draft law elaboration on the website of the Parliament (Parliament of Georgia)
3. Regular and organized disclosure of the information on Parliamentary supervisory activities on the website of the Parliament (GGI)
4. Proactive disclosure of stenographic records of plenary sessions in open format on the website of the Parliament (IDFI)
5. Implementation of an adapted mechanism for online registration of citizens, for the purpose of ensuring attendance at committee sessions (IDFI and the Parliament of Georgia)
6. Implementation of an online chat mechanism ("live chat") for gathering information (GIZ)
7. Elaboration and proactive disclosure of a unified form of Parliamentary Committee reports on the website of the Parliament (GYLA)
8. Elaboration of an electronic search engine for draft laws that are reviewed in an accelerated manner (GYLA)
9. Elaboration of an electronic map for majoritarian MP Bureaus (GYLA)
10. Prior to conducting committee hearings, proactive disclosure and reception of citizen opinions/questions on reports submitted by an accountable entity on the website of the Parliament (GYLA)
11. Proactive disclosure of information on composition, formation rules and activities of consultative councils of committees on the website of the Parliament (TI)
12. Creation and proactive disclosure of the instruction and tutorial for elaborating explanatory notes on the website of the Parliament (TI and GIZ)
13. Elaboration and proactive disclosure of a Common Registry of Stakeholders on the website of the Parliament for the purpose of ensuring stakeholder involvement in the initial stages of lawmaking (American Chamber of Commerce)
14. Elaboration and proactive disclosure of a Lobbyist Organizations Registry on the website of the Parliament (Citizen: Natia Bagdavadze)
15. Refining the mobile application of the Parliament (Citizens: Shalva Dekanozishvili; Kalenike Uridia; Rusudan Mgeladze)

Start Date: September 2018
End Date: June 2019

Editorial note: For the full text of this commitment, please see
https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/georgia-action-plan-2018-2019/.

Commitment Overview	Verifiability	OGP Value Relevance (as written)	Potential Impact	Completion	Did It Open Government?

	Not specific enough to be verifiable	Specific enough to be verifiable	Access to Information	Civic Participation	Public Accountability	Technology & Innovation for Transparency & Accountability	None	Minor	Moderate	Transformative	Not Started	Limited	Substantial	Completed	Worsened	Did Not Change	Marginal	Major	Outstanding
26. Overall		✔	✔	✔		✔			✔		Assessed at the end of action plan cycle.				Assessed at the end of action plan cycle.				

Context and Objectives

This commitment includes many activities to strengthen the Parliament of Georgia's effectiveness and transparency, with support from stakeholders.[1] Parliament will develop a new webpage that includes a variety of information, such as online forms for draft laws, information on parliamentary oversight activities, stenographic records of plenary sessions, parliamentary committee reports in a unified format, and the composition and formation of committee consultation councils. The new webpage will also have a live online chat function for citizens to receive information without navigating the webpage.[2] The new webpage will have a search function to easily locate bills that have qualified for accelerated passage.[3]

Parliament also plans to introduce online registration for citizens to acquire an entry pass to the Parliament building and attend committee sessions. Previously, interested citizens needed to call up an acquaintance in Parliament,[4] and they had to ask for a pass to attend a committee meeting. Additionally, Parliament aims to create a registry of stakeholders and a registry of lobbyist organizations that will be integrated into the new webpage. A launch of a new mobile application is planned. Compared to the previous version, this application would provide more comprehensive functions and information. The application would include a search module for bills, the parliamentary calendar, Parliament's agenda, upcoming events, information about members of Parliament (MPs), questions posed by MPs, and more.

Lastly, the commitment also entails proactive disclosure of reports submitted by the entities that are accountable to the Parliament prior to committee hearings. According to the Georgian Young Lawyers' Association,[5] compared to current practice, this disclosure will provide interested parties and citizens an opportunity to leave comments and questions about the reports on the new webpage. Those questions will later be collected by the committee and asked during the special time allocated for citizens' questions during committee hearings.

Considering all the aforementioned, as well as the fact that the commitment entails several activities whose implementations require the utilization of technology, this commitment is relevant to the OGP values of access to information and civic participation. This commitment's planned activities are specific enough to be verified.

The proposed improvements to the parliamentary webpage represent positive steps toward greater transparency of the Parliament. The Parliament plans to regularly disclose and update various types of information, such as stenographic records of plenaries in an open data format, committee reports, supervisory activities of individual MPs, information on the formation of committee consultation councils, and reports of accountable entities.

With the launch of the new parliamentary webpage (Milestone 26.1), Parliament plans to improve the interface and navigation to better accommodate new types of disclosed data and allow citizens to easily surf and find the necessary information. The new webpage will also include a function for users to leave comments on various reports submitted to the Parliament by the accountable government agencies prior to committee hearings. Parliament will also proactively publish the registry of lobbyist organizations, which represents an important step forward in disclosing lobbyist information.

The way Parliament delivers information and certain services would also improve. For example, currently, committee reports are prepared in individually designed formats and are not published for the broader public. Thus, having a standardized format is important.[6] Furthermore, the online chat window will serve as a fast and easy-to-use source of information, providing answers, directions, and clarifications. The online registration for committee hearings could simplify and regulate a process that usually requires personal networking.[7] The mobile application could help deliver information about parliamentary news and activities to citizens. Cumulatively, these activities could have a moderate potential impact on parliamentary transparency. In the long-term, they could result in a higher level of public trust toward the Parliament.

