

Independent Reporting Mechanism (IRM): Tbilisi, Georgia Final Report 2017

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Site map

The Open Government Partnership (OGP) is a voluntary international initiative that aims to secure commitments from governments to their citizenry to promote transparency, empower citizens, fight corruption, and harness new technologies to strengthen governance. In 2016, OGP opened to subnational participants in their own right as part of a pilot program. The OGP Subnational Pilot Program consists of 15 subnational governments who submitted Action Plans and signed onto the Subnational Declaration at the Paris Global OGP Summit, and implemented them from 1 January 2017 to 31 December 2017. This report summarizes the results of the implementation of Tbilisi's pilot subnational action plans from January 2017 to December 2017.

The IRM reports for OGP pioneers will be published online primarily. As a result, this report is outlined in terms of the final site layout of the report.

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Overview

Period under Review

Action Plan under Review	2017
Dates of Actions under Review	01/2017 – 12/2017

Summary of IRM Findings

Tbilisi's action plan was a result of a consultative process and contained commitments focused on creating participatory tools for citizen engagement in the governance of the city. Four out of five commitments saw limited completion while the e-petitions portal was successfully launched and has created a major opening for civic participation. Moving forward, City Hall should ensure continuity and transfer of institutional memory on OGP.

Participation in OGP

Action Plan Date	01/2017 – 12/2017
Lead Agency (Office, Department, etc.)	Deputy Mayor's office at Administration of Tbilisi City Hall

At a Glance

Table 1: At a Glance	
Number of Commitments	5
Level of Completion	
Completed	1
Substantial	0
Limited	4
Not Started	0
Number of Commitments with...	
Clear Relevance to OGP Values	5
Transformative Potential Impact	0
Substantial or Complete Implementation	1
All Three (★)	0

Did It Open Government?	<i>Major</i>	1
	<i>Outstanding</i>	0

Action Plan Priorities

1. E-petitions portal
2. Participatory budget planning mechanism
3. Civic control and online municipal services

Institutional Context

This section summarizes the Institutional and Subnational Context section. It emphasizes the description of the lead institutions responsible for the action plan, their powers of coordination and how the institutional set-up boosts or affects the OGP process.

OGP leadership in Tbilisi

Tbilisi City Hall leads the process of drafting and coordinating the implementation of the action plan. The Deputy Mayor's office at Administration of Tbilisi City Hall led the public consultation process and coordinated the elaboration and implementation of the action plan. The Tbilisi Government approved the creation of a working group on 30 May 2016 by normative act following the order of the Mayor of Tbilisi to participate in the program, and the Deputy Mayor, Nina Khatiskatsi, was assigned as the chair of the working group. The working group was created as a permanent coordination mechanism for OGP at the subnational level and is composed of local non-governmental organizations, international organizations, public agencies and representatives of the private sector. The working group is the mechanism that supports the action plan elaboration process, and monitoring and assessment of the action plan implementation. The Tbilisi Government adopted the OGP Tbilisi action plan on 16 November 2016, based on the normative act from the order of the Mayor of Tbilisi, which ensures the legal mandate for the departments and agencies that operate under the Tbilisi Government.

Municipal elections at the end of 2017 significantly impacted OGP leadership during the implementation process of the action plan. The action plan was elaborated and mostly implemented under the mandate of David Narmania (Mayor of Tbilisi, 2014-2017). After the election and during the final stage of action plan implementation, a series of administrative changes took place, including the transfer of leadership from the Deputy Mayor to Vice Mayor and changes in the working group chair and personnel responsible for commitment implementation.

Table 2. Summary of OGP leadership in Tbilisi

1. Structure	Yes	No
Is there a clearly designated government lead for OGP?	X	
	Shared	Single
Is there a single lead agency or shared leadership on OGP efforts?		X
	Yes	No
Is the head of government leading the OGP initiative?	X	
2. Legal Mandate	Yes	No
Is the government's commitment to OGP established through an official, publicly released mandate?	X	
Is the government's commitment to OGP established through a legally binding mandate?	X	
3. Continuity and Instability	Yes	No
Was there a change in the organization(s) leading or involved with the OGP initiatives during the action plan implementation cycle?	X	
Was there a change in the executive leader during the duration of the OGP action plan cycle?	X	

Participation in OGP by Government Institutions

This sub-section describes which government institutions were involved at various stages in OGP.

In Tbilisi, OGP participation was led by the Deputy Mayor's office at Administration of Tbilisi City Hall. Information on other departments and agencies actively involved in the implementation process is summarized in the table below.

Generally, the departments under Tbilisi City Hall were involved in the consultation and implementation process of the OGP action plan. Among the departments actively involved in the process were the Tbilisi Municipal Legal Department, which was consulted during the elaboration of the action plan, as well as during the implementation process. During the consultation process, representatives from the Ministry of Justice, the coordinators of Open Government Georgia national level, were invited to observe the action plan, but were not responsible for any of the commitments.

One of the most actively involved agencies in the consulting, proposing and implementation process was the Tbilisi Municipal Services Development Agency (NCLE), which was responsible for creating technical tasks for all the commitments.

In addition, during the consultation and implementation process representatives of all 10 local administrative districts (*Gamgeoba*) were actively involved.

Table 3. Participation in OGP by Government Institutions

How did institutions participate?	Ministries, departments or agencies	Legislative (parliaments or councils)	Justice institutions (including quasi-judicial agencies)	Other (special districts, authorities, parastatal bodies, etc.)
Consult: These institutions observed or were invited to observe the action plan, but may not be responsible for commitments in the action plan	9	0	0	12
Propose: These institutions proposed commitments for inclusion in the action plan	2	0	0	0
Implement: These institutions are responsible for implementing commitments in the action plan whether or not they proposed the commitments	8	0	0	11

Commitment Overview

Tbilisi’s pilot action plan prioritizes launching the tools to increase the level of access to information and civic participation in the city. Civic information and participation portal “Smart Map” is meant to provide information in an interactive format accessible for Tbilisi residents. In addition, the action plan promises to create an electronic petition for residents, implement participatory budget planning and monitor the spending of public funds. The action plan also contains a commitment on starting a public monitoring mechanism through the creation of citizen monitoring groups to check the services provided by the Government of Tbilisi.

Table 4. Overview: Assessment of Progress by Commitment

Table 4 displays for each commitment the level of specificity, relevance to OGP values, potential impact level of completion.

Commitment Overview	Specificity				OGP Value Relevance (as written)				Potential Impact				Completion				Did It Open Government?				
	None	Low	Medium	High	Access to Information	Civic Participation	Public Accountability	Technology & Innovation for Transparency & Accountability	None	Minor	Moderate	Transformative	Not Started	Limited	Substantial	Completed	Worsens	No Change	Marginal	Major	Outstanding
1. Smart Map				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓			✓				✓			
2. E-petitions			✓			✓		✓			✓				✓					✓	
3. Participatory budget planning mechanism				✓	✓	✓		✓			✓			✓				✓			
4. Budget spending			✓		✓	✓		✓		✓				✓				✓			
5. Civic control and online municipal services			✓		✓	✓		✓			✓			✓				✓			

General Recommendations

I. Ensure continuity and renewed commitment to OGP

Moving forward, it is important for City Hall to ensure continuity and transfer of institutional memory on OGP commitments from the first action plan. While significant work has gone into preparation of draft legal acts and test versions of various online tools, four out of five commitments remain incomplete. Communication around the status of these legal acts and the follow-up steps needs to improve.

2. Continue the co-creation process and expand participation to more diverse and targeted actors

In the spirit of co-creation, Tbilisi City Hall needs to continue engagement with the working group, a legally mandated multi-stakeholder forum for OGP implementation in Tbilisi. In addition, the consultation process on the development and implementation of the action plan could be more representative of the diverse actors. For the action plan's co-creation process, City Hall provided a mechanism for all interested stakeholders to be actively involved in the formulation of commitments. However, despite their efforts to ensure broad participation, many of the organizations invited did not show interest. Therefore, Tbilisi City Hall should strategically engage and involve individuals, experts and communities of practice with specific knowledge and expertise in the field of the commitments, who are more likely to understand the value of the OGP process. These could be urban activists or groups working on environmental issues or transportation, who could potentially provide professional input in the areas where City Hall could benefit from more nuanced thematic expertise.

3. Carry out the public awareness campaign to raise visibility of OGP and to promote new tools

The general public visibility of Tbilisi's involvement in OGP and public awareness of the action plan was low during the formulation as well as implementation of the action plan. To raise the visibility of OGP both within the city government and publicly, City Hall should start implementing the communications strategy developed with the support of USAID Good Governance Initiative (GGI). Once all planned portals become fully functional, City Hall should carry out a widescale public campaign to ensure effective uptake of these tools. In addition, the public relations department could be more proactive on an ongoing basis in raising the visibility of OGP activities.

4. Participatory budgeting and public oversight of spending

The next action plan needs to continue building on the efforts made in creating transparency and participation tools for budget planning and oversight of public spending in Tbilisi. The Municipal Services Development Agency could map and build on existing participatory budgeting interfaces to ensure the use of best practices from other participating cities in the OGP Local program, such as Madrid, Paris and Buenos Aires.

It will also be important to extend the current focus of online transparency and participation tools to include broader policy reform on financial transparency and budget planning.

5. Leverage the opportunity of the Global OGP Summit

Tbilisi could leverage the opportunity of being the host city for the fifth OGP Global Summit to advance the above recommendations. Tbilisi City Hall could build peer-learning, support and resources from key partners and fellow OGP local program participants, particularly in thematic areas such as participatory budgeting and other key sectoral policy areas.

Institutional and Subnational Context and Scope of Action Plan

This section places the action plan commitments in the broader context. The emphasis of the IRM report is on the development and implementation of the OGP action plan. However, to ensure the credibility of the report and of OGP more broadly and to inform future versions of the action plan, researchers are asked to briefly consider the institutional context within which the OGP action plan is framed. Consider significant actions not covered by the action plan that are relevant to OGP values and the entity's participation in the Partnership. The emphasis should be on the specific subnational context, although researchers may make some reference to the broader national context as it affects implementation at the subnational level.

Background

Tbilisi is the capital and largest city of Georgia. It has an area of 720 km² and is the most populous city in the country, with an estimated 1.118 million residents.¹ The city presently houses 30 percent of Georgia's population, produces almost half of Georgia's GDP² and, furthermore, contributes to 60-75 percent of the country's key statistics in entrepreneurial and construction activities.³

Tbilisi has a special status as the capital and is also one of five cities with independent self-governing units.⁴ Local self-government in Tbilisi is exercised through a representative body of Tbilisi - the Tbilisi City Council (*Sakrebulo*) - and a system of executive bodies at Tbilisi City Hall. The structure and rules of operation of Tbilisi City Hall are determined by the statute of Tbilisi City Council. The number of Tbilisi City Council members and the procedure for elections of the members are determined by the Election Code of Georgia. Tbilisi City Hall (Tbilisi Mayor, the Government of Tbilisi, structural units of Tbilisi City Hall and Administrative units (*Gamgeobas*) of Tbilisi Districts) constitutes the system of the executive bodies of Tbilisi and ensures the exercise of executive and administrative functions of Tbilisi. The highest executive body— the Tbilisi Mayor - is the head of the Government of Tbilisi. The Mayor is elected in direct elections, for a four-year term. Internally, the territory of Tbilisi is divided into 10 administrative units. An administrative unit of Tbilisi is a district (*Gamgeoba*) and is not a self-governing unit. The head of a district is *Gamgebeli*, appointed by the Mayor of Tbilisi with the consent of Tbilisi City Council.

Tbilisi City Hall provides a number of services to residents, including pre-school (kindergarten) education, architecture and construction in the city, including issuance of permits and legalization, city transportation and parking. The following agencies are under City Hall: Tbilisi Transport Company, 100 percent share of which is under the ownership of City Hall and ensures provision of transport services for the city;⁵ Property Management Agency, which entails procedures for property management in Tbilisi⁶; and Social Programs, which incorporates different social programs available to residents.⁷

According to the Local Self-Government Code, approved in 2014, the municipal budget is independent from the budgets of other municipalities, as well as from state budgets. The independence of the municipal budget is ensured by its own receipts and the power to independently exercise its own powers. The Local Self-Government Code increases financial resources of municipal authorities at the

expense of various tax shares and transfers, and introduces local taxes to fill the municipal budget along with a share of income taxes⁸ paid by persons registered and employed in the city. In addition, along with special and targeted transfers, the municipality's budget receives capital investments from the national budget, which includes funds allocated for building or repairing bridges, roads, cultural objects, hospitals, schools and other buildings/facilities. The municipal budget is proposed by the Government of Tbilisi and approved by Tbilisi City Council (*Sakrebulo*), through a series of planning instruments. Public hearings with local citizens are legally a constitutive part of this process, but usually there is a lack of citizen participation. The total budget for Tbilisi municipality for 2017 was US\$3,188,454.1 million, and US\$335,504.5 million is planned for the 2018 budget.⁹ According to the budget of Tbilisi for 2017, the largest part is for social benefits, other benefits and use of goods and services (US\$60,226.24; 49,616.41 and 47,170.24 million respectively).¹⁰

Open Government in Georgia

Georgia scores second out of 13 countries in the Eastern Europe and Central Asia region for open government, according to the World Justice Project's Open Government indicator. Overall, according to the Rule of Law index, Georgia is the first country in the region and globally places 38th out of 113 countries.¹¹ In addition, Georgia is perceived as the leader in the region as the least corrupt country. According to the Global Corruption Barometer, 7 percent of surveyed respondents said that they paid bribes when accessing public services in the last 12 months.¹²

Georgia was among the first countries to declare its intention to join OGP in 2011. In 2012, the Government developed and launched the first national action plan of 2012-2013.¹³ Currently, Georgia is implementing commitments under the third national action plan (of 2016-2017) which comprises 24 commitments to be implemented by 24 responsible agencies. In 2016, the Steering Committee, by a majority of votes, elected Georgia as co-chair of OGP for a two-year term.¹⁴ Georgia assumed the lead chair role of the Partnership in September 2017. To make the term a success, the Government of Georgia has created an interagency working group in which all key stakeholders of the process (the Ministry of Justice of Georgia as the OGP lead at the national and international level; the Government administration; the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; the Parliament of Georgia; City Hall, and key players from international and local civil society organizations) are represented. This group is in charge of planning the chair's activities, as well as the OGP Global Summit hosted by Georgia.

