

OZURGETI, GEORGIA

Action plan – Ozurgeti, Georgia, 2021 – 2021

6th August 2021

Overview

At-a-Glance

Action Plan: Action plan – Ozurgeti, Georgia, 2021 – 2021

Action Plan Submission: 2021

Action Plan End: December 2021

Lead Institution: Ozurgeti Municipality City Hall,
Ozurgeti Municipality City Council,

Description

Duration

Dec 2021

Date Submitted

28th July 2021

Foreword(s)

Ozurgeti is widely recognized as a local reformer committed to upholding the principles of open and transparent government. Ozurgeti was one of the first local self-government to join the OGP Georgia national process in 2016 and pledged commitments to strengthen open governance at the grassroots level. Since then, Ozurgeti was engaged in the implementation of the last two OGP Georgia National Action Plans (NAP). As a result, Ozurgeti has become one of the front-runner municipalities across Georgia in the last few years due to its long-term vision, strong commitment, and continuous efforts to improve good governance in active collaboration with civil society.

In this light, we would like to strengthen our efforts to achieve sustainable results for citizen participation, introduce innovative solutions that guarantee transparency and counter corruption, and improve public service delivery by initiating the action plan within the framework of the OGP Local in 2021.

Through engaging in the OGP Georgia process, Ozurgeti has already established active cooperation with the local CSOs with the aim to ensure the OGP principles are undertaken in policy planning and implementation. As a further continuation of a cooperative spirit between government and CSOs, we aim to develop and implement the OGP Local

Action Plan with Guria Youth Resource Center, Center for Innovations and Civic Development “Progress House” and Democratic Development Union of Georgia, the CSOs that have extensive experience in working to advance OGP values and principles. It should also be noted that the Ozurgeti Municipality joined the OGP Local Program with the CSOs actively engaged in the OGP process. In line with its OGP aspirations, we believe that our commitment will empower and further incentivize Municipality to promote OGP values and principles across the Municipality, thus, improve inclusive, citizen-oriented local governance.

Open Government Challenges, Opportunities and Strategic Vision

What is the long-term vision for open government in your context and jurisdiction?

Ozurgeti is committed to establishing itself as a model in-open government-oriented self-governance. Following Municipality’s previous success of introducing digital governance, improving service delivery, citizen participation, and access to information, we fully believe that our continued efforts will help us accomplish this open governance goal.

In particular, as a further step forward considering the local context, Ozurgeti municipality is committed to:

1. Eliminate corruption risks and strengthen anti-corruption mechanisms at the local level.
2. Strengthen citizen participation and inclusive decision-making process.
3. Improve the quality-of-service delivery and ensure equal access to public service for the marginalized communities.

Strengthen Public Finance Management processes at the local level.

What are the achievements in open government to date (for example, recent open government reforms)?

Ozurgeti has extensive experience in accomplishing innovative initiatives in partnership with the local CSOs and international organizations. This resulted in the implementation of the following initiatives aimed at strengthening transparency, public participation, quality service delivery, and access to the information within our local government, ensuring co-creation with non-governmental stakeholders:

- Developing Transparency and Integrity Building Strategy along with rigorous Monitoring and Evaluation framework.

- Establishing civic participation platforms and strengthen transparency.
- Launching an online petition platform.
- Creating a Participatory Budgeting Online Platform.

We have created Online Platform for Participatory Budgeting to allow citizens to engage in the municipal budget planning process and initiative funding for infrastructural projects of Ozurgeti City by using online vouchers (1 voucher (100 GEL) per citizen) from the dedicated municipal budget. At this point, the percentage of citizen engagement level reaches up to 40%.

- Conducting robust awareness-raising toward open governance at the local level

We have conducted awareness-raising on the local governance and OGP literature to spread knowledge among the communities about local governance and existing civic participation instruments. Our Municipality has created dedicated cyberspace combining all the available information in one repository accessible from other municipalities' website.

What are the current challenges/areas for improvement in open government that the jurisdiction wishes to tackle?

Despite Georgia's remarkable progress in eliminating corruption in public administration during the past years, many shortcomings in Georgia's open government processes have been recognized by various international organizations at the national and local levels. Thus, in 2016 the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) 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. Another challenge relates to improving public service delivery responding to COVID-19 related emergency matters. As part of its digital governance agenda, Ozurgeti recognizes the importance of simplifying the dialogue between the government and citizens to improve access to information and improve public service delivery to ensure an open response while facilitating COVID-19 related emergency matters across the Municipality. Thus, we acknowledge the importance of conducting a comprehensive study to understand local needs, and based on the findings, facilitate the open recovery from COVID-19 related emergency matters. Public Finance Management is another important area. Although Ozurgeti has been implementing civic budget and developing municipal budgets in full conformity with the program budget development methodology adopted by the Minister of Finance of Georgia, further improvement of the PFM process includes inclusive and active civic

participation.