Next steps

If this commitment is carried forward to the next action plan, the IRM researcher advises grouping similar activities with closer correlation around a specific goal. As an example, the development of the new webpage and introduction of new modules—such as a search engine and live chat—could be grouped to form a commitment regarding utilization of innovative technologies. Similarly, milestones on elaboration and proactive publishing of various documents would form another commitment that more directly addresses the value of access to information. Furthermore, the IRM researcher recommends providing clear timelines for publishing reports ahead of meetings, so MPs, citizens, and other stakeholders have the sufficient time to study them.

[1] The following stakeholders were involved: USAID Good Governance Initiative, IDFI, GIZ, GYLA, TI, AMCHAM, and citizens.
[2] Nino Tsukhishvili, Parliamentary Secretary, Georgian Young Lawyers' Association, interview with IRM researcher, 5 July 2019.
[3] Tsukhishvili interview, July 2019.
[4] Tamar Sartania, Deputy Chief of Party, National Democratic Institute, interview with IRM researcher, 11 July 2019.
[5] Tsukhishvili, phone interview, July 2019.
[6] Tsukhishvili, phone interview, July 2019.
[7] Sartania, interview, July11, 2019.

Commitment 27: Creation of a Citizen Engagement Center in the Parliament of Georgia

Language of the commitment as it appears in the action plan:

"The Department of Case Management of the Parliament of Georgia, which is composed of several structural units, is tasked with ensuring uniform case management of the Parliament Bureau, citizen reception, registration of their letters and other appeals and transferring them to relevant addressees.

The constitutional amendments and the new Rules of Procedure of the Parliament that will enter into force in November 2018 will increase the Parliament's oversight function. This constitutes a challenge that the Parliament Bureau must tackle through a new approach.

Article 1, Paragraphs f) and g) of the draft Rules of Procedure determine the following principles of parliamentary work: openness, transparency and accessibility. The principle of good governance and the Sustainable Development Goal 16 are also being fully reflected in parliamentary activities.

To tackle existing challenges, the Parliament must establish a Citizen Engagement Center that will offer new services to citizens in terms of staying informed about and taking part in parliamentary activities. The Center will also provide adapted services for vulnerable citizens and those with special needs."

Milestones:
1. Analysis of the activities of the existing citizen reception office
2. Development and approval of a concept of the Citizen Engagement Center (including adapted services)
3. Creation and provision with equipment of the Citizen Engagement Center
4. Implementation of adapted services in the Citizen Engagement Center
5. Development of work instructions and training programs for the Citizen Engagement Center staff and retraining of staff

Start Date: September 2018
End Date: June 2019

Editorial note: For the full text of this commitment, please see https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/georgia-action-plan-2018-2019/.

Commitment Overview	Verifiability		OGP Value Relevance (as written)				Potential Impact				Completion				Did It Open Government?				
	Not specific enough to be verifiable	Specific enough to be verifiable	Access to Information	Civic Participation	Public Accountability	Technology & Innovation for Transparency & Accountability	None	Minor	Moderate	Transformative	Not Started	Limited	Substantial	Completed	Worsened	Did Not Change	Marginal	Major	Outstanding
27. Overall		✔		✔					✔		Assessed at the end of action plan cycle.				Assessed at the end of action plan cycle.				

Context and Objectives

Under this commitment, the Parliament of Georgia, with the support of the German Corporation for International Cooperation,[1] aims to establish a Citizen Engagement Center to ensure citizens are properly informed and to promote their engagement. As stated by the chair of the Open Governance Permanent Parliamentary Council,[2] the existing Citizen Reception currently does not have any mechanisms for citizen engagement in day-to-day parliamentary activities. The Citizen Reception's current functions are limited to registering citizen requests and issuing entrance passes. Therefore,

Parliament plans to replace it with an entirely new approach to engage citizens, namely the Citizen Engagement Center.

Parliament will conduct an analysis of existing participation practices and develop a concept for the Citizen Engagement Center, including adapting parliamentary services for people with disabilities. Parliament will then launch the Center and integrate the adapted services. Finally, Parliament will develop trainings for Center staff. As all the presented activities are aimed at increasing public awareness about Parliament's activities and support greater public engagement, this commitment is clearly relevant to the OGP value of civic participation.

The set of milestones and indicators are specific enough to be verified. However, the text does not specify the scope of the Citizen Engagement Center. For example, it does not explain whether stakeholders or the public will be involved in the development process or what type of training will be provided to build staff capacity.

According to an interviewed National Democratic Institute representative, if established, the new Center could help improve Parliament's engagement with citizens and deliver new and improved services.[3] According to the former parliamentary secretary of the president of Georgia,[4] this commitment could contribute to the effectiveness of the Parliament as an institution. Citizens who are not well informed about government services often address politicians and members of Parliament (MPs) with requests and complaints that do not fall within an MP's legal discretion. Accordingly, the new Center could help citizens identify the proper addressee (agency, committee, an individual MP, or the Ombudsman Office) for their concerns. The Center could also provide them with support in further proceedings, such as writing and submitting notice, and set up the meeting. Thus, it could save the time of both citizens and MPs. When properly targeted, more citizens might receive better services that in the long term could increase the level of trust toward Parliament. However, because the scope of the initiative is not clear, this commitment is likely to have a moderate impact if fully implemented as designed.