Georgia hosted the 5th OGP Global Summit in Tbilisi, on July 17-19, 2018, with representatives from more than 70 countries.

Local elections

Local elections were held in Georgia in October 2017, prior to the completion of the action plan. Elections to *Sakrebulos* are held under a mixed proportional-majoritarian system. In Tbilisi, 25 members are elected proportionally and 25 under the majoritarian component. In the proportional component, the parties/blocks receive at least 4 per cent of the votes cast in the distribution of seats in *Sakrebulos*. As a result of the election, the Tbilisi City Assembly (*Sakrebulo*) seats were distributed mostly among the Georgian Dream (40 seats out of 50 members).¹⁵ Kakha Kaladze, the former footballer and Minister of Energy of Georgia, and Vice Prime Minister from the ruling party "Georgian Dream", was elected as the Mayor of Tbilisi.¹⁶

Tbilisi became one of the members of the OGP subnational government pilot program under the previous Mayor in 2016. Considering the possible impact of the elections on action plan implementation, four Georgian CSOs¹⁷ working on the Open Government Partnership drafted a declaration text for mayoral candidates to sign, committing them to uphold existing action plan commitments, co-create the next action plan with ambitious commitments, make their implementation a priority, promote the establishment of independent structural units in City Hall, ensure regular participation of high-ranking officials in OGP and strengthen cooperation with and involvement of other stakeholders. All the major candidates signed the declaration publicly.¹⁸ Prior to the election, Mr Kaladze met the chair of the OGP Executive Committee (Minister of Justice) and was introduced to the “Open Government Subnational Declaration”. He stated his awareness of the importance of OGP for the country and the city.¹⁹

The election and subsequent change of government happened two months prior to the completion of the action plan and these events affected the projected completion of commitments. During the final stage of implementation, a series of administrative changes took place in City Hall, including changes in personnel who were responsible for the implementation of the commitments as well as the change of the Deputy Mayor, who was the chair of the working group. No working group meetings took place after the election of the new government and overall communication with CSOs stopped in the framework of OGP. CSOs assessed the process of the changing of government as negative due to the fact that they were no longer informed about the status of commitments and did not get feedback on their recommendations that had been submitted to City Hall prior to the election. Moreover, representatives of CSOs mentioned they did not meet after the government change,²⁰ as the last working group meeting was held on 3 November 2017.²¹

During the campaign for municipal elections in 2017, the topics that were discussed widely include: availability of social benefits for vulnerable citizens, jobs creation and various infrastructural projects in the capital, including the railway route project bypassing the city. Illegal construction, poor infrastructure, traffic congestion and ecology were the main problems focused on by the main opposition party. The candidate for the ruling party, the current City Mayor, focused on government-initiated economic and energy projects, social issues, environmental protection, road traffic and parking among his priorities.²²

Stakeholder Priorities

Increasing public participation and improving access to information are perceived as the main priorities highlighted by the stakeholders in Georgia for national and subnational level. Also, enhancing citizen engagement and citizen-centered governance is one of the primary goals defined by Georgia for the OGP Chair year. Creating a multi-functional portal for citizen engagement, introducing a participatory budget mechanism and accessibility to budget spending, as well as the creation of electronic petitions to Tbilisi City Hall are considered as high priority issues for the city.

The following themes are identified as priorities for the second Tbilisi action plan based on interviews with stakeholders:

- To provide access to information on construction permits to ensure transparency of the process and to provide opportunities for public participation in approving infrastructural projects in the city;
- Environmental protection was one of the top campaign promises during the local elections, and

CSOs also underlined the importance of protecting the environment and green spaces and added environmental permitting into the construction permitting process; access to information should also be provided on the fines issued against companies for a negative impact on the environment;

- To ensure the availability of the electronic petitions platform in Tbilisi as a tool for public participation and accountability;
- Open Society Georgia Foundation (OSGF) considers that City Hall needs to improve access to information on homeless residents, as well as to create a mechanism to promote their public participation; and to create a policy strategy for homeless residents at the municipal level;
- To improve awareness raising about already implemented projects within the OGP action plan to ensure their effectiveness and wide public usage of newly-created tools;
- To improve communication between the citizens and Government of Tbilisi on key city development issues, especially on increasing the role of local administrative districts (*Gamgeoba*) in the process of communication;
- CSOs stressed that in addition to the current commitments to implement a participatory budget planning mechanism and accessibility to budget spending and instruction of civic control mechanism, the Tbilisi Government needs to create more effective mechanisms to ensure accountability of the government on budget decisions and their implementation.

Scope of Action Plan in Relation to Subnational Context

While it is not the job of the IRM to tell governments and civil society organizations what can or cannot be in action plans, the IRM Guiding Principles do require the IRM to identify, “The extent to which the action plan and its commitments reflect, in a certain subnational context, the OGP values of transparency, accountability, and civic participation, as articulated in the OGP Declaration of Principles and the Articles of Governance.

The major focus of the first action plan was access to information and civic participation on the issues that are perceived crucial for the city by the stakeholders. The focus on access to information is understandable because, traditionally, residents of Tbilisi have had limited access to information on decision making, depriving them of a basis on which to provide feedback or monitor government performance, especially in cases of decision making related to construction permits, tree cutting and investment projects.²³ The construction and development projects in the city have been a cause of public outcry.²⁴ City Hall announced plans to implement construction regulations prior to the completion of the city’s urbanization Masterplan.²⁵ Construction permitting issues discussed in conjunction with environmental issues is another area of public debate. The Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI) prepared a statistic which showed that the number of trees cut down in Tbilisi due to construction had increased at least five times in 2016 compared to previous years.²⁶ The OGP action plan addressed this issue by including a commitment on creating a portal to increase access to information and allow citizens feedback through the creation of an interactive e-portal called Smart Map.

Another important focus of the action plan was to introduce a mechanism for electronic petitions for Tbilisi City Hall. Generally, establishing an online petitions portal was considered to be a useful tool for increased public participation at all levels of government in Georgia. Creation of a national e-petitions portal was one of the unfulfilled commitments in the second national action plan. The third national

action plan also includes a commitment on the creation of electronic petitions for Zugdidi, a municipality in western Georgia.

The Tbilisi action plan covers the issue of open budgeting in two commitments, a) implementation of a participatory budget planning mechanism and b) interactive accessibility to budget spending and introduction of a civic control mechanism. Although public consultations on the elaboration of the city budget drafts usually take place during City Council meetings, which are open to the public, citizen participation in these meetings has historically been low. Moreover, according to the Local Self-Government Index (elaborated by the Center for Consultation and Training, Institute for Development of Freedom of Information and the Management Systems Development Center), the absolute majority of Georgian municipalities do not include citizen participation during budget planning processes.²⁷

¹ About Georgia, Government of Georgia, http://gov.ge/index.php?lang_id=ENG&sec_id=193

² Statistical information by Regions of Georgia, National Statistics Office of Georgia, <http://geostat.ge/regions/#>

³ Joseph Salukvadze, Oleg Golubchikov: "City as a geopolitics: Tbilisi, Georgia – A globalizing metropolis in a turbulent region" (March 2016) https://ac.els-cdn.com/S0264275115300056/1-s2.0-S0264275115300056-main.pdf?_tid=2f2990a6-0f45-11e8-8813-00000aacb35e&acdnat=1518365225_87f0965e9a0536ee3b05358539907892

⁴ "Parliament Reduces Number of Self-Governing Cities", <http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=30234>

⁵ Tbilisi Transport Company, http://ttc.com.ge/index.php?lang_id=ENG&sec_id=72

⁶ Property Management Agency, LELP, Tbilisi Municipality, <http://auction.tbilisi.gov.ge/Pages/AboutUs.aspx>

⁷ Information about social programs implemented by Tbilisi City Hall, <http://tbilisi.gov.ge/page/26?lang=en>

⁸ "Analysis of the Draft Law on Local Self-Governance, International Experience and Recommendations", International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED), <http://www.isfed.ge/main/547/eng/>

⁹ Budget of Tbilisi Municipality for 2017 and 2018, The total budget for Tbilisi municipality for 2017 was 818 826, 9 million Gel and for 861 609,0 million Gel is the planned budget for 2018. The Oanda exchange rate is 2.5681, 28.08.2018.

<http://tbilisi.gov.ge/page/43?lang=ge>

¹⁰ Detailed information about the budget of Tbilisi Municipality in 2016, 2017 and 2018, p.5. The Oanda exchange rate is 2.5681, <http://tbsakrebulo.gov.ge/uploads/bijeti/12-031734272-03-ilovepdf-compressed.pdf>

¹¹ World Justice Project, Rule of Law Index, Findings of Georgia, 2017-2018, <http://data.worldjusticeproject.org/#!/groups/GEO>

¹² Transparency International, Global Corruption Barometer, 2017

https://www.transparency.org/news/feature/global_corruption_barometer_citizens_voices_from_around_the_world

¹³ Georgia Action Plan, 2012-2013, <http://justice.gov.ge/Multimedia%2FFiles%2FOGP%2FOGP%20Action%20Plan%202012-2013.pdf>

¹⁴ From October 2016 to October 2018.

¹⁵ "Tbilisi City Assembly convenes for the first time after elections", <http://agenda.ge/news/90634/eng>

¹⁶ Kakha Kaladze, Mayor of Tbilisi City, <http://tbilisi.gov.ge/government/2?lang=en>

¹⁷ Open Society Georgia Foundation, Georgia Young Lawyer's Association, Transparency International, and the Institute for Development of Freedom of Information.

¹⁸ "A Campaign for Openness: Tbilisi Mayoral Candidates Sign OGP Pledge", Open Society Georgia Foundation (OSGF), http://www.osgf.ge/index.php?lang_id=ENG&sec_id=15&info_id=5060

¹⁹ "Kakha Kaladze meets the representatives of OGP secretaries in Georgia", <http://www.newspress.ge/politika/101437-kakha-kaladze-thea-tsulukiansa-da-ghia-mmarthvelobis-partniorobis-saqarthvelos-samdivno-tsarmomadgenlebs-shekhvda.html?ar=A>

²⁰ Anano Tsinstsabadze (Participatory Democracy Program Project Coordinator, Open Society Georgia Foundation), interview with IRM researcher, 19 February 2017.

²¹ "OGP working group meeting was held in Tbilisi Municipality City Hall", <http://ogp.tbilisi.gov.ge/news/4257?lang=en>

²² "Tbilisi Mayoral Candidates and their campaigns", <http://civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=30282>

²³ Erekle Urushadze (Program Manager, Transparency International Georgia), interview with IRM researcher, 28 February 2018.

²⁴ "Chaotic building spree dismays some in seaside Georgian city", New York Times, (July 4, 2016)

<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/05/world/europe/batumi-georgia-architecture.html> 2016

²⁵ "Tbilisi City Hall willing to reduce Tbilisi construction chaos", <http://georgiatoday.ge/news/3734/Tbilisi-City-Hall-Willing-to-Reduce-Tbilisi-Construction-Chaos->

²⁶“Statistics of cutting down trees in Tbilisi due to constructions”, <https://idfi.ge/en/trees-cut-for-construction-purposes>

²⁷ “Tbilisi budget of 2018 - criticism and demands of opposition considered illogic in City Hall”-
<http://web2.rustavi2.ge/en/news/91595>

Process of Development and Monitoring of the Action Plan

Process of Development of the Action Plan

Governments participating in the OGP follow a process for consultation during development of their OGP action plan and during implementation. This section summarizes the performance of the Government of Tbilisi during the development of their first action plan.

OGP Basic Requirements

Subnational Governments received the following guidance on participation during action plan development and execution:

May – November 2016: Development of commitments: Participants set up ways to work with civil society organizations and other groups outside government and use these mechanisms to identify priority areas for commitments. Specific commitments should then be developed in partnership with civil society, allowing them the opportunity to support governments in drafting them and establishing milestones. Draft commitments should be shared with the OGP Support Unit as they are being developed and for comment and advice in October-November. Commitments should be finalized and agreed by the end of November, so they can be published and announced at the OGP Summit in December.