What are the medium-term open government goals that the government wants to achieve?

Ozurgeti municipality is committed to achieving the following medium-term goals:

1. To enhance inclusive, citizen-centered, and transparent public service delivery and improved access to services for the marginalized communities through study the needs to marginalized communities and reflect it to the public service delivery.
2. To institutionalize corruption risk assessment system at the local level.
3. To strengthen civic participation for better Public Finance Management processes in the municipality through elaborating priority document and program budget for the municipality in active collaboration with the local community.

The medium-term goals are directly in line with the long-term strategic vision of the municipality and address the challenges to open government identified in the previous section.

How does this action plan contribute to achieve the Open Government Strategic Vision?

Ozurgeti Municipality is committed to implementing the following three commitments for the OGP Local Action Plan 2021.

1. Ensure equal access to public service for the vulnerable groups and improve response to their needs in Ozurgeti Municipality.

To conduct a comprehensive study to explore the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on vulnerable communities and the extent to which local government efforts and public services have responded to their needs. Based on the study results, develop an action plan to improve vulnerable communities' access to public services.

2. Improvement of Corruption Risk Management in the Ozurgeti Municipality

To develop and approve the corruption risk assessment methodology addressing the specificities of local context and carry out the corruption risk assessment.

3. Improve Public Finance Management processes in Ozurgeti Municipality through inclusive and active participation.

As a result of public consultations with civil society, to develop a Priority Document for FY2022-2025 and Program Budget for FY2020 for the municipality

along with publicly available Citizens' Guide for the local budget 2022.

How does the open government strategic vision contribute to the accomplishment of the current administration's overall policy goals?

In line with its ambitious Open Government aspirations of Ozurgeti Municipality, the OGP Local Action Plan 2021 will further stimulate Ozurgeti's governance agenda Municipality to promote OGP values and principles across the Municipality, thus, ensuring inclusive, citizen-oriented local governance. In particular, the vision reflects Ozurgeti's aspirations to enhance public service delivery accessible to every citizen, especially marginalized communities, eliminate corruption risks, and intensify public finance management in the Municipality.

Engagement and Coordination in the Open Government Strategic Vision and OGP Action Plan

Please list the lead institutions responsible for the implementation of this OGP action plan.

- Ozurgeti Municipality City Hall
- Ozurgeti Municipality City Council

What kind of institutional arrangements are in place to coordinate between government agencies and departments to implement the OGP action plan?

Ozurgeti City Hall and the Municipality Assembly will be leading the implementation of the 2021 OGP Local Action Plan. In addition, for better coordination, by the decree of the Mayor of Municipality, a working group will be established to coordinate the implementation of OGP Local Action Plan 2021. The working group will consist of representatives of Ozurgeti Municipality and its subordinate legal entities, City Council, and civil society organizations. Furthermore, it will function with a co-chair by one of the local government representatives and one civil society representative. The Working Group chairman will be Chairman of Ozurgeti Municipality City Council, and co-chair will be selected from the local civil society organizations. It will act as a coordination mechanism to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the priority areas identified by the strategy. The corresponding legal act will determine the frequency of the meetings and other relevant rules of procedure.

What kind of spaces have you used or created to enable the collaboration between government and civil society in the co-creation and implementation of this action plan? Mention both offline and online spaces.

Through engaging in the OGP process since 2016, Ozurgeti municipality has already established active cooperation with local civil society organizations such as Guria Youth Resource Center, Center for Innovations and Civic Development “Progress House” and Democratic Development Union as well as development partners such as USAID GGI to ensure OGP principles of co-creation are reflected in the policy planning and implementation process. Although the major steps have been taken to ensure co-creation initiatives with non-governmental stakeholders in the municipality, establishment of a new working group will contribute to fostering cooperative spirit between government and CSOs.

Finally, for wider participation and engagement of the locals in the co-creation process of OGP Local AP 2021, the Municipality published Strategic Vision and Action Plan publicly on the official website available for public comments during the 14 days. After the public commenting period, Ozurgeti municipality organized a public discussion before the City Council approved the Strategy and Action Plan.

The working group will serve as the main mechanism to enable the collaboration between the government and civil society in the co-creation and implementation of the OGP Local Action Plan 2021 on a regular basis.

What measures did you take to ensure diversity of representation (including vulnerable or marginalized populations) in these spaces?

A number of local civil society organizations are functional in Ozurgeti representing the voices of the marginalized communities to the local level. In addition, representatives of the Council of Civil Advisors, and Gender Equality Council will be invited to join the Working Group to ensure their participation for a better co-creation process through the perspective of the marginalized communities.