Next steps

Moving forward, Parliament could clarify the new services that will be offered to citizens by the Citizen Engagement Center and describe what improvements and engagement mechanisms it will provide. To stimulate greater public interest and engagement in Parliamentary processes, the IRM researcher advises greater and sustained engagement with citizens and civil society. The government should also raise awareness about the prospective engagement opportunities through targeted public outreach activities. A special outreach exercise with teachers and students at schools and universities would also contribute to teaching practice and to a more up-to-date, practical understanding of the role and activities of Parliament.

If this commitment is carried into future action plans, the Center could elaborate an evaluation mechanism to assess its overall effectiveness. This could include tracking the number of persons who address the Center, types of questions and requests, petitions, engagement cases, and monitoring of service quality and feedback opportunity.

[1] GIZ eastern partnership parliamentary program project: Enhancement of the Parliamentary Staff in EaP Countries.
[2] Irina Pruidze, Chairperson of the Open Governance Permanent Parliamentary Council, interview with IRM researcher, 22 April 2019.
[3] Tamar Sartania, Deputy Chief of Party, National Democratic Institute, interview with IRM researcher, 11 July 2019.
[4] Ana Dolidze, Expert Member of the High Council of Justice, former Parliamentary Secretary of the President of Georgia, interview with IRM researcher, 12 July 2019.

Commitment 28: Raising Public Awareness about Parliamentary Democracy

Language of the commitment as it appears in the action plan:

"A large part of the public in Georgia is not fully informed about the activities of the Parliament and its systemic reforms. This greatly impedes the establishment of democratic and inclusive governance. To solve this problem, the Parliament of Georgia must develop a communication strategy involving the organization of various events, such as information campaigns and public meetings, use of social networks (e.g. Facebook) and production of informational materials. An awareness raising campaign on parliamentary activities will promote the formation of an informed society and more active citizen engagement in the lawmaking process. This will also significantly increase public trust towards the legislative authority."

Milestones:
1. Development and approval of the communications strategy and action plan of the Permanent Parliamentary Open Governance Council (GYLA)
2. Determining the frequency of direct TV and Radio broadcasting for Parliamentary Committee and Plenary Sessions (Parliament of Georgia)
3. Dissemination of information about parliamentary services available to citizens, including services adapted to people with special needs (Parliament of Georgia, UNDP, IDFI)
4. Development of a concept for social network communication of the Parliament of Georgia (IDFI)
5. Production and dissemination of informational materials (comics, flyers, video clips), including materials adapted to people with special needs about the Parliament and its activities (Parliament of Georgia, GIZ Eastern Partnership Parliamentary Project)
6. Organizing informational meetings with students and youth organizations – Day of the Parliament in Universities (Parliament of Georgia)
7. Keeping statistics on citizen comments and petitions. Granting points to active citizens (e.g. 1 point per comment) and publishing a rating of most active citizens on the Parliament website (Amiran Janjghava, Rustavi City Council member)
8. Establishing the 'Active Citizen' award for citizens who are actively involved in the activities of the Parliament through various instruments: comments, electronic petitions, attendance at committee hearings (Amiran Janjghava, Rustavi City Council member)

Start Date: August 2018
End Date: December 2019

Editorial note: For the full text of this commitment, please see https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/georgia-action-plan-2018-2019/.

Commitment Overview	Verifiability		OGP Value Relevance (as written)				Potential Impact				Completion				Did It Open Government?				
	Not specific enough to be verifiable	Specific enough to be verifiable	Access to Information	Civic Participation	Public Accountability	Technology & Innovation for Transparency & Accountability	None	Minor	Moderate	Transformative	Not Started	Limited	Substantial	Completed	Worsened	Did Not Change	Marginal	Major	Outstanding
28. Overall		✔	✔	✔				✔			Assessed at the end of action plan cycle.				Assessed at the end of action plan cycle.				

Context and Objectives

Large amounts of information are published on Georgia's parliamentary webpage and social media channels, but the way information is framed and delivered is not always useful or engaging for citizens. Accordingly, this commitment comprises eight milestones with a collective goal of raising public awareness about Parliament as an institution, its activities, and recent open government reforms.

According to an interviewed Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (GYLA) representative,[1] Parliament has already institutionalized several mechanisms that provide opportunities for citizens to become more informed and engaged in decision making.[2] However, there was a need to increase public awareness about the opportunities that Parliament provides under the OGP framework. Hence, in efforts initiated by GYLA and supported by the Institute for Development of Freedom of Information, Parliament has committed to develop an Open Governance Permanent Parliamentary Council communication strategy and an action plan. The plan will provide a framework for institutionalizing a communication approach as well as particular steps for 2019–2020.

Along with the communication strategy, Parliament also plans to develop several conceptual documents and informational materials to maximize utilization of communication channels. These channels include direct TV and radio broadcasting for committee hearings and plenaries, social networking, information booklets, flyers, and short videos. The commitment also envisions targeted informational meetings with students and youth organizations, as well as dissemination of information about the available parliamentary services. Such services include those adapted to people with special needs. Finally, Parliament plans to introduce an Active Citizen award for those who are most actively involved in parliamentary activities, including attendance at committee hearings, online comments, petitions, and more. To do this, Parliament will collect statistical data relevant to citizen participation and proactively publish the rating of the most active citizens in the country.

The commitment's activities generally aim to make information on Parliament more accessible and raise public awareness about Parliament. Thus, it is relevant to the OGP value of access to information. Additionally, the Active Citizen award seeks to promote greater public engagement with Parliament, making the commitment also relevant to civic participation. Overall, the potential impact of this commitment could be minor. Each activity could be a positive step forward to improve the various communication channels of Parliament. According to the stakeholders,[3] in general, the implementation of this commitment could increase public awareness about parliamentary activities and opportunities, and it might also stimulate higher participation in OGP-related activities, such as action plan elaboration. It could also improve overall engagement in the parliamentary processes through the utilization of various mechanisms that have been created under the OGP framework.[4]

Next steps

The IRM researcher recommends the following:

- Elaborate an evaluation mechanism that will assess the effectiveness and overall impact of the commitment. This could include developing a methodology that will enable analysis of aggregate data collected through various sources, such as online participation, mobile application,[5] the Civic Engagement Center,[6] and other participation channels.

- Parliament should expand its communication channels to the regions nationwide through direct communication and various public outreach campaigns.

- Make the commitment more ambitious and comprehensive. Elaborate the communication policy and strategy of the Parliament, setting the general institutional framework for external communication and defining specific goals, objectives, and communication channels of Parliament as an institution. The milestones under this commitment would represent a part of the Parliament's institutional communication policy and strategy. Further, the milestones would contribute to the implementation of the Parliament's strategic goal to raise public awareness of and participation in the decision making.

[1] Nino Tsukhishvili, Parliamentary Secretary, Georgian Young Lawyers' Association, phone interview with IRM researcher, 5 July 2019.
[2] Tsukhishvili phone interview, July 2019.
[3] Tsukhishvili phone interview, July 2019.
[4] Tsukhishvili phone interview, July 2019.
[5] Commitment 26, Georgia national action plan 2018–2019, https://bit.ly/2XLXiju.
[6] Commitment 27, Georgia national action plan 2018–2019, https://bit.ly/2XLXiju.

V. General Recommendations

This section aims to inform the development of the next action plan and guide implementation of the current action plan. It is divided into two sections: 1) IRM key recommendations to improve OGP process and action plans in the country or entity and, 2) an assessment of how the government responded to previous IRM key recommendations.

5.1 IRM Recommendations

Process-related recommendations

Strengthen the mandate and the role of the multi-stakeholder forum (MSF), and increase its overall effectiveness as the major mechanism for ensuring the engagement and participation of both civil society and government (and thus the entire co-creation process). To do this, the IRM researcher recommends the following:

- The OGP Forum Guiding Principles currently do not set rules or guidelines for recruiting new members to the MSF. Therefore, the IRM researcher recommends that the Administration of the Government of Georgia (AoG) develop new, transparent procedures for involving new members in the Forum and integrate those procedures into the Guiding Principles of the Forum.

- AoG should map and invite different stakeholders—such as civil society organizations (CSOs), academia, the private sector, youth and regional organizations, and nonprofits with various thematic expertise—to be members of the MSF. This wide invite could bring diverse perspectives, more bottom-up initiatives, and a more inclusive process. It could also increase the scope of participation and raise awareness about OGP nationwide. To strengthen the thematic expertise of the MSF, the government should create working groups under the MSF that are focused on certain policy areas.

- The IRM researcher advises the creation of a multi-stakeholder decision-making body that involves high-level government representatives. In addition, since currently no decision-making rules and procedures are laid out in the Guiding Principles, AoG needs to develop these rules. The IRM researcher advises employing a qualified majority voting system to improve the decision-making practice and empower CSOs that currently represent the minority in the Forum.

- The Forum should ensure collaboration on both working and representative levels. This could be achieved by establishing thematic working groups aligned with OGP policy challenge areas. The groups would cooperate through various working channels on a regular basis, but these groups would also have high-level representation during the regular Forum meetings.

- The Forum should set the procedures for taking meeting minutes and publishing them online and integrate those procedures into its Guiding Principles. This could be useful for tracking action plan development and implementation.

- The MSF should outline how to secure final voting on the action plan in its Guiding Principles to ensure mutual endorsement of the plan from both government and civil society.

The IRM researcher recommends strengthening the co-creation process through the development of **unified and standardized guidelines** aligned with the OGP participation and co-creation standards. This can be accomplished through the following actions:

      ○   The MSF should develop guidelines on the dissemination of information. These guidelines will outline the rules on publishing information about the key stages, concepts, deadlines, consultation events, and procedures for the development process. The guidelines would also outline rules for publishing the progress updates on the development of the action plan, including the draft commitments and meeting minutes. In addition, they would cover the publishing of overviews of public and civil society contributions, government responses, and more.

      ○   AoG should publish a draft action plan for additional public comments, reflections, and input.

The IRM researcher recommends that AoG create an official repository webpage that will accumulate all open government initiatives and activities in one, easy-to-access, and user-friendly interface. The webpage would involve government, Parliament, and municipalities and would be updated on a regular basis. The IRM researcher also recommends that the AoG, in cooperation with the responsible agencies, define and provide information about financial and human resources for each commitment. This will help responsible agencies to plan accordingly during the action plan development phase and to ensure the prioritization of realistic commitments.

The IRM researcher recommends the AoG, in cooperation with the responsible agencies, allocate more time to refine the language of the action plan, especially the English translation, and ensure that commitment texts provide the same information in both languages. This is important since several commitments in the current action plan provide different information about the OGP relevance in the Georgian and English versions (e.g., Commitments 2, 4, 5, 6). Also, the IRM researcher advises providing more precise descriptions of milestones and defining measurable quantitative and/or qualitative indicators for each milestone. Well-targeted commitments have a better chance of achieving a measurable impact and managing expectations for clearly written targets. Adding measurable indicators will provide fertile ground for proper monitoring, evaluation, and learning.

Lastly, the IRM researcher recommends that AoG develop a monitoring and self-assessment methodology for OGP action plans that is in line with OGP regulations and guidelines. This methodology should create an effective mechanism for monitoring the implementation of the action plan commitments and assessing the efficiency and effectiveness of the objectives achieved. The methodology will result in relevant reports that would help the Forum prepare, implement, and monitor the action plan.

Content-related recommendations

Although Georgia's fourth action plan covers a wide range of policy areas, it generally lacks ambition and focus. Most commitments call for minor improvements to ongoing government projects, and it is often unclear how OGP contributes to the projects' goals, other than attracting donor funding for the finalization of these projects. Furthermore, unlike all previous Georgian action plans, the fourth plan does not include any potentially transformative commitments. Therefore, the IRM researcher recommends that the MSF develop a focused and cohesive open government strategy around a few major open government policy areas that are aligned with European Union–Georgia Association Agreement and stakeholder priorities. Commitments in the next actin plan should aim to bring tangible results to these major policy areas. Potential areas of focus for the next action plan that both fit with the Association Agreement and stakeholder priorities include improving Georgia's anti-corruption framework, adopting the Freedom of Information Law, disclosing beneficial ownership information, and closing loopholes in the public procurement system.

Considering the gap between the positions of government and all major stakeholders about the issue, and to respond specifically to the high-level corruption challenges that Georgia faces today, the IRM researcher **recommends introducing a third-party comprehensive assessment of the country's anti-corruption needs**. This entails involving experts from various international

organizations to conduct an independent, objective public policy analysis that will provide a comprehensive analysis with relevant impact assessment for all the possible scenarios.

The IRM researcher recommends **expanding the action plan policy areas to beneficial ownership** transparency, which has emerged as an important tool for combating corruption worldwide. In this regard, the IRM researcher advises prioritizing a commitment initiative developed by the Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI) that envisages the establishment of a registry of beneficial owners of foreign companies that hold assets in Georgia and participate in public procurement. Transparency International–Georgia (TI–Georgia) has recently called upon the government to require disclosure of ownership of companies, at least when these companies or their subsidiaries participate in public procurement, the Partnership Fund's projects, or other state programs.[1] At the 2016 London Anti-Corruption Summit, Georgia committed to take steps to ensure the transparency of the ownership and control of all companies involved in public contracting and to explore the feasibility of establishing a public central register of company beneficial ownership information.[2] In 2017, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Anti-Corruption Network recommended that Georgia require mandatory disclosure of beneficial ownership in legal persons in a central register and publish this information online.[3] These reforms would help Georgia address the OECD recommendations, honor its commitment at the 2016 Anti-Corruption Summit, and join other OGP members in the region (such as Armenia and Ukraine) in working toward beneficial ownership disclosure.

The next action plan could also focus on major improvements to the transparency of public procurement. Although Georgia already has a robust procurement system, there are loopholes and exemptions that need to be addressed. These include the large share of direct procurement, bad subcontracting practices, and lack of accessibility of information on all government contracts. Civil society organizations such as TI–Georgia,[4] IDFI,[5] and the Georgian Young Lawyers' Association have long advocated for addressing these issues,[6] which have also been included under the recommendation of the OECD Anti-Corruption Network,[7] the Council of Europe,[8] and the EU–Georgia Association Agreement. These changes could lead to some major anti-corruption wins and could include a requirement to make information on subcontractors public. Publishing information on subcontractors would address a major loophole in the law and prevent blacklisted companies from participating as subcontractors. Additionally, IDFI recommends that subcontracting should be made public to verify who was subcontracted and on what terms.[9] The legislation can be amended to restrict companies and management who were convicted of corruption and fraud from participating in public procurement.

In addition, the IRM researcher reiterates the recommendation from the *IRM Progress Report*[10] for Georgia's 2016–2017 action plan to declassify information on bidders and proposed bids based on public administrative proceedings and to provide information on how the bidders are fulfilling terms of agreements. The report also recommended the government publish the terms and conditions under which the state transfers its property to investors. Prior to granting the license or auctioning state property, the government could establish mechanisms for initial public involvement in decisions.

The right to information is a right guaranteed by the Constitution of Georgia and regulated by the Administrative Code of Georgia, adopted in 1999. Therefore, there has been a long public call for a dedicated law with a strong enforcement mechanism to guarantee the right to information. Despite the fact that, under the second and third action plans, the Ministry of Justice, in close collaboration with CSOs, has developed a draft of the Freedom of Information Law in 2014 it has never been submitted to the Parliament for further legislative procedures. Accordingly, the IRM researcher reiterates the previous recommendation on **prompt adoption of the Freedom of Information Law**.

Finally, the IRM researcher recommends that AoG develop an OGP communication strategy and conduct a nation-wide public awareness campaign to raise the visibility of the commitments that have been and are currently being implemented within OGP action plans. For that purpose, AoG could review and give new impetus to an OGP communications strategy developed with the United States Agency for International Development's Good (USAID GGI) support back in 2017.

Table 5.1. Five Key Recommendations

1	Strengthen the co-creation process by mandating the role of the multi-stakeholder forum and developing guidelines aligned with the OGP Participation and Co-creation Standards.
2	Promptly adopt the Freedom of Information Law.
3	Conduct an independent, objective, and politically neutral comprehensive assessment of the country's anti-corruption needs and the effectiveness of current institutional frameworks to address the same.
4	Expand the national action plan policy areas to beneficial ownership transparency and establish a registry of beneficial owners of foreign companies that hold assets in Georgia and participate in public procurement.
5	Continue efforts to publish public procurement data using the Open Contracting Data Standard.

5.2 Response to Previous IRM Key Recommendations

Table 5.2. Previous IRM Report Key Recommendations

Recommendation		Responded to?	Integrated into Current Action Plan?
1	Develop an open government strategy and a policy vision to enhance public participation at all levels of government.	No	No
2	Leverage Georgia's year as lead co-chair of OGP to deliver an exemplary new action plan and model best practices in co-creation and participation in 2018.	No	No
3	Develop a wide-ranging public awareness campaign about the value and benefits of open government and OGP.	Partially	Partially
4	Adopt and use the Open Contracting Data Standard in conjunction with stakeholder collaboration to increase the transparency of government contracts in the licensing of natural resources, privatization, and public procurement in infrastructure projects.	Partially	Partially
5	Ensure the prompt adoption of the Freedom of Information Law, with key provisions on universal standards for proactive disclosure in and open data format, independent oversight, and enforcement mechanisms.	No	No

Out of the five IRM recommendations, the government did not fully address or integrate any of the recommendations in the next action plan. Georgia's chairmanship of OGP partially contributed to the third recommendation. The Government of Georgia (GoG) implemented several awareness-raising activities, such as radio and television interviews, and working meetings with public agencies and

nonprofit organizations to increase the general awareness of the value and benefits of OGP. However, these efforts were spontaneous and not a part of a wide-ranging public awareness campaign. According to the point of contact, the short period between the publishing of the design report, where the IRM recommendations are outlined, and adoption of the next action plan hindered the incorporation of the first recommendation in the next action plan.

The fourth recommendation was partially integrated into the action plan as Commitment 13, which addresses the improvement of public procurement praxis through better alignment with the Open Contracting Data Standard. However, it does not specifically address the licensing of natural resources, privatization, and public procurement in infrastructure projects. As for the fifth recommendation, according to the point of contact, GoG has expressed the political will to adopt the Freedom of Information Law and developed the draft in cooperation with stakeholder CSOs. However, considering the complexity of the new act, which requires wider-range involvement, consultations, and elaboration, more time is required to finalize the initiative for submission to the Parliament.

[1] Transparency International–Georgia, "Offshore Zones and Georgia," 27 November 2019, https://bit.ly/38MOijA
[2] *Anti-corruption Summit—London 2016: Georgia Country Statement,* https://bit.ly/2U312gE
[3] Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *Istanbul Anti-corruption Action Plan: Fourth Round of Monitoring: Georgia,* 2017, https://bit.ly/3cR8Pqp
[4] Transparency International–Georgia, "Persons Convicted of Corruption and Fraud Should be Restricted from Participating in Public Procurement," 19 November 2018, https://bit.ly/2IH98q8
[5] IDFI, *Implementation Assessment of the Georgian Public Procurement Legislation*, 2017, p. 14, https://bit.ly/2IH2tMw
[6] See Salome Sagharadze, *Simplified State Procurement,* 2017, https://bit.ly/2U3OQw6
[7] Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *Istanbul Anti-corruption Action Plan,* p. 42, https://bit.ly/3cQaLzz
[8] Project against Economic Crime, *Corruption Risk Assessment of the Public Procurement,* May 2017, https://bit.ly/2vQE18U
[9] IDFI, *Implementation Assessment of the Georgian Public Procurement Legislation*, p. 14, https://bit.ly/38IVf5e
[10] Open Government Partnership, *IRM: Georgia Progress Report 2016–2018,* https://bit.ly/2Q8wnxq

VI. Methodology and Sources

The IRM reports are written by researchers for each OGP-participating country or entity. All IRM reports undergo a process of quality control to ensure that the highest standards of research and due diligence have been applied.

Analysis of progress on OGP action plans is a combination of interviews, desk research, observation, and feedback from nongovernmental stakeholders. The IRM report builds on the evidence available in Georgia's OGP repository (or online tracker), website, findings in the government's own self-assessment reports, and any other assessments of process and progress put out by civil society, the private sector, or international organizations. At the beginning of each reporting cycle, IRM staff share a research plan with governments to open a seven-day period of comments or feedback regarding the proposed research approach.

Each IRM researcher carries out stakeholder interviews to ensure an accurate portrayal of events. Given budgetary and calendar constraints, the IRM cannot consult all interested parties or visit implementation sites. Some contexts require anonymity of interviewees and the IRM reviews the right to remove personal identifying information of these participants. Due to the necessary limitations of the method, the IRM strongly encourages commentary during the pre-publication review period of each report.

Each report undergoes a quality-control process that includes an internal review by IRM staff and the IRM's International Experts Panel (IEP). Each report also undergoes an external review where governments and civil society are invited to provide comments on the content of the draft IRM report.

This review process, including the procedure for incorporating comments received, is outlined in greater detail in Section III of the Procedures Manual.[1]

Interviews and stakeholder input

Primary information for this report was obtained through key informant interviews, focus group discussions, stakeholder meetings, and phone interviews when the in-person meetings were not possible.

The table below summarizes information about the data collection conducted in preparation for this report.

	Method		Source	Synopsis	Date
1	Key Informant Interview	Forum: Government	Nino Sarishvili, Head of Policy Analysis, Strategic Planning and Coordination department at the Administration of the Government of Georgia	Open Government Context, Leadership and Stakeholder Forum	16 April 2019
2	Key Informant Interview	Forum: Government	Ketevan Tsanava, Senior Policy Advisor at Policy Analysis, Strategic Planning and Coordination department at the Administration of the Government of Georgia	Open Government Context, Leadership and Stakeholder Forum	16 April 2019
3	Key Informant Interview	Forum: Government	Zurab Sanikidze, Head of the Analytical Department of the Ministry of Justice of Georgia	Open Government Context, Leadership and Stakeholder Forum, Commitment 6	3 May 2019

4	Key Informant Interview	Forum: Parliament	Irina Pruidze, Chairperson of the Open Governance Permanent Parliamentary Council	Open Government Context, Leadership and Stakeholder Forum, Commitment 24, Commitment 26, Commitment 27, Commitment 28	22 April 2019
5	Key Informant Interview	Forum: CSOs	Giorgi Oniani, Deputy Executive Director at Transparency International–Georgia	Open Government Context, Leadership and Stakeholder Forum, Commitment 6	30 May 2019
6	Key Informant Interview	Forum: CSOs	Salome Sagaradze, Project Coordinator, Georgian Young Lawyers' Association	Open Government Context, Leadership and Stakeholder Forum, Commitment 6	17 May 2019
7	Key Informant Interview	Forum: International Organization	Mikheil Darchiashvili, Governance Manager at USAID Georgia Good Governance Initiative	Open Government Context, Leadership and Stakeholder Forum, Commitment 8, Commitment 16, Commitment 17, Commitment 18, Commitment 21	14 May 2019
8	Key Informant Interview	Forum: International Organization	Mariam Gorgadze, Deputy Chief of Party at USAID Georgia Good Governance Initiative	Open Government Context, Leadership and Stakeholder Forum, Commitment 8, Commitment 16, Commitment 17, Commitment 18, Commitment 21	14 May 2019
9	Key Informant Interview	Forum: International Organization	Nino Kakubava, Project Manager at UNDP project: Fostering Decentralization and Good Governance at the Local Level in Georgia	Commitment 16, Commitment 17	10 June 2019
10	Key Informant Interview	Forum: International Organization	Giorgi Nasrashvili, Good Governance Expert at UNDP project: Fostering Decentralization and Good Governance at the Local Level in Georgia	Commitment 16, Commitment 17	10 June 2019
11	Key Informant Interview	Forum: International Organization	Sopo Guruli, Project Manager, UNDP Project: Strengthening Parliamentary Democracy in Georgia	Open Government Context, Leadership and Stakeholder Forum, Commitment 24	10 June 2019
12	Key Informant Interview	Forum: CSOs	Saba Buadze, Former Anti-Corruption Direction Lead, Institute for Development of Freedom of Information	Open Government Context, Leadership and Stakeholder Forum, Commitment 6, Commitment 7, Commitment 9, Commitment 12, Commitment 13	22 May 2019

13	Key Informant Interview	Forum: CSOs	Anano Tsintsabadze, Participatory Democracy Program Project Coordinator, Open Society Georgia Foundation	Open Government Context, Leadership and Stakeholder Forum, Commitment 5, Commitment 6, Commitment 10, Commitment 14	15 May 2019
14	Key Informant Interview	Forum: CSOs	Giorgi Topuria, Senior Analyst at Transparency International–Georgia	Open Government Context, Leadership and Stakeholder Forum, Commitment 6, Commitment 8, Commitment 9, Commitment 10, Commitment 11, Commitment 12, Commitment 13	22 May 2019; 25 June 2019
15	Key Informant Interview	Forum: CSOs	Tamar Tatanashvili, Senior Lawyer at Transparency International–Georgia	Commitment 8	25 June 2019
16	Key Informant Interview	Non-Forum CSOs	Irakli Seperteladze, Member of Board at Anika	Commitment 1, Commitment 2	6 June 2019
17	Key Informant Interview	Expert	Tinatin Kuprashvili, Public Service Expert	Commitment 1, Commitment 2, Commitment 3	18 June 2019
18	Key Informant Interview	Expert	Giorgi Meladze, Director of Constitutional Research Center, Associate Professor in the Law School at Ilia State University	Commitment 6, Commitment 8, Commitment 16	8 June 2019
19	Key Informant Interview	Expert	Tamar Tatishvili, MPA-Nonprofit Management, Head of Nonprofit Management Program at Consulting and Training Center	Commitment 1, Commitment 2, Commitment 7	18 June 2019
20	Key Informant Interview	Expert	Natia Goliadze, Chairwoman at Export Development Association, Head of Business Administration Department at the University of Georgia	Commitment 12	19 June 2019
21	Key Informant Interview	Expert	Tamar Sartania, Deputy Chief of Party, National Democratic Institute	Commitment 24, Commitment 25, Commitment 26, Commitment 27, Commitment 28	11 July 2019
22	Key Informant Interview	Expert	Ana Dolidze, Expert, Member of the High Council of Justice, Former Parliamentary Secretary of the President of Georgia	Commitment 9, Commitment 27	12 July 2019

24	Phone Interview	Forum: CSOs	Nino Tsukhishvili, Parliamentary Secretary, Georgian Young Lawyers' Association	Commitment 16, Commitment 16, Commitment 28	5 July 2019
25	Focus Group Discussion	Citizen	With experts, researchers, and master's students of public administration	Commitment 1, Commitment 2, Commitment 4, Commitment 7, Commitment 13, Commitment 15, Commitment 25	18 June 2019
26	Focus Group Discussion	Citizen	With experts and public fund recipients	Commitment 12, Commitment 15	18 June 2019
27	Focus Group Discussion	Citizen	With students in Zugdidi	Commitment 20, Commitment 22	15 June 2019
28	Stakeholder Meeting	Citizen	OGP Intermunicipal Meeting in Ozurgeti	Commitment 16, Commitment 17, Commitment 18, Commitment 19, Commitment 20, Commitment 21, Commitment 22, Commitment 23	11 June 2019

About the Independent Reporting Mechanism

The Independent Reporting Mechanism (IRM) is a key means by which all stakeholders can track OGP progress in participating countries and entities. The International Experts Panel (IEP) oversees the quality control of each report. The IEP is comprised of experts in transparency, participation, accountability, and social science research methods.

The current membership of the International Experts Panel is

- César Cruz-Rubio
- Mary Francoli
- Brendan Halloran
- Jeff Lovitt
- Fredline M'Cormack-Hale
- Showers Mawowa
- Juanita Olaya
- Quentin Reed
- Rick Snell
- Jean-Patrick Villeneuve

A small staff based in Washington, DC, shepherds reports through the IRM process in close coordination with the researchers. Questions and comments about this report can be directed to the staff at irm@opengovpartnership.org.

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[1] IRM Procedures Manual, V.3, https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/irm-procedures-manual.

Annex I. Overview of Georgia's performance throughout action plan development

Key:
Green= Meets standard
Yellow= In progress (steps have been taken to meet this standard, but standard is not met)
Red= No evidence of action

Multi-stakeholder Forum	
1a. Forum established: There is a forum to oversee the OGP process	Green
1b. Regularity: The forum meets at least every quarter, in person or remotely	Green
1c. Collaborative mandate development: Members of the forum jointly develop its remit, membership and governance structure.	Yellow
1d. Mandate public: Information on the forum's remit, membership and governance structure is available on the OGP website/page.	Yellow
2a. Multi-stakeholder: The forum includes both governmental and non-government representatives	Green
2b. Parity: The forum includes an even balance of governmental and non-governmental representatives	Yellow
2c. Transparent selection: Non-governmental members of the forum are selected through a fair and transparent process.	Yellow
2d. High-level government representation: The forum includes high-level representatives with decision making authority from government	Red
3d. Openness: The forum accepts inputs and representation on the action plan process from any civil society or other stakeholders outside the forum	Green
3e. Remote participation: There are opportunities for remote participation in at least some meetings and events	Red
3f. Minutes: The OGP forum proactively communicates and reports back on its decisions, activities and results to wider government and civil society stakeholders	Red

Key:
Green= Meets standard
Yellow= In progress (steps have been taken to meet this standard, but standard is not met)
Red= No evidence of action

Action Plan Development	
4a. Process transparency: There is a national OGP website (or OGP webpage on a government website) where information on all aspects of the national OGP process is proactively published.	Red
4b. Documentation in advance: The forum shares information about OGP to stakeholders in advance to guarantee they are informed and prepared to participate in all stages of the process.	Yellow
4c. Awareness-raising: The forum conducts outreach and awareness raising activities with relevant stakeholders to inform them of the OGP process.	Yellow
4d. Communication channels: The government facilitates direct communication with stakeholders to respond to action plan process questions, particularly during times of intense OGP activity.	Yellow
4e. Reasoned response: The multi-stakeholder forum publishes its reasoning behind decisions and responds to major categories of public comment.	Yellow
5a. Repository: Government collects and publishes a document repository on the national OGP website/webpage, which provides a historical record and access to all documents related to the national OGP process, including (but not limited to) consultation documents, National Action Plans, government self-assessments, IRM reports and supporting documentation of commitment implementation (e.g links to databases, evidence of meetings, publications)	Yellow

Editorial note: If a country "meets" the six standards in bold, the IRM will recognize the country's process as a Starred Process.