The Government of Tbilisi met all basic requirements as set out by OGP guidelines. In July 2017, Tbilisi City Hall created a multi-stakeholder working group for support in drafting the action plan. Through this group, City Hall collected input from different stakeholders. During the formulation of the plan, the working group was composed of 20 members, including seven civil society organizations (CSOs), seven representatives from the municipal government, two from the EU delegation to Georgia, three multilateral organizations and a representative from the national government.²⁸ The composition of the group changed slightly during the implementation process, for example, two media representatives left the group, while USAID, through its Good Governance Initiative (GGI) Program, added new representatives. Organizations representing journalists and the private sector displayed lower levels of engagement, mostly due to their low level of interest and lack of time. Through this multi-stakeholder working group, a diverse group of CSOs was involved in different phases of the development of the action plan.

Tbilisi City Hall first identified the action plan priority areas taking into consideration studies produced by the Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI), a CSO member of the working group. These were shared for comments with the working group, who, in turn, held four meetings to provide extensive input for City Hall to produce a draft action plan.²⁹ In addition, City Hall, with active involvement of Tbilisi Youth Centers Unions, organized 11 meetings to gather recommendations from the public. The meetings allowed participants to provide input verbally while City Hall took note.

Additionally, they could also provide recommendations via email. Detailed minutes of public consultation meetings were shared with participants.³⁰

According to interviews with representatives of CSOs involved in the process, this participatory mechanism allowed all interested stakeholders to be actively involved in the formulation of the action plan.³¹ Detailed notes of the meetings were prepared and posted on the Tbilisi City Hall website. The commitments in the final draft of the action plan include activities proposed by members of civil society, as explained in the “*Level of public input*” section of this report.

The commitments were shared for review with the OGP Support Unit prior to finalization, and the action plan was submitted before the deadline by the Municipality of Tbilisi.

Table 5. Basic Requirements

<p>1. Participatory Mechanism: Was there a way of working with CSOs and other groups? Guideline: Participants set up ways to work with civil society organizations and other groups outside government and use these mechanisms to identify priority areas for commitments.</p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p>2. Priority identification: Was civil society able to help identify priority areas for commitments? Guideline: Specific commitments should then be developed in partnership with civil society, allowing them the opportunity to support governments in drafting them and establishing milestones.</p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p>3. Commitment development: Did civil society participate in the [development/drafting] of commitments and milestones? Guideline: Specific commitments should then be developed in partnership with civil society, allowing them the opportunity to support governments in drafting them and establishing milestones.</p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p>4. Review: Were commitments submitted for review to the Open Government Partnership Support Unit prior to finalization? Guideline: Draft commitments should be shared with the OGP Support Unit as they are being developed and for comment and advice in October-November.</p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p>5. Submission: Were commitments submitted on time? Guideline: Commitments should be finalized and agreed by the end of November, so they can be published and announced at the OGP Summit in December.</p>	<p>Yes</p>

Openness of Consultation

Who was invited?

To determine which stakeholders would be part of the working group, Tbilisi City Hall contacted the members of Georgia’s Open Government Forum (Forum), a multi-stakeholder coordination mechanism that operates at a national level.³² This forum includes representatives of all main CSOs working on

issues related to openness and transparency, international organizations, governmental agencies and the Ministry of Justice of Georgia, which is the main coordinating government body for OGP in Georgia.

CSOs that are part of the multi-stakeholder working group at City Hall are the most prominent organizations working in the areas of transparency and accountability, such as IDFI, Transparency International Georgia (TI Georgia) and Open Society Foundation Georgia (OSGF). Two NGOs were invited to represent the media sector. The private sector was represented by the “Georgian Small and Medium Enterprise Association”. While many other local NGOs and private sector representatives were invited to provide recommendations, interest in the OGP process was low³³ as they did not see it as a priority. IDFI suggested extending the invitation from transparency-focused NGOs to ones with expertise on the action plan priority areas.³⁴ The working group jointly decided to target organizations that had positively contributed to previous projects and are relevant to the OGP process.³⁵ According to the Tbilisi Government point of contact for OGP, Lado Khasia, all CSOs that requested to join the group became part of it.

To invite all stakeholders mentioned above, the Administration of Tbilisi Municipality sent out official and personalized online invitation letters and contacted them directly.

How was awareness raising carried out?

Tbilisi City Hall created the working group by sending out invitations to CSOs that are part of the Ministry of Justice’s nationwide open government forum. Additionally, they sent invitations to other stakeholders they considered to be interested in the issue, such as the German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ), the Georgian Young Lawyers’ Association (GYLA) and the Human Rights Education and Monitoring Center (EMC). Seven CSOs and three multilateral organizations responded positively to the call and became part of the working group.

Upon its creation, Tbilisi City Hall provided participants with information about the timeline, procedures and methods for consultation to be followed during the formulation of the action plan. Regular updates were provided during working group meetings. Additionally, in the scope of OGP pilot program, the government created a webpage (<http://ogp.tbilisi.gov.ge/>) as a tool to inform and promote further involvement of the public. All the information regarding the timeline and plans were shared publicly in advance. Awareness raising was also done through youth centers and meetings with targeted groups of citizens.

Civil society representatives noted that general public visibility of Tbilisi’s involvement in OGP and public awareness of the action plan was low during the formulation of the plan and has remained the same during its implementation. It could be due to the lack of resources needed for a large scale public information campaign, but CSO representatives noted that City Hall’s PR department could have been more proactive in raising the visibility of the project using its existing resources. For example, they could have been more active on social media channels, going beyond the OGP Tbilisi website, to reach a wider audience.³⁶

Which parts of civil society participated?

Through the working group, civil society representatives were involved in the consultation process to varying degrees. IDFI, TI Georgia and OSGF actively participated in the working group meetings, and shared recommendations and suggestions during the elaboration process of the action plan. USAID Georgia Good Governance Initiative was actively involved in the discussions and provided input during

the action plan's development process. Other organizations representing journalists and the private sector displayed lower levels of engagement due to their lack of interest in the topic.

Additionally, the wider audience who participated in the 11 meetings organized by the working group represented varying audiences, such as: different age groups, social status, occupation and others including students, youth organizations³⁷, parents of kindergarten children,³⁸ socially vulnerable people, members of Civic Councils,³⁹ business community representatives⁴⁰ and others. In total, public consultations involved 240 individuals.

Level of Public Input

The IRM has adapted the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) "Spectrum of Participation" to apply to OGP.⁴¹ 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 "collaborative."

Tbilisi City Hall led substantial efforts to ensure the inclusion of CSOs and citizens throughout the co-creation process. The public was involved in two ways: through the working group, where members could provide recommendations, and through wider public consultations with citizens. Ideas gathered through these channels were reviewed several times and most of the recommendations were later reflected in the final version of the action plan. Control over the agenda was in the hands of City Hall. They worked directly with CSOs throughout the process to ensure their concerns and aspirations were consistently understood and they gave feedback on how they were being considered.⁴² As detailed below, both mechanisms allowed the public and CSOs to provide specific suggestions. Therefore, considering that the government was ultimately responsible for the drafting of commitments, but sought participation and gave feedback on the process, the level of public input on the IAP2 Spectrum is set at *Involve*.

Working group meetings: During the elaboration process of the action plan, the working group reviewed several drafts of the action plan prepared by City Hall. On 27 October 2016, the government shared the first draft of the Tbilisi action plan 2017 with working group members via email.⁴³ Later, on 8 November 2016, they shared an updated draft, which incorporated inputs from the working group and public consultations. Both versions were made public on the website (<http://ogp.tbilisi.gov.ge/>).⁴⁴ During the elaboration process, CSOs had the opportunity to provide recommendations to the government and discuss them. According to government members, they received approximately six emails and had several conversations with CSO representatives. The input provided by different stakeholders is clearly visible in the final version of the action plan when compared with the first draft, which shows the involvement of the CSOs through the working group, as confirmed by two representatives from USAID Georgia who were part of the elaboration process.⁴⁵

Two specific commitments came from proposals made by CSO members of the working group. According to IDFI, the leading CSO in the working group, the process of developing the action plan was inclusive and the government was open to ideas proposed by civil society members. For example, they proposed the creation of a mechanism to allow citizens to initiate discussions on problems, which was accepted and included as commitment two, which calls for the creation of an e-petitions platform.⁴⁶ Additionally, the third commitment, on budget planning participation, was a recommendation from the Open Society Georgia Foundation. USAID GGI representatives confirmed that the working group held active discussions and exchanges between the government and CSOs.⁴⁷ According to them, they could

provide ample input and the government responded with feedback on how they would consider suggestions.

Public consultations with citizens: The 11 meetings held for consultations targeted members of district civil councils, youth organizations, students and volunteers, parents of kindergarten children, people with disabilities and other socially vulnerable groups, as well as house owners’ associations,⁴⁸ and representatives of the business community. In addition, Tbilisi Youth Centers Union organized a series of meetings with different target groups, such as youth, students, youth NGOs and representatives of the city government in charge of youth policy. Although public consultations covered 240 individuals, they could have benefited from CSO involvement in the planning. However, because of time issues and conflicting priorities, CSOs decided to let the government lead this part of the process.⁴⁹

The Tbilisi Government provided information about the action plan through their website (<http://ogp.tbilisi.gov.ge/>). Some CSO stakeholders considered this public consultation process to be short and criticized the fact that the timeline to participate and provide comments lasted only for two weeks. However, the public could provide inputs and give feedback on commitments. Some of these inputs were reflected in the final version of action plan, as is the case with the fifth commitment, which was a direct result of the public consultation. Recommendations could be submitted online, by telephone or in person. Detailed meeting minutes of public consultations were prepared and documented as a reference for future follow up on the suggestions made during the consultation process.

While some members of the working group initially expressed skepticism on the effectiveness of public consultations for generating realistic ideas,⁵⁰ City Hall found these consultations to be very useful in improving the content of the commitments. Specifically, commitment five of the action plan, related to the introduction of civic control and an accessibility mechanism for municipality services, came from citizen input.

Table 6. Level of Public Input

Level of public input		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	

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- 28 See the list of working group members, <http://ogp.tbilisi.gov.ge/page/3128>
- 29 See the meeting minutes of working group, <http://ogp.tbilisi.gov.ge/page/3155?lang=en>
- 30 Vladimer Khasia (The Head of Deputy Mayor's Office, the Administration of Tbilisi Municipality), interview with IRM researcher, 27 July 2017.
- 31 Levan Avalishvili (Programs Director, Co-founder of Institute for Development of Freedom of Information), interview with IRM researcher, 19 June 2017.
- 32 Khasia, interview, July 2017.
- 33 Khasia, interview, June 2017.
- 34 Avalishvili, interview, June 2017.
- 35 Khasia, interview, June 2017.
- 36 Avalishvili, interview, June 2017.
- 37 Meetings with representatives of the Youth Organizations, see detailed information, <http://ogp.tbilisi.gov.ge/news/3057>
- 38 Public consultation for parents of Tbilisi kindergarten pupils, <http://ogp.tbilisi.gov.ge/news/3002>
- 39 Public consultations with Tbilisi residents, <http://ogp.tbilisi.gov.ge/news/2987>
- 40 Public consultations for representatives of Tbilisi business community, <http://ogp.tbilisi.gov.ge/news/3016>
- 41 International Association for Public Participation's (IAP2) 'Spectrum of Participation': http://c.yimcdn.com/sites/www.iap2.org/resource/resmgr/foundations_course/IAP2_P2_Spectrum_FINAL.pdf
- 42 IAP2 'Spectrum of Participation'.
- 43 "Tbilisi action plan, draft project, 2017" (Government of Tbilisi). http://ogp.tbilisi.gov.ge/img/original/2016/10/27/%E1%83%A1%E1%83%90%E1%83%9B%E1%83%9D%E1%83%A5%E1%83%9B%E1%83%94%E1%83%93%E1%83%9D_%E1%83%92%E1%83%94%E1%83%92%E1%83%9B%E1%83%90.pdf
- 44 "2017 draft Tbilisi action plan", http://ogp.tbilisi.gov.ge/img/original/2016/11/8/DRAFT_action_plan_5..pdf
- 45 Mikheil Darchiashvili (Senior Governance Advisor, USAID Georgia Good Governance Initiative) and Mariam Gorgodze (Program Manager, USAID Georgia Good Governance Initiative), interview with IRM researcher, 22 June 2017.
- 46 Avalishvili, interview, June 2017.
- 47 Darchiashvili and Gorgodze, interview, June 2017.
- 48 Public consultations with Heads of Chugureti District's House-Owners Cooperatives <http://ogp.tbilisi.gov.ge/news/3000>
- 49 Avalishvili, interview, June 2017.
- 50 Khasia, interview, June 2017.

Process of Monitoring Implementation of the Action Plan

OGP Basic Requirements

Subnational governments received the following guidance on participation during action plan development and execution:

December 2016 – December 2017: Implementation of Commitments

The guidance below provides more information about the best way to manage implementation of commitments, internal reporting and consultation with civil society throughout.

- Commitments should be developed in partnership with civil society and should seek to engage the widest possible input from citizens. [This note](#) provides guidance about how to conduct successful engagement with civil society and provides advice about ongoing consultation with civil society.
- Governments should conduct regular internal assessment, to make sure that commitments are on track and that there is an ongoing role for civil society. This assessment should be carried out along the lines of the OGP template for self-assessment, to make it easier for the IRM researcher to gather information.
- At regular intervals governments should publish a brief update on progress against commitments and use that as an opportunity to invite any comments. To complement any tracking system, governments are strongly encouraged to maintain a public, online repository of all documents giving evidence of consultation and implementation of commitments.

The process of monitoring and implementation of the action plan was coordinated by the Government of Tbilisi, which fully complied with OGP basic requirements for internal assessments and participatory mechanisms, as well as regular updates ensuring opportunities to involve CSOs.

The working group was the main mechanism for consultation during the development and implementation of the action plan. The working group was created based on the special order of the Mayor of Tbilisi to form a working group for the purpose of the OGP action plan's preparation, promotion of its implementation and monitoring within the framework of OGP.⁵¹ Working group meetings were held on average once a month at City Hall.⁵² The first official meeting was held on 10 June 2016.⁵³ In total, nine OGP working group meetings were held by the Government of Tbilisi. The minutes of the meetings are publicly available on the ogp.tbilisi.gov.ge website, published in a timely manner.⁵⁴ Representatives of CSOs agreed that the government published progress updates at regular intervals and they were provided the opportunity to comment on the progress of implementation of commitments. However, after the municipality election, the processes were delayed and no official follow-up meetings were held. The last working group meeting was held on 14 November 2017⁵⁵ to report on the implementation process of the commitments, and at the end of the meeting the group members agreed to take into consideration all remarks and comments made during the meeting and were asked to provide their recommendations and feedback on the process of implementation. Since then, they have not heard anything from the government.⁵⁶

The Government of Tbilisi continued updating ogp.tbilisi.gov.ge to publish information on OGP activities and serve as a public, online repository of all documents giving evidence of implementation of

commitments. It provides detailed information about the members of the working group, meeting minutes, news, announcements, events, drafting of action plans, several useful links on OGP and contact information. Despite the fact that CSOs agree on the usefulness of the existing website, Giorgi Topuria, from Transparency International Georgia, suggests improving the existing portal to make it more user-friendly and provide more information about the commitments implemented under the OGP action plan in an interactive and simple way to reach a wider audience.⁵⁷

Table 7. Basic Requirements

<p>1. Internal Assessment & Participatory Mechanism:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Did the government conduct regular internal assessments? b. Did the government ensure an ongoing role for civil society in monitoring of the action plan? <p>Guideline: Governments should conduct regular internal assessment, to make sure that commitments are on track and that there is an ongoing role for civil society.</p>	Yes
<p>2. Regular Updates & Opportunity to Comment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Did the government publish updates on progress at regular intervals? [at least once every four months] b. Were civil society organizations provided the opportunity to comment on progress of commitment implementation? <p>Guideline: At regular intervals governments should publish a brief update on progress against commitments and use that as an opportunity to invite any comments.</p>	Yes
<p>3. Online Repository:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Did the government create a public online repository of documents? <p>Guideline: To complement any tracking system, governments are strongly encouraged to maintain a public, online repository of all documents giving evidence of consultation and implementation of commitments.</p>	Yes

Openness during implementation

Who Was Invited?

According to the interviews with representatives of CSOs, the consultations were open to a wide range of stakeholders. The working group as a mechanism enables regular multi-stakeholder consultations on the OGP action plan implementation process.

The parties involved in the consultation process were the same CSOs which were involved in the process of the elaboration of the action plan. The most prominent organizations working in the areas of transparency and accountability, such as IDFI, TI Georgia, OSGF and USAID GGI were actively involved in the consultation process, while other members were less active but provided feedback electronically. CSO representatives suggested that participation should be widened to include organizations working on the specific topics that are implemented under the action plan (for example, urban planners and architects).⁵⁸

The Administration of Tbilisi sent agendas of upcoming meetings via email to the members of the working group to share. In addition, information about working group meetings was published on ogp.tbilisi.gov.ge with a detailed agenda of the meeting.

How Was Awareness Raising Carried Out?

Tbilisi City Hall provided regular updates to the working group on implementation of the commitments and milestones, including preparing legal acts and technical descriptions of the commitments. Mostly <http://ogp.tbilisi.gov.ge> was used as a tool to inform the public about upcoming meetings of the working group and for publishing meeting minutes. Awareness raising was also done through the official Tbilisi City Hall Facebook page.

Interviewed CSOs underlined the importance of public awareness raising on the activities implemented in the OGP framework. One of the recommendations from IDFI was for the PR department of City Hall to be more proactive in raising the visibility of the commitments to be implemented.⁵⁹ The government agreed to the recommendation and believes that a targeted campaign could better inform citizens about OGP activities and results of commitments implemented by City Hall.⁶⁰ Recognizing the importance of public awareness, USAID GGI actively promoted the idea of creating a communication strategy and assisted City Hall to draft an OGP communication strategy as a tool to better promote planned commitment outputs to the general public, as they are doing for the national level with the MoJ.⁶¹ The last meeting of the working group took place on 3 November 2017. The main topic of the meeting was developing the communication strategy which aims to inform the public on existing commitments and platforms in the action plan.⁶² As a result, the communication strategy has been drafted.

Which Parts of Civil Society Participated?

The members of the working group were the main actors participating in the consultation process and their diverse views were represented. The working group formally met five times during the consultation process.⁶³

Through the working group, mostly civil society representatives were involved in the consultation process to varying degrees. The Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI), Transparency International-Georgia and Open Society Georgia Foundation (OSGF), and USAID Good Governance Initiative (GGI) were the representatives of the working group who actively participated in the consultation process of the monitoring of action plan implementation. In addition, City Hall public servants from the responsible agencies, such as the NNLE “Municipal Services Development Agency” and Tbilisi Municipal Legal Department actively participated in the implementation process. Members of the working group were able to provide their recommendations on the drafting of the legal acts and development of technical tasks for the creation of the portals under the action plan. However, the last meeting of the working group took place before the elections and since then the CSOs have received no information on their feedback, which was submitted electronically, whether it was accepted by the government and what the final completion status is of the existing commitments.

Both government and civil society agree that the consultation process should be more representative of the diverse actors of Tbilisi and bring different views to the table. In addition, according to CSO recommendations, the consultation process should involve organizations with specific knowledge and expertise in the field of the commitments implemented to be able to provide more useful, content-related recommendations. OSGF noted that the recommendations they have shared with the government are based on the recommendations from their own consultations with third parties. For

example, the organizations working on urban planning could potentially give more professional recommendations on developing the Smart Map platform and ensure professional feedback on the areas where City Hall could benefit from more nuanced thematic expertise.⁶⁴

Level of Public Input

The IRM has adapted the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Scale of participation for use in OGP. The table below shows the level of public influence on the implementation of the action plan. From left to right, features of participation are cumulative. In the spirit of OGP, most countries should aspire for “collaborate.”

City Hall also led considerable efforts to involve CSOs during implementation of the action plan, as was observed during the process of development of the action plan. Overall, the government collected input from CSO representatives in the working group. The working group helped bring diverse ideas to the table, which improved the implementation process (for example, through contributions to the development of draft legal acts and various elements of some commitments). However, there was no specific process in which the government would provide feedback on how these comments and recommendations were being considered. Additionally, there is a clear distinction on how monitoring took place before and after municipal elections. According to interviews with working group members, the process of consultation before elections was veering towards collaboration, considering the iterative dialogue that took place through working group meetings. However, it was unclear how this feedback was recorded during meetings or whether it was submitted electronically. After municipal elections in October 2017, the consultation process was interrupted.⁶⁵ Therefore, despite substantial efforts to involve CSOs in the process, the lack of clear feedback and challenges that affected dialogue after the local elections mean that the level of public input is considered as *Involve*.

Table 8. Level of Public Input

Level of public input		During implementation of the 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	

⁵¹ Order of the Mayor of Tbilisi Municipality City Hall to form a working group

[http://ogp.tbilisi.gov.ge/img/original/2016/11/8/OGP_Order\(english\).pdf](http://ogp.tbilisi.gov.ge/img/original/2016/11/8/OGP_Order(english).pdf)

⁵² Khasia, Interview, January 2018.

⁵³ OGP working group meeting, <http://ogp.tbilisi.gov.ge/news/2973?lang=en>

⁵⁴ OGP working group meeting minutes published online, <http://ogp.tbilisi.gov.ge/page/3155?lang=en>

⁵⁵ OGP working group meeting was held in Tbilisi Municipality City Hall, <http://ogp.tbilisi.gov.ge/news>

⁵⁶ Tsintsabadze, February 2018.

⁵⁷ Giorgi Topuria (Transparency International Georgia), Interview with IRM researcher, 1 March 2018.

⁵⁸ Tsintsabadze, February 2018.

⁵⁹ Avalishvili, Buadze, Tutberidze, October 2017.

⁶⁰ Khasia, February 2018.

⁶¹ Mikheil Darchiashvili (Senior Governance Advisor, USAID Georgia Good Governance Initiative) and Mariam Gorgodze (Program Manager, USAID Georgia Good Governance Initiative), interview with IRM researcher, February 2017.

⁶² OGP working group meeting in Tbilisi Municipality City Hall, <http://ogp.tbilisi.gov.ge/news/4166>

⁶³ List of OGP working group meetings in Tbilisi City Hall, <http://ogp.tbilisi.gov.ge/page/3155?lang=en>

⁶⁴ Tsintsabadze, February 2018.

⁶⁵ Topuria, March 2018.

Commitments

I. Multi-discipline mechanism of open government and civic participation – information and civic activities portal “Smart Map”

Commitment Text

As it was explained in the introductory section [of the action plan], access to information in Tbilisi City Hall is based on minimal legal requirements, which very often does not ensure supplying information and participation of the public. Subsequently, through absence of adequate system, often execution of requests is met with difficulties as well as issuing simple public information often requires maximum period of 10 days. Members of the public are reporting their problems via hotlines and through statements. The consideration period is one month. There is no feedback and performance monitoring systemic mechanism. The citizens are participating through informal and non-proportional public councils and contest to propose their ideas for Tbilisi City Hall projects (organized by Tbilisi City Hall)

Main goals:

- *Increased access to all data available on Smart Map. This information in interactive format will be accessible for Tbilisi residents interested in what is going on in their place of residence. This will create pre-requisites for public to participate in governance and make informed decisions;*
- *There will be created results-orientated and accountable participation system. Tbilisi City Hall will have an obligation to respond to the City’s issues displayed in the portal in a timely manner;*
- *System will be created, which will support Tbilisi Municipality to make their decisions through public participation and based on their needs.*

Milestones

1. Improvement of technical task for updating and modernization of multi-functional web portal and existing municipal interactive map, and timetable (by January 2017)

2. Development of technical functions and content of the portal, agreement with interested parties, piloting and introduction: (by February 2017)

2.1 Development of portal’s technical and contextual part (by March 2017)

2.2 Creating individual page for a citizen and integration with the map (by June 2017)

2.3 Function for citizen’s subscription for any information related to different activities on interactive map (by July 2017)

2.4 Display of any problem by a citizen (also administrator) related to different projects covering different layers, also function for public discussion (by August 2017)

2.5 Piloting and introduction of the portal (by October 2017)

2.6 Personnel training on map functional and processing the data (October 2017)

2.7 Consultation, development of supportive legislative acts for the system, approval (by February 2017)

3. Making one video clip covering portal and other OGP obligation and its dissemination through social media, mass media or municipalities local units (by November 2017)

Commitment Overview

Status of Completion	Limited
Start Date	January 2017
Intended Completion Date	December 2017
Responsible Office	Tbilisi Municipal Services Development Agency” NCLE; The Administration of Tbilisi Municipality; Municipal Legal Department; Municipal Department of Environmental and Landscaping; Municipal Amenities Department; Municipal Department of Economic Development
Did It Open Government?	No change

<p>Is it a STAR commitment?</p> <p>Starred commitments are considered exemplary OGP commitments. To receive a star, a commitment must meet several criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It must be specific enough that a judgment can be made about its potential impact. Starred commitments will have “medium” or “high” specificity. - The commitment’s language should make clear its relevance to opening government. Specifically, it must relate to at least one of the OGP values of Access to Information, Civic Participation, or Public Accountability. - The commitment would have a "transformative" potential impact if completely implemented. - Finally, the commitment must see significant progress during the action plan implementation period, receiving an assessment of "substantial" or "complete" implementation. 	No
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Editorial Note: The commitment text above is an excerpt from the Tbilisi 2017 action plan. The complete text provides detailed and technical information on how the milestones will be carried out, assigns responsibility to specific actors and provides concrete deadlines for its implementation.

Commitment Overview	Specificity				OGP Value Relevance				Potential Impact				Completion				Did It Open Government?				
	None	Low	Medium	High	Access to Information	Civic Participation	Public Accountability	Tech. and Innov. for Transparency and Accountability	None	Minor	Moderate	Transformative	Not Started	Limited	Substantial	Complete	Worsens	No change	Marginal	Major	Outstanding
Overall				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓			✓				✓			

Commitment Aim

Overall Objective & Relevance

Traditionally, residents of Tbilisi have had limited access to information on decision making. There is no mechanism for feedback or to monitor government performance, particularly in decision making around issuance of construction permits, tree cutting and investment projects. Although legislation prescribes the possibility to involve all interested parties before any construction permits are issued, there is no proactive mechanism to involve citizens in the decision-making process and information is hard to access. Citizens usually participate through informal public councils and an idea competition held by the government based on individual projects (organized by Tbilisi City Hall).

Chaotic construction and development projects in the city have been a cause of public outcry. Several cases of illegal cutting of trees have been reported by the media.⁶⁶ The Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI) has found it hard to follow the removal of trees in the city. Upon requests for disclosure of permits, the City has responded with incomplete and disorganized data.⁶⁷ Among the most prominent is the controversial case of 'Panorama' in Tbilisi.⁶⁸ Proposed in May 2014 as the Georgian Co-Investment Fund's flagship project, it constitutes a large-scale, mixed-used development project that would extend from central Tbilisi into the Sololaki hillsides overlooking the historic city centre.⁶⁹ The biggest concern is that it could damage Tbilisi's architectural and cultural integrity, and endanger Old Tbilisi's candidacy for UNESCO World Heritage Status.⁷⁰ In spite of spirited grassroots protests, at the time when the action plan was being elaborated, there was limited public input on the project's approval and city government decisions on the matter were widely questioned.⁷¹

This commitment aims to increase access to information and allow citizens' feedback through the creation of an interactive e-portal Smart Map. According to the action plan, the Smart Map would allow the publication of government-held construction data according to geographic locations with the use of maps; Tbilisi residents would be able to view information in a user-friendly format on the initial stage of constructions, tree cutting, large scale infrastructural projects or Tbilisi investment sites. The map was meant to introduce a mechanism to respond to citizen input and allow citizens to initiate discussions on specific projects in their neighborhood.

Additionally, the commitment introduces the legal obligation for City Hall to respond to citizens' concerns and questions displayed in the portal in a timely manner.

This commitment is relevant to all OGP values. The Smart Map portal should display basic construction data including: status at any stage and other related information (it should be connected to the Department of Architecture's database); information on large scale infrastructural projects (rehabilitation projects for old streets and buildings, reinforcement and construction of bridges, large scale road-infrastructural projects and other territorially or functionally significant large scale infrastructural projects); and a 'Tbilisi property map' with information related to Tbilisi-owned investment sites.

The portal is also intended to allow citizens to provide input (positive or negative) on any topic. It should also allow the public to present solutions or projects related to local issues that they identify in their neighborhoods. Finally, the commitment introduces the obligation of the Municipality to respond to public questions and complaints and these inputs, as explained above. For these reasons, the commitment is considered relevant to all OGP values.

Specificity and Potential Impact

The commitment is highly specific with milestones representing cumulative steps for developing and piloting the platform, training the relevant personnel and adoption of legal acts necessary for its functioning. The commitment also includes specific indicators that would allow the IRM researcher to measure the completion of its activities. These indicators, as written in the action plan, are:

The commitment could have a significant impact on changing government practice in publishing information and engaging citizens on construction and city infrastructure development issues. Given the lack of information on urban planning issues in the city, evidenced by the recent public outcries regarding issuance of construction permits and tree cutting, the Smart Map platform could be a result oriented and accountable participation system, in which Tbilisi Municipality will have an obligation to respond to the questions in a timely manner. In addition, it can support Tbilisi Municipality to make decisions through public participation and based on citizens' needs.

CSOs which are members of the working group perceive the potential impact of this commitment differently. While CSOs differed in their assessment of potential impact, it is coded as Moderate. According to IDFI, the implementation of this commitment as a whole, and specifically creating legal obligations, provides the opportunity for CSOs and citizens to raise concerns about the way City Hall is currently giving information, which could translate to improved government practice.⁷² However, despite its specificity, the Open Society Georgia Foundation (OSGF) did not believe this commitment would necessarily guarantee effective citizen participation or access to information.⁷³ OSGF referred to the past projects of City Hall in which similar platforms with maps were used to provide information.⁷⁴ These were not widely known or used by the public. Without a robust awareness-raising strategy and a user-friendly platform, Smart Map could prove to be of little use. Additionally, regarding public accountability, they mentioned the language does not contain a guarantee that government feedback would be substantiated.

Completion: Limited

The implementation process clarified the aims and deliverables of the commitment. This commitment made progress at the beginning, but it is currently delayed and overall has been completed only to a limited extent.

The Government of Tbilisi, with the Tbilisi Municipal Services Development Agency (MSDA) and the Municipal Legal Department, prepared and approved the technical task for updating and modernizing the multi-functional web-portal and existing interactive map and timetable. MSDA developed the portal's technical and contextual part which included the creation of a web portal (my.tbilisi.gov.ge), which is an online system providing information on municipal services and the municipality's activities. A resident of Tbilisi can register and create a profile and have access to different portals that are planned to be implemented under the action plan for all the commitments.

The following portals were created under the first commitment: a) Smart Map b) Forum c) Fix Tbilisi. All three were in the process of development and were not available for public use at the time of writing of this report. The *Smart Map* application is a multifunctional, interactive map which is meant to serve as an information hub for construction-related data according to geographic locations presented on the map. The base platform of the map already existed prior to the commitment and a new interactive map was updated and added new layers of information about tree cutting issues, architecture and big infrastructural projects. The *Forum* module is meant to enable a dialogue with the public by introducing a feature to start public discussion about specific projects in different neighborhoods. City

Hall has developed draft regulations that will oblige them to respond to concerns or issues raised in the forum. The *FIX Tbilisi* module would allow individuals to inform local authorities of problems that need to be fixed in their neighborhood. Registered users can report the problem through a mobile application integrated under the my.tbilisi.gov.ge, specifying the exact location of the problem, adding comments and attaching photos to provide detailed information. The *Fix Tbilisi* is based on the concept of the open-source FixMyStreet concept.

Several technical components were completed under this commitment, including development of test versions and functions of portals. In addition, relevant personnel from all government departments were trained on the Smart Map and test portals developed under the platform. The training covered all *Gamgeobas* and all 14 departments of City Hall. MSDA conducted training on the usage of the platform. All test versions of the portals with these features were presented to the IRM researcher and the OGP working group.

Even though technically the test versions of the portals are developed, CSOs consider that the implementation of this commitment remains limited unless appropriate legal acts are passed to support the functioning of the portals as envisaged by the action plan. City Hall presented a package of legal acts developed in the framework of the action plan during the eighth meeting of the working group on 10 October 2017.⁷⁵ CSOs provided feedback during the meeting and later prepared recommendations and more detailed feedback, which was submitted via email. According to the representative of City Hall, based on the active consultation with members of the working group and several exchanges with civil society, supportive legislative acts for the proper functioning of the system were finalized.⁷⁶ However, the process is currently delayed and no legislative acts have been approved. CSOs consider that legally binding rules for the functioning of these portals and for the obligation of City Hall to maintain these portals are critical for ensuring the sustainability despite personnel changes in the city government.

Furthermore, according to interviews with CSOs, including Open Society Georgia Foundation and Transparency International Georgia, which are members of the working group, they are not aware if their comments have been taken into consideration.⁷⁷ Representatives of the CSOs have no information about the final version of the platform nor the legal acts they were working on, which should have been finalized by the end of 2017.⁷⁸ The perceived reason for the delay is connected to the municipal elections and subsequent changes in the Government of Tbilisi.⁷⁹

Early results: did it open government?

Access to Information: No change

Civic Participation: No change

Public Accountability: No change

Civil society considers that there is no evidence yet to measure early results, as only the pilot version of the portals was presented by the Government of Tbilisi and none of the envisioned tools have become publicly accessible.

CSOs interviewed for this report mentioned that they have no direct access to the portal and have only seen the presentation of a test version.⁸⁰ However, based on the test version and the draft legal acts made available prior to the October 2017 meeting, the OSGF representative believes that the Smart Map would not guarantee sufficient access to information, effective citizen participation or public accountability.⁸¹ Draft legal acts that they saw in October do not specify how City Hall will respond to

topics raised during the Forum discussions.

Representative of USAID GGI believes that the addition of Fix Tbilisi was a good idea that could provide additional opportunities to involve e citizens in the process of governing the city. TI Georgia recalled that they had close cooperation with Tbilisi Municipality in 2011⁸² which resulted in the development of a website (Chemikucha.ge) based on a FixMyStreet concept, that allowed residents to easily report and discuss problems about the city's streets, in order to get them fixed. After reporting to the website, Tbilisi City Hall automatically received an email that informed them about the issue reported by citizens. Tbilisi citizens actively used the website to report local problems.⁸³ However, there was not much information available to residents on how the reported problems were being fixed or how the relevant public officials were held accountable.

Depending on when portals become publicly available, it will be important to see what features are being used, how many users are registered, what type of problems are reported and how City Hall responds to, and acts on, feedback received from the public.

Recommendations

City Hall needs to prioritize the following steps:

- Ensure that the commitment moves on and the portals are in fact launched, after the legal basis has been created. City Hall needs to pass the legal act clarifying the procedures for the government to incorporate received feedback and take follow-up measures. Also to ensure that the Smart Map application has user-friendly features.
- Once the portals are functional the government needs to promote the usage of my.tbilisi.gov.ge portal, and carry out a wide awareness-raising campaign to ensure that Tbilisi residents are familiar with the existing web-portal and the ways of using it.

⁶⁶ Examples of media articles reporting the situation include, but are not limited to:

- "Mass tree felling near Tbilisi for motorway construction", <http://oc-media.org/mass-tree-felling-near-tbilisi-for-motorway-construction/>
- "New Campaign targets illegal tree cutting for New Year", <http://agenda.ge/news/72293/eng>
- "709 trees were taken down in Tbilisi in 2016", <https://jam-news.net/?p=11020>

⁶⁷ Giorgi Khatiaishvili, "Statistics of cutting down trees in Tbilisi due to constructions purposes", <https://idfi.ge/en/trees-cut-for-construction-purposes>

⁶⁸ "Panorama Tbilisi -Investment that kills?", <https://storybuilder.jumpstart.ge/en/panorama-tbilisi-investment-that-kills>

⁶⁹ Eva Anderson, "Georgian Co-investment Fund's 2014 projects: Further Transparency needed", Transparency International Georgia, <http://www.transparency.ge/en/blog/georgian-co-investment-fund-s-2014-projects-further-transparency-needed>

⁷⁰ "UNESCO vs Ivanishvili," JAMNews, <https://jam-news.net/?p=2860>

⁷¹ Examples of media articles reporting the situation include, but are not limited to:

- Dominik Cagara, "Hundreds rally against Ivanishvili's 'Panorama Tbilisi' project," Democracy and Freedom Watch, <http://dfwatch.net/hundreds-rally-against-ivanishvilis-panorama-tbilisi-project-40538>
- Irakli Zhvania, "Tbilisi's Panorama project is urban boosterism at its worst," Open Democracy, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/od-russia/irakli-zhvania/tbilisi-panorama-project-urban-boosterism-at-its-worst>

⁷² Levan Avalishvili (Programs Director, Co-founder of Institute for Development of Freedom of Information), interview with IRM researcher, 26 October 2017.

⁷³ Vakhtang (Vako) Natsvlshvili (Open Society Georgia Foundation) and Anano Tsintsabadze (Participatory Democracy Program Project Coordinator, Open Society Georgia Foundation), interview with IRM researcher, 27 October 2017.

⁷⁴ Interactive Tbilisi Mayoral Map, <http://maps.tbilisi.gov.ge/#/C=44.7807474-41.7138468@Z=14>

⁷⁵ Minutes of the Meeting N8, http://ogp.tbilisi.gov.ge/img/original/2017/10/25/Record_of_Meeting_N8.pdf

76 Khasia, February 2018.

77 Tsintsabadze, February 2018.

78 Topuria, February 2018.

79 Tsintsabadze, February 2018.

80 Tsintsabadze, February 2018.

81 Topuria, February 2018.

82 “New website helps to fix problems on Tbilisi’s streets”, <http://www.transparency.ge/en/post/press-release/new-website-helps-fix-problems-tbilisi%E2%80%99s-streets>

83 Topuria, February 2018.

2. Introduction of a mechanism for electronic petitions to Tbilisi City Hall

Commitment Text

Application for Tbilisi Municipality [to make petitions] to the Mayor integrated to the City Portal. It will be possible to request it [make petitions] from “Smart map” (particularly when there is a territorial connection) as well as from a separate column. The application will enable Tbilisi residents to create petition on important issues for them and invite other people to be a signatory.

There will be a legal basis established related to number of signatories for petitions and subsequent obligations of the Tbilisi City Hall to satisfy request and provide an explanatory and documented feedback.

Milestones

1. Elaboration of terms of reference to create [an] integrated application in the Tbilisi City Hall portal (by March 2017)
2. Development of electronic petition’s web application and integration with other systems as well as with Smart Map (final integration depends on electronic systems completion dates) (by September 2017)
3. Development of electronic petition’s mobile application and integration with systems (Final integration depends on electronic systems completion dates) (by October 2017)
4. System testing and putting it in to force (by December 2017)
5. Training of relevant personnel to process petitions (by November 2017)
6. Making one video clip covering portal and other OGP commitments and its dissemination through social media, mass media or municipal entities (by December 2017)
7. Legal consultancy, development of system supports legislative acts, approval (by December 2017)

Commitment Overview

Status of Completion	Complete
Start Date	January 2017
Intended Completion Date	December 2017
Responsible Office	Municipal Services Development Agency, (NCLE); Tbilisi Municipality Legal Department
Did It Open Government?	Major

<p>Is it a STAR commitment?</p> <p>Starred commitments are considered exemplary OGP commitments. To receive a star, a commitment must meet several criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It must be specific enough that a judgment can be made about its potential impact. Starred commitments will have “medium” or “high” specificity. - The commitment’s language should make clear its relevance to opening government. Specifically, it must relate to at least one of the OGP values of Access to Information, Civic Participation, or Public Accountability. - The commitment would have a "transformative" potential impact if completely implemented. - Finally, the commitment must see significant progress during the action plan implementation period, receiving an assessment of "substantial" or "complete" implementation. 	No
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Editorial Note: The commitment text above is an excerpt from the Tbilisi 2017 action plan. The complete text provides detailed and technical information on how the milestones will be carried out, assigns responsibility to specific actors and provides concrete deadlines for its implementation.

Commitment Overview	Specificity				OGP Value Relevance				Potential Impact				Completion				Did It Open Government?				
	None	Low	Medium	High	Access to Information	Civic Participation	Public Accountability	Tech. and Innov. for Transparency and Accountability	None	Minor	Moderate	Transformative	Not Started	Limited	Substantial	Complete	Worsens	No change	Marginal	Major	Outstanding
Overall			✓			✓		✓			✓				✓					✓	

Commitment Aim

Overall Objective & Relevance

Tbilisi City Hall did not have a direct e-communication tool with residents. Citizens can make petitions to the legislative body of the city, the Tbilisi City Council, only in print form, but not to City Hall, which constitutes the city’s administrative body (including the Mayor’s office, municipal departments and the City Council). The commitment aims to increase public participation and engagement through an electronic petitions platform that will allow residents to start initiatives, gather signatures and petition any institution within City Hall to act on identified priorities.

This commitment was proposed by the IDFI, a CSO that focuses on freedom of information issues, and was agreed within the multi-stakeholder working group. It calls for the establishment of a legal

framework to regulate the e-petition system and procedures (i.e. number of signatures for petitions and subsequent obligations of City Hall to satisfy requests and provide well documented explanatory feedback). According to the action plan, e-petitions were to be integrated in the Smart Map portal tool created as part of the first commitment of the action plan.

The commitment is relevant to the OGP value of civic participation and technology and innovation for transparency and accountability. E-petitions could allow citizen mobilization and active participation in raising issues of public concern for setting priorities for government decision making. The legal requirement for the government to respond to citizens' petitions aims to ensure public accountability. However, the commitment text does not specify if this legal requirement would oblige the government to justify their actions, act upon criticisms or requirements made of citizens, and accept responsibility for failure to perform with respect to laws or commitments; it is therefore not relevant to public accountability.

Specificity and Potential Impact

The commitment contains detailed and verifiable milestones, including technical steps for elaboration of the electronic platform, system testing, training of relevant government personnel and a public dissemination strategy. However, the commitment text does not specify how the petition system would work, who would form the technical taskforce, which personnel would be trained, what the taskforce will consider when introducing the regulatory acts, what would be considered a satisfactory response to citizen petitions, which would be permissible subject areas for petitions, etc.

However, despite its lack of specificity on measurable outcomes, the commitment could have a moderate potential impact, considering there is no formal mechanism in place for citizens to make requests to City Hall and the Mayor's Office. An e-petition system could become an important tool for strengthening participatory mechanisms in city government. Given the lack of sufficient citizen participation and accountability mechanisms in city governance, the electronic petitions systems have the potential to increase and strengthen civic participation. IDFI highlighted the importance of expanding the petitions system currently in place for the City Council and upgrading it from a paper-based mechanism to an electronic system. According to IDFI, the current paper-based system is not transparent. There are no tools to observe the process itself and it could be used by politicians or interest groups to legitimize their political objectives by introducing ideas as citizen petitions without an appropriate control mechanism that validates the system. Additionally, the requirement to respond to petitions represents a significant commitment that can change the way city government responds to citizens' concerns. In addition, the petitions system could also enhance the transparency of government activities and decisions to further stimulate interactions between City Hall and residents of Tbilisi. However, the potential impact that can be attributed to this commitment as written is affected by its lack of specificity, especially as it does not provide details on how the mechanism would work and the legal obligations that would be developed for processing, responding and considering petitions.

Completion: complete

The commitment has been completed. Implementation encountered delays due to the municipality elections and the process of changing the Government of Tbilisi and the commitment was also modified during the implementation period.

A technical taskforce was formed for the creation of an electronic platform and developed a mobile application integrated in the Smart Map tool within the Tbilisi City Hall portal. In the beginning, it was planned to integrate the e-petition portal as one of the portals in the Smart Map application. However, during the implementation process it was decided to create one single web-portal, my.tbilisi.gov.ge, to consolidate all the planned portals under this action plan, including e-petitions.⁸⁴ After development of the application, the system was tested and its pilot version has been presented to stakeholders during the working group meeting. Later, relevant personnel from MSDA were trained to process the electronic petitions.

Legal acts necessary for the operation of the e-petition system were developed and approved by City Hall. The draft legal acts were presented during the eighth working group meeting on 10 October 2017.⁸⁵ During the implementation, representatives of the Government of Tbilisi and members of the working group had active exchanges about the development and implementation of the e-petitions. The working group discussed aspects, such as the number of petition voters, age thresholds for petitioners, legal basis behind declining of “petition” and its subsequent results, procedural issues related to “petition” and the period of its consideration.⁸⁶ City Hall presented the pilot versions of electronic petitions to the members of the working group. CSOs that are part of the working group were actively engaged in the process and prepared several recommendations. Moreover, as part of the public dissemination strategy, a video clip was prepared covering information about the portal.

While most of the milestones were completed within the timeline, the final product, the portal, was not launched by the end of December 2017, as foreseen by the action plan. Instead it was launched on 12 February 2018 by the Mayor of Tbilisi.⁸⁷ The electronic petition portal has been initiated on the same legal basis and according to the technical tasks formulated under the OGP working group, but with a different name and on a different web-portal, which is not integrated in the my.tbilisi.gov.ge portal. The petitions portal is called Your Idea for the City Mayor and is accessible through the newly created web-portal idea.tbilisi.gov.ge. The electronic portal presents systemized ideas and allows voting online. After receiving the necessary number of votes, the idea passed to City Hall for further deliberation. The portal includes 13 categories. Currently, out of a total of 620 registered ideas (petitions), 103 ideas are registered under road infrastructure and 126 ideas under the transportation infrastructure category. However, there are 120 ideas which are considered as relevant for City Hall competencies. After selecting each category, citizens would have an opportunity to submit an idea and to vote for specific projects. Currently, there are 415 ideas published through the web-portal. Two ideas which gathered the required votes moved to the next phase. These two ideas are a) “Bottle Swallowing” Recycling Containers⁸⁸, and b) “Culture Feeds Animals”,⁸⁹ which allows citizens to feed homeless animals through recycled waste. The next phase provides information if the author of the petition and the government agreed on the main content of the petition. It also provides information about ideas that have been rejected, providing additional information from City Hall explaining the reasons for the rejection of the idea. Currently, 286 ideas are registered which have not gathered the required votes, and 131 are blocked due to having inappropriate content or considered not relevant under City Hall competencies.

During the interviews, CSOs stated that although the commitment is completed, they have had limited information on its development since November as they have not received any response from the government on the recommendations they had submitted electronically.⁹⁰ CSOs were not invited to the presentation of the portal, idea.tbilisi.gov.ge, and were not aware that this was the electronic petition platform that they had been jointly developing with City Hall.⁹¹

Early results: did it open government?

Civic Participation: Major

Since its launch in February 2018 the e-petitions portal is actively used by residents of Tbilisi. After launching the portal, 415 ideas were submitted in a month, and two ideas gathered the required minimum number of signatures to be considered by the city government. City Hall has the subsequent obligation to satisfy requests and provide explanatory feedback. There are also 100 ideas that were rejected and determined as irrelevant for the petition based on the criteria of ethical considerations or the idea deemed not being under the jurisdiction of City Hall. After registering on the portal, the IRM researcher considers that the registration, as well as the submission process, is easy and user-friendly.

Overall the CSOs are positive about the petitions portal and consider it to be very user friendly.⁹² They believe the electronic petition could be used as a major tool for citizens' mobilization and active participation in setting priorities for government decision making.⁹³

OSGF considers that it has to be seen how these topics are addressed, especially when the issues submitted as petitions are not included in the competencies of any other governmental agency. Moreover, OSGF perceives the number of signatures defined for petitions, 2500, too high to be easily gathered.⁹⁴

Recommendations

CSOs that are part of the working group recommend these follow-up steps:

- Create a robust awareness-raising strategy and ensure that the residents of Tbilisi are familiar with the existence of the electronic petitions portal. During the awareness-raising campaign ensure information is provided about the main aims of the “Your Idea for the City Mayor”;
- Provide clear understanding of the procedures starting from the creation of the petitions to the final stages. Provide detailed information about the procedures and publish them on the website. For example, what are timelines of the petitions? Who, and in what timeframe, will review it? What are the main reasons behind accepting or rejecting submitted ideas? Ensure that the above-mentioned information is expressed in simple and easy to understand language;
- The government should have a legal obligation to provide a clear response along with the arguments that determined the decision of acceptance of petition or non-acceptance, as well as time limits for responses and follow-up actions;
- Make the web-portal available at least in Azeri and Armenian languages as the largest ethnic minority groups.

⁸⁴ Khasia, February 2018.

⁸⁵ Minutes of the Meeting N8, http://ogp.tbilisi.gov.ge/img/original/2017/10/25/Record_of_Meeting_N8.pdf

⁸⁶ Minutes of the Meeting N6, <http://ogp.tbilisi.gov.ge/img/original/2017/4/12/document2017-04-12-132943.pdf>

⁸⁷ Web portal – “Your Idea for the City Mayor” is available now, <http://www.tbilisi.gov.ge/news/4804?lang=en>

⁸⁸ “Bottle Swallowing” Recycling Containers, <https://idea.tbilisi.gov.ge/idea-details/309>

⁸⁹ “Culture Feeds Animals”, <https://idea.tbilisi.gov.ge/idea-details/102>

⁹⁰ Tsintsabadze, February 2018.

⁹¹ Topuria, February 2017.

⁹² Darchiashvili & Gorgadze, February 2017.

⁹³ Avalishvili, November 2017.

⁹⁴ Tsintsabadze, February 2017.

Commitment 3. Implementation of participatory budget planning mechanism

Commitment Text

An integrated electronic platform will be created with other electronic applications enabling Tbilisi residents to allocate 100 GEL [(representing 100% of the Tbilisi budget)]⁹⁵ between thematic priorities in visually presented thematic Budget. Citizens will be able to see sub-topics of each priority and will have access to the information related to previous year(s) budget allocation(s). The program automatically calculates weighted average - a result from citizens' selected priorities. Consideration of this result will be mandatory at any stage of formation and approval of the budget. On the same portal, there will be a published comparison between the finally approved budget and the budget developed by public, and the difference will be documented. At all above-mentioned stages, there will be sections for comments, discussions and direct remarks for the Tbilisi City Hall. Also, statistics will be available. In parallel with the voting process, Tbilisi City Hall departments and district administrations will ensure the engagement of citizens and facilitation of voting process.

A legal timeframe and procedures will be established [to define]: when the platform will be open for voting; when it will close; when will the budget [be discussed] after budget formation and correction processes according to the government procedures that resulted in the weighted average budget; a legal framework for comparison of the two budgets and legal argumentation procedure. There also will be established requirements and a format for informing and interviewing members of the public, including people with disabilities and other target groups.

Milestones

1. Elaboration of terms of reference to create appropriate functions for budget web application (by May 2017)
2. Provide software for application (by September 2017)
3. Legal consultancy, development of system support legislative acts, approval (by December 2017)
4. System testing and introduction (by December 2017)
5. Training of District Administration civil servants (by December 2017)
6. Making of a video clip covering portal and other OGP commitments and its dissemination through social media, mass media or through municipal entities (by December 2017)

Commitment Overview

Status of Completion	Limited
Start Date	January 2017
Intended Completion Date	December 2017
Responsible Office	Tbilisi Municipal Department of Finance, "Municipal Services Development Agency" NCLE, Tbilisi Municipal Legal Department, Districts administrations.
Did It Open Government?	No change

<p>Is it a STAR commitment?</p> <p>Starred commitments are considered exemplary OGP commitments. To receive a star, a commitment must meet several criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It must be specific enough that a judgment can be made about its potential impact. Starred commitments will have “medium” or “high” specificity. - The commitment’s language should make clear its relevance to opening government. Specifically, it must relate to at least one of the OGP values of Access to Information, Civic Participation, or Public Accountability. - The commitment would have a "transformative" potential impact if completely implemented. - Finally, the commitment must see significant progress during the action plan implementation period, receiving an assessment of "substantial" or "complete" implementation. 	No
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Editorial Note: The commitment text above is an excerpt from the Tbilisi 2017 action plan. The complete text provides detailed and technical information on how the milestones will be carried out, assigns responsibility to specific actors and provides concrete deadlines for its implementation.

Commitment Overview	Specificity				OGP Value Relevance				Potential Impact				Completion				Did It Open Government?				
	None	Low	Medium	High	Access to Information	Civic Participation	Public Accountability	Tech. and Innov. for Transparency and Accountability	None	Minor	Moderate	Transformative	Not Started	Limited	Substantial	Complete	Worsens	No change	Marginal	Major	Outstanding
Overall				✓	✓	✓		✓			✓		✓				✓				

Commitment Aim

Overall Objective & Relevance

Tbilisi has seen important improvements towards transparency in the budgetary process. Organizations such as Transparency Georgia have praised developments such as the inclusion of budget appendixes which provide detailed information on planned infrastructure works, social affairs spending, education and other projects.⁹⁶ However, there is no effective mechanism to ensure citizen participation in the city budget planning process and information presented for public use is not easy to read, which stirred public discussions on the neglect of citizens’ interests.⁹⁷ Consultations on budget drafts usually take place during City Council meetings, which are open to the public, but have low participation rates. Additionally, according to the Local Self-Government Index (published by the Center for Consultation and Training, Institute for Development of Freedom of Information and the Management Systems

Development Center), the absolute majority of Georgian municipalities do not include citizens in budget planning processes.

Tbilisi City Hall committed to opening the budgetary process by publishing key budget documents and creating an electronic participatory mechanism for budget planning, to increase cooperation between citizens and government. The action plan lays out a detailed description of how the mechanism should look. Users would be able to create their own version of the city budget. For ease of understanding, the user is given 100GEL (ca US\$40) (to simulate 100 percent of the budget) which he or she needs to allocate according to the thematic priorities and sub-topics presented. This user-friendly platform would also display information related to budget allocations from previous years. As explained in the action plan, the platform would record and publish a comparison between the citizen-prioritized budget and the final approved budget; it would also include functions for citizens to leave comments, organize discussions and direct remarks to the city government.

Additionally, the commitment calls for the establishment of a legal framework that stipulates the obligation of deliberating on citizen input (through the voting process and calculations of weighted average of results). The action plan specifies that City Hall is to establish a legal framework to define how the government will communicate the decisions made for a final budget. It will, at least, require publishing a comparison between the budget designed by public opinion and the approved budget with supporting documentation (and legal argumentation) explaining the differences among them. City Hall is to define the specific requirements and the format for informing and interviewing members of the public (including people with disabilities and other target groups).

The commitment is relevant to the OGP values of access to information, citizen participation and technology and innovation for transparency. Budget visualizations can improve the way citizens access and understand budgetary planning processes. In turn, the voting system on the platform allows citizens to participate in the process of development of the city budget.

Specificity and Potential Impact

The commitment is highly specific as it contains several detailed milestones with steps to develop the software for the application and overall system, establish a legal framework, carry-out the testing of the system and training the relevant personnel in district and local administrations. The commitment provides clear, verifiable activities with measurable results.

If implemented fully, the commitment could have a significant impact on citizen participation in the budgetary process, potentially ensuring meaningful dialogue between the public and the government of Tbilisi. The commitment could imply a significant increase in access to information and civic participation, considering that the mechanism is envisioned as a learning tool for citizens to understand how the budget is distributed, including comparisons with previous budgets, showcasing citizens' proposals on what they believe is a fair budget and providing a tool to communicate with City Hall on themes relevant to the budgetary process. Considering the current ongoing discussions, political debates and accusations,⁹⁸ promoting e-participation in the planning phase of the budgetary process to gather direct input from citizens through an effective and accessible online platform, coupled with the legal obligation to inform citizens on how their voices are accounted for, could significantly change the way the general public is integrated in the budgeting process.

CSOs have differing opinions about the likely impact this commitment would have. IDFI believes that providing information on the comparison of the approved budget and priorities identified by the

sociological surveys empowers citizens, stakeholders and media to know what the priorities of the citizens are and what was taken into consideration by the government. This helps to monitor the process and could have a significant impact on meaningful dialogue between the public and the government of Tbilisi.⁹⁹

OSGF believes that, according to the draft legal acts, the participatory budget planning mechanism is supposed to be based on research only and there is no evidence on how the gathered information from citizens would be taken into consideration during the planning process of the budget, “*Somehow, they are referring to the research of citizens’ needs as the participatory budget planning tool*”.¹⁰⁰ While this commitment could be a useful tool to increase the accessibility of information, OSGF representatives note that the draft regulation CSOs have seen does not elaborate on what would be the next steps from the government in case the compared results are different to each other. Furthermore, there is no obligation for the government to take into consideration the views or priorities of citizens.¹⁰¹ Representatives of TI Georgia agreed that the government is not obliged to provide argument-based explanations to citizens with simple and understandable language.¹⁰²

Completion: Limited

This commitment has been completed to a limited extent. The Government of Tbilisi, with active involvement of the Municipal Services Development Agency, Tbilisi Municipal Legal and Finance departments and administrations of districts elaborated legal terms of reference to create appropriate functions for budget web-application. MSDA was responsible for providing software for the application to indicate the city budget according to their thematic priorities and sub-topics presented. The system was tested and introduced to the working group members.¹⁰³ The portal is still in the test version and is not yet launched or publicly available. The plan is to integrate it as one sub-application under the my.tbilisi.gov.ge and citizens will have access after registering.

OSGF was actively involved in the process of developing the commitment, participating in the elaboration of the supportive legal acts. However, they believe that the mechanism that has been developed is different from the one that was initially suggested in the action plan. Furthermore, they stressed that they were not informed if any of their recommendations were considered, because they did not have the opportunity to see the last version of the draft acts.¹⁰⁴

According to the government, the developed participatory budget mechanism is based on the research which planned to identify the needs of Tbilisi residents through public opinion surveys.

Although not part of the commitment, the OSGF contracted the polling firm which conducted research on information level of citizens and what Tbilisi residents’ priorities are. This research was meant to help plan the development of the mechanism. The methodology was developed for helping the employees of *Gamgeobas* to conduct representative face-to-face interviews with Tbilisi residents. The survey was conducted by the Institute of Social Studies and Analysis and assessed the needs of Tbilisi citizens by interviewing 3,000 individuals in 10 districts of Tbilisi.¹⁰⁵ Additionally, OSGF suggested to the Municipality of Tbilisi to hire specialists to create survey questionnaires and methodology for developing the participatory budget mechanism. Also, they supported the provision of trainings for Municipality personnel and carrying out an initial survey in Tbilisi to identify the current needs of residents.¹⁰⁶

According to the draft legal regulation developed by City Hall in the early stages, the implementation of this commitment was planned in two phases: During the first stage the residents were to vote

electronically from 1 March to 15 July, and the second stage included conducting face-to-face interviews with the residents of Tbilisi. The face-to-face interviews were planned to be conducted by the specially trained civil servants of district administrations from 1 May to 15 July. The methodology and questionnaires were developed specifically to guarantee a proper information gathering. After gathering the information from residents, the data will be automatically calculated and weighted with average results from citizens' selected priorities. The comparison between the citizen's budget and the finally approved budget will be published. None of these stages have taken place and the implementation of both activities has been delayed.

The respective regulation which provides a legal basis for the implementation of this commitment, as envisaged, is a crucial procedural step causing the delay in implementation. OSGF believes that conducting the study to identify the needs of residents is not enough to be able to say that the budget is planned based on the participatory budget planning mechanism.

According to the Government of Tbilisi, trainings with civil servants of the district administrations have begun, based on the methodology agreed with OSGF. The first round of trainings involved representatives of the district administrations who will be responsible for gathering data from citizens through face-to-face interviews. The second round of trainings target City Hall employees to teach them how to administer the online platform. This round of training has started but has not finished.

At the time of writing of the report, only the pilot version of the portal exists, pending approval from the Government of Tbilisi.

Early results: did it open government?

Access to Information: No change

Civic Participation: No change

According to CSOs there is no evidence yet to measure if the commitment increases access to information or civic participation, as only the pilot version of the portal was presented by the Government of Tbilisi.

Recommendations

Given the importance of this commitment and its limited implementation at this stage, the IRM researcher recommends carrying it forward to the next action plan.

The following recommendations are to be considered by the Government of Tbilisi:

- The participatory budget planning mechanism should be implemented not only through conducting the survey. The IRM researcher recommends the Municipal Services Development Agency to map and build on existing participatory budgeting interfaces to ensure the use of best practices as well as saving resources. For example, a participatory budgeting interface, such as Decide Madrid (<https://decide.madrid.es/>), an open source civic technology platform created in 2015 by the Municipality of Madrid, enables citizens to propose, deliberate and vote on policies and city projects and ensure transparency in various government processes. It also includes features that go beyond participatory budgeting. The platform provides spaces for citizen-prompted debates, crowdsourcing ideas for new city projects and participatory budgeting processes.

The platform uses Consul (<http://consulproject.org/en/>), a free software for citizen participation that is currently being replicated in many municipalities worldwide.

- In case of availability of comparison between the priorities identified by citizens and the priorities in the actual budget, the regulation should clearly define the steps to be taken by the Government of Tbilisi to ensure the voice of citizens is heard and considered.

⁹⁵ Point of clarification: This commitment proposes to create a mechanism that allows citizens to simulate the allocation process of Tbilisi's budget. Participants would have 100GEL, representing 100 percent of the city's budget.

⁹⁶ "2015 Tbilisi Budget: New Developments and Problems" (Transparency International, Georgia), <http://www.transparency.ge/en/blog/2015-tbilisi-budget-new-developments-and-problems>

⁹⁷ "Budget of Tbilisi: Political Game or caring for people" (Transparency International, Georgia), <http://www.transparency.ge/en/blog/tbilisi-budget-political-game-or-caring-people>

⁹⁸ Giorgi Gogua, "The opposition does not like the new budget project of Tbilisi", <https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/opozicias-ar-moscons-tbilisis-axali-biujeti/28125839.html>

⁹⁹ Avalishvili, October 2017.

¹⁰⁰ Tsintsabadze, February 2018.

¹⁰¹ Tsintsabadze, February 2018.

¹⁰² Topuria, February 2018.

¹⁰³ Khasia, February 2018.

¹⁰⁴ Tsintsabadze, February 2018.

¹⁰⁵ "Tbilisi Citizens' Needs Assessment", Open Society Georgia Foundation, 2017, http://www.osgf.ge/index.php?lang_id=ENG&sec_id=15&info_id=5057

¹⁰⁶ Minutes of the Meeting #7, http://ogp.tbilisi.gov.ge/img/original/2017/9/13/record_of_meeting_7.pdf

4. Interactive accessibility to budget spending and introduction of civic control mechanism

Commitment Text

The aim [of this commitment] is to enable the public to follow budgetary processes in a simple manner on a daily basis without specific prior knowledge and experience. Interactive publication of simplified budget spending forms to ensure governments accountability on the daily bases as opposed to an annual format. Developing interactive mechanisms of accountability, civic participation and control to simplify access to information and to increase public involvement.

[Create a] program [that] will be linked with a public electronic [mechanism], which will at least display current spending in specific budget priorities and budget codes and its related parameters. This format, with support of statistical and other tools, will enable users to filter specific elements of the information, obtain detailed information related to spending and print it out in full or partially [form] as an official document with its date and a unique code.

This [mechanism] will also include an automatic format for spending related citizen’s data entries [input] and directly informing the Tbilisi City Hall’s appropriate department with or without indicating individual’s identity. The information will be subject to periodical analysis after which it will be summarized and the general information related to response will be made publicly available.

Registration and activities of civic monitoring groups will be taken into consideration. Tbilisi residents (also organizations) will be able to monitor budget spending. For this purpose, they will need to get registered in civic monitoring group. They will receive special cards in order to be able to have a quick access to events, activities and certain types of information. Collected findings will be shared with Tbilisi City Hall. The information will be periodically analyzed, summarized and general information related to response, will be made publicly available.

Conditions and formats of these processes will be established.

Milestones

1. Development and introduction of electronic system of financial management and analysis for the Department of Finance and development of terms of reference for the public e-portal interactive budget spending linked with the system (by June 2017)
2. Developing software and content for the portal. Creating a mechanism to allow information to be exported from budget spending interactive system into [the portal] (function of uploading on the e- portal) (by October 2017)
3. Piloting and introduction of the portal (by December 2017)
4. Making of a video clip covering portal and other OGP commitments and its dissemination through social media, mass media or through municipal entities (by December 2017)
5. Legal consultancy, development of system support legislative act(s), approval (by January 2017)

Commitment Overview

Status of Completion	Limited
Start Date	January 2017
Intended Completion Date	December 2017

Responsible Office	Tbilisi Municipal Department of Finance, Municipal Services Development Agency (NCLE), Tbilisi Municipal Legal Department
Did It Open Government?	No change

<p>Is it a STAR commitment?</p> <p>Starred commitments are considered exemplary OGP commitments. To receive a star, a commitment must meet several criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It must be specific enough that a judgment can be made about its potential impact. Starred commitments will have “medium” or “high” specificity. - The commitment’s language should make clear its relevance to opening government. Specifically, it must relate to at least one of the OGP values of Access to Information, Civic Participation, or Public Accountability. - The commitment would have a "transformative" potential impact if completely implemented. - Finally, the commitment must see significant progress during the action plan implementation period, receiving an assessment of "substantial" or "complete" implementation. 	No
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Editorial Note: The commitment text above is an excerpt from the Tbilisi 2017 action plan. The complete text provides detailed and technical information on how the milestones will be carried out, assigns responsibility to specific actors and provides concrete deadlines for its implementation.

Commitment Overview	Specificity				OGP Value Relevance				Potential Impact				Completion				Did It Open Government?				
	None	Low	Medium	High	Access to Information	Civic Participation	Public Accountability	Tech. and Innov. for Transparency and Accountability	None	Minor	Moderate	Transformative	Not Started	Limited	Substantial	Complete	Worsens	No Change	Marginal	Major	Outstanding
Overall			✓		✓	✓		✓					✓				✓				

Commitment Aim

Overall Objective & Relevance

In Tbilisi, access to information on budget spending has been an issue of wide discussion among CSOs and citizens in general.¹⁰⁷ As mentioned in the action plan, Tbilisi City Hall (the city executive body) publishes an annual budgetary report, while Tbilisi City Council (which approves the budget) does so every quarter. Any individual may request information from these bodies, which should be responded to

within 10 days. However, information is provided in Excel spreadsheets without a unified or guiding format, limiting its access and use. Additionally, neither executive nor representative municipal bodies proactively publish information regarding administrative expenses. A recent study conducted by the Open Society Georgia Foundation, shows that among interviewed respondents, a clear majority (66 percent) claim that they are not at all informed about the Tbilisi budget and the programs to be carried out. A tiny minority (1.9 percent) consider themselves to be well-informed and 13.6 percent consider themselves as more or less informed.¹⁰⁸

This commitment aims to open the budgetary process by providing interactive and online accessibility to up-to-date information on budget spending. The program would enable users to filter specific elements of the information and obtain detailed and printable reports. This e-tool would include a standardized template that automatically informs the appropriate municipal department of citizens' data requests or comments. The tool is expected to be integrated into the Smart Map (a platform described in commitment I of this action plan).

During the elaboration of this commitment, government representatives considered that citizens who wanted to participate in monitoring activities would need to access sites to witness how the budget is being spent (for example, if the budgetary item is the construction of a building, the citizen would need special access granted to visit the construction site). Users would need to register in a civic monitoring group to access the program. They would receive special cards in order to be able to get quick access to events, activities and certain types of information. The concept of the monitoring groups and registration process is better explained in Commitment 5, which focuses on the creation of these groups. The information gathered from the program (citizen requests, input from groups and government responses) would be periodically analyzed and summarized to be made publicly available.

In addition, the commitment calls for the legal basis to be established to define procedures and conditions for operating the system.

The commitment is relevant to the OGP values of access to information, civic participation and technology and innovation for transparency. The platform provides user-friendly access to budget spending information while enabling citizens to provide input through monitoring groups regarding budget spending decisions. The government is required to respond periodically to citizen feedback, promoting public accountability. However, the commitment text does not specify what this response should contain and whether it would be enough to ensure justification of the government's actions, act upon criticisms or requirements made of citizens, and accept responsibility for failure to perform with respect to laws or commitments.

Specificity and Potential Impact

The commitment is considered of medium specificity as it contains several verifiable milestones that represent subsequent steps for developing an electronic system for financial management, developing the software and content of a portal, piloting the system and, in addition, providing a legal basis to support the operation of the system. However, these activities require interpretation from the reader in order to measure its outcomes. For example, it is unclear exactly what data will be made public, what will be included in the simplified budget spending forms, how citizens will be able to inform decision-making processes or what the periodical analysis with summarized general information will include in response to citizen input and comments. Furthermore, it is intended for citizens to have to register in order to participate in the civic monitoring groups. The commitment does not explain the mechanism or criteria that would be used to screen and approve citizens.

The commitment could have an impact on current government practice, as it could change the current budgetary policy area. It could improve access to information and participation to allow Tbilisi residents to follow ongoing budget spending. Daily publication of information, as well as visualization on the web page, additional statistics and electronic tools, would simplify understanding and required analysis for the public. This will potentially enable more interested individuals to obtain and understand comprehensive information about the city's budget spending without specific experience and knowledge. However, this commitment only includes details on the general functionality of the platform without a strong indication of what should be expected from the implementation of the commitment. For this reason, the IRM researcher considers this commitment, as written, to have a minor potential impact.

Completion: Limited

MSDA, with the active involvement of the department of finance, has developed an electronic system of financial management and created the terms of reference for the public e-portal interactive budget spending mechanism. The system was intended to be integrated under the electronic portal my.tbilisi.gov.ge. The software and content for the portal was developed and a mechanism was created to export information from the budget spending interactive system.

The pilot version of the portal was introduced to the members of the working group. Based on the pilot version of the module, it is intended to provide accessibility to budget expenditures approved by City Hall during the whole year. Once operational, citizens will have the opportunity to follow daily budget updates. The published information was meant to provide data on four main areas: budget duties, budget revenues, daily transfers and reserve funds. The sub-portal is meant to be integrated as a module under the website my.tbilisi.gov.ge with other portals created under the OGP action plan.

Supportive legal acts have been elaborated within the timeframe but have not been approved. During the last meeting of the working group in November 2017 the updated drafts of the legal acts were presented.¹⁰⁹ However, that was the last meeting of the working group before the process was delayed. CSOs mentioned that they had no access to the final version of the legal acts. In general, USAID GGI believes that the Government of Tbilisi was on track but the process has been delayed since the municipal elections.¹¹⁰

Stakeholders from civil society were not aware if their recommendations had been incorporated. Also, they are not aware of what the final act includes and whether it guarantees the accessibility of citizens to budget spending and if it can meaningfully serve as a civic control mechanism.¹¹¹

Early results: did it open government?

Access to Information: No change

Civic Participation: No change

Because the legal framework has not been completed and the portal has not been launched, there are no visible results in changes to government practice in improving access to information or civic participation. According to the CSOs, there is no evidence yet to measure early results as they have limited information about the implementation process of the commitment.¹¹²

Some stakeholders state that this commitment might overlap with the results of one of the commitments under the Georgia national action plan¹¹³ implemented by the Supreme Audit Office.

Under this commitment, a web platform, Budget Monitor, was launched which informs citizens on state budget and audit findings in an easily understandable visual way and provides a mechanism for public feedback on potential violations by public institutions.¹¹⁴ According to the City Hall point of contact, the difference between Budget Monitor and the Tbilisi budget spending monitor is that under the Budget Monitor concept the information is not updated automatically. Under the portal, the information is requested from the municipalities and manually added. The government believes that the pilot version of the sub-portal is likely to be a useful tool for budget monitoring organizations. The main advantage of the system would be live updates on spending that would be publicly accessible for the first time. The sub-portal was created as a civic control mechanism to update information on budget spending automatically, which will minimize the subjectivity and provide a maximum level of access to information.¹¹⁵

Recommendations

Given the importance of this commitment but its limited completion status at this stage, the IRM researcher recommends carrying it forward in the next action plan. Once the portal becomes operational, City Hall will need to make efforts to ensure uptake. Public awareness-raising campaigns would help to popularize the tool among Tbilisi residents and encourage its usage. The follow-up commitment should be more specific about the budget information that will be presented, and explain the civic monitoring process in more detail, e.g. how would the results of the monitoring be presented on the portal, and what would be the required responses/follow-up based on the monitoring?

¹⁰⁷ “No rational spending of budgets from Tbilisi budget to purchase decorations for New Year”, (Georgian Young Lawyer Association), <https://gyla.ge/ge/post/tbilisshi-3-milioni-laris-ghirebulebis-2017-2018-tslis-saakhaltslo-dekoraciebis-shesyidva-racionalurad-ar-khdeba#sthash.H7gv47k6.c50SwFYT.dpbs>

¹⁰⁸ “Tbilisi Citizens’ Needs Assessment” Open Society Georgia Foundation, page 9, [http://www.osgf.ge/files/2017/Publications/Presentation_File_English_\(00000002\).pdf](http://www.osgf.ge/files/2017/Publications/Presentation_File_English_(00000002).pdf)

¹⁰⁹ Minutes of the Meeting N9, 20 October 2017, http://ogp.tbilisi.gov.ge/img/original/2017/10/27/Record_Of_Meetig_N9.pdf

¹¹⁰ Darchiashvili, Gorgodze, February 2018.

¹¹¹ Tsintsabadze, February 2018.

¹¹² Tsintsabadze, February 2018.

¹¹³ Georgia National Action Plan 2016-2018, <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/georgia-national-action-plan-2016-2018>

¹¹⁴ Darchiashvili, Gorgodze, February 2018.

¹¹⁵ Khasia, February 2018.

5. Introduction of civic control and accessibility mechanisms for municipal services.

Commitment Text

To simplify the process of providing Tbilisi City Hall services, raise awareness and accessibility, and increase accountability, the commitment seeks to create interactive participation mechanisms in two directions: 1) to create two types of civic participation mechanisms (civic monitoring and service's feedback system) 2) to transfer services of main providers into an online platform.

1. Civic participation mechanisms: The first part authorizes civic monitoring groups to undertake some type of control over services in healthcare, social services, education, sport and youth affairs (homeless shelter, homecare, education, sport and youth projects – programs supporting initiatives, also educational, youth and sports services provided by organizations under Tbilisi City Hall control) and free canteen. It will also include the establishment of registration monitoring and definition of the scope of their activities, as well as setting the conditions in which Tbilisi residents (and organizations) will be able to monitor the services. They will be required to register as a member of the monitoring group and they will be given special marks to ensure their rights and easy access to see and monitor the services and activities, request and get certain type of information. The findings of the group will be communicated to Tbilisi City Hall. The information will be periodically analyzed, summarized and general information related to response actions and/or countering arguments will be made publicly available.

2. Services on online platforms: This second part comprises an integrated web application, which will allow online access to all services provided by the Tbilisi City Hall system. At a first stage in 2017, healthcare, social services, education, sport and youth affairs (at least 5 general services in healthcare, social care, sport, youth affairs and education which will be broke down into subcategories and fully cover services by 2 relevant largest service provider departments of Tbilisi City Hall) services will be included in web application. This will be a significant step towards establishing a one stop shop principle. It will allow and improve public access to full information on specific services in Tbilisi City Hall system. The Application will let members of the public create their online account and, without having to come to the Municipality, receive their services and manage their own information. A mobile version will also be available. Its format will enable citizens to enter service related comments. The information will be periodically analyzed, summarized and general information related to response actions and/or countering arguments will be made publicly available. Legal procedures will be established to support the mechanism.

Milestones

- 1. Consensus, development and integration of the civic monitoring registration's e-tool format with unified electronic portal (by September 2017)*
- 2. Description and documentation of work processes in Municipal Departments of Healthcare and Social Services, and Education, Sport and Youth affairs (by February 2017)*
- 3. Define procedures for citizen's application grading and processing. Develop internal work process panel – employees page (by May 2017)*
- 4. Creation of unified service's public platform. Introduction of citizens' personal pages in Municipality (which will be integrated with other obligations functional) (by September 2017)*
- 5. Testing and introduction of system and civic monitors electronic tools (by December 2017)*
- 6. Training of Civic monitors coordinators, employees of Municipal Department of Healthcare and Social services as well as Municipal department of Education, Sport and Youth Affairs, in how to use the system (by November 2017)*

- 7. Making one video clip covering portal and other OGP obligation and its dissemination through social media, mass media or municipalities local units (by December 2017)
- 8. Legal consultancy, development of system support legislative act(s), approval (by December 2017)

Commitment Overview

Status of Completion	Limited
Start Date	January 2017
Intended Completion Date	December 2017
Responsible Office	Municipal Services Development Agency (NCLE), Tbilisi Municipal Legal Department, departments of Tbilisi City Hall responsible for specific thematic activities (Department of Healthcare and Social Services, Department of Education, Sport and Youth Affairs, District Administrations)
Did It Open Government?	No Change

<p>Is it a STAR commitment?</p> <p>Starred commitments are considered exemplary OGP commitments. To receive a star, a commitment must meet several criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It must be specific enough that a judgment can be made about its potential impact. Starred commitments will have “medium” or “high” specificity. - The commitment’s language should make clear its relevance to opening government. Specifically, it must relate to at least one of the OGP values of Access to Information, Civic Participation, or Public Accountability. - The commitment would have a "transformative" potential impact if completely implemented. - Finally, the commitment must see significant progress during the action plan implementation period, receiving an assessment of "substantial" or "complete" implementation. 	No
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Editorial Note: The commitment text above is an excerpt from the Tbilisi 2017 action plan. The complete text provides detailed and technical information on how the milestones will be carried out, assigns responsibility to specific actors and provides concrete deadlines for its implementation.

Commitment Overview	Specificity				OGP Value Relevance				Potential Impact				Completion				Did It Open Government?				
	None	Low	Medium	High	Access to Information	Civic Participation	Public Accountability	Tech. and Innov. for Transparency and