A robust co-creation process during the OGP Local Plan development as well as implementation helped us to identify major challenges and leverage civil society and other stakeholders in implementing reforms. In addition, the local non-governmental organization – “Charity Association -Guria” will be invited to participate in the OGP Action Plan implementation process. As a result, it will sense that marginalized groups take an active part in designing policies considering special needs of those groups. Thus, it will strengthen the role of local CSOs and citizens to play an essential role in the decision-making process.

Who participated in these spaces?

At the initial stage, in March 2021, Ozurgeti Municipality established non-permanent working

group representing local government and key stakeholders. During the AP elaboration process, Ozurgeti Municipality held two consultations with representatives of Ozurgeti City Council, City Hall, and local key stakeholders to develop the OGP Local Strategic Vision and Action Plan 2021. Local civil society representatives were encouraged to voice their ideas and recommendations on how to improve good governance at the local level. In total, 16 participants attended the two consultations (five representatives of the local government and three from local CSOs at the first meeting, and three representatives of the local government and five local CSOs at the second).

How many groups participated in these spaces?

5

How many public-facing meetings were held in the co-creation process?

5

How will government and non-governmental stakeholders continue to collaborate through the implementation of the action plan?

Working group will serve as the main mechanism to ensure cooperation spirit during the implementation process of the OGP Local Action Plan 2021. Meetings

will be held on a regular basis to provide updates about the implementation process and inform the Working Group members.

In addition, the municipality will keep a record of the meetings and publish the transcripts online for public use. As part of informing a wider audience on the implementation process, Ozurgeti Municipality will ensure that OGP Local repository is created on the City Hall website to collect all OGP Local-related materials in one space for better access. In addition, to robust a better awareness of OGP, Ozurgeti will ensure of using various communication channels such as Facebook, City Hall's and Council's webpage and etc.

Please describe the independent Monitoring Body you have identified for this plan.

Ozurgeti Municipality will actively work with the development partners to carry out independent external results-based monitoring of OGP Ozurgeti Action Plan 2021. The working group will ensure that the monitoring results are reflected in the implementation process of the Action Plan.

Provide the contact details for the independent monitoring body.

To be determined.

What types of activities will you have in place to discuss progress on commitments with stakeholders?

Ozurgeti municipality is committed to encouraging the co-creation process by implementing the following activities:

1. Regular meetings with key stakeholders, including implementing units as well as local civil society organizations.
2. Depending on the COVID-19 pandemic situation in the country, face-to-face public meetings to discuss with the wider community about the progress of the OGP Local Action Plan implementation.
3. Regular meetings with the representatives of functional platforms of civic participations such as the Council of Civil Advisors; the Council for Gender Equality; General Assemblies of Settlements

Regular outreach campaign through various social media platforms

How will you regularly check in on progress with implementing agencies?

The co-chairs of the Working Group will be responsible for regularly checking on the progress with the implementing units from the City Hall as well

as Council. The working group will meet at least once a month to provide updates on OGP Action Plan 2021 implementation progress and to better coordinate implementation with other relevant departments. Regular updates will ensure that the implementing agencies report any expected challenges faced during the implementation period for respective solutions with other stakeholders involved in the OGP process.

Besides, the Ozurgeti City council will serve as additional Monitoring Body to monitor the OGP Local 2021 Action Plan implementation process. The involvement of the City Council will establish a high legitimacy of the implementation of the Action Plan

How will you share the results of your monitoring efforts with the public?

Ozurgeti Municipality will be responsible for communicating with the general public and informing the population about ongoing OGP-related activities in the Municipality. The Municipality City Council Chief of Staff will be in charge in active collaboration with Public Relations unit to inform with the results the monitoring to the local community by utilizing various social media platforms, municipal webpage: City Hall and Council.

In addition, Ozurgeti Municipality will create an online OGP repository to collect and publish all documents

repository on the local OGP website. OGP repository will provide a historical record and access to all the documents related to the OGP local process, including transcripts of the meetings, Strategic Vision and Action Plan, monitoring results, and various supporting documentation of the commitment implementation process.

Additionally, to ensure the involvement of the marginalized communities, especially from rural areas, the Village Trustees will incorporate OGP-related information as part of their agenda. This will support the spread of information in the rural area of the Municipality, where the internet penetration is lower, and the citizens rely more on word of mouth.

Endorsement from Non-Governmental Stakeholders

- The Institute for Change and Innovations (former Guria Youth Resource Center), Executive Director, Tamar Ghlonti
- Center for Innovations and Civic Development “Progress House”, Chairman Executive Director, Minda Salukvadze Levan Mjavanadze
- Democratic Development Union of Georgia, Chairman, Levan Khinitibidze

[?vanity=sakrebulo](#)

Filed under:

Action Plan

Government

No comments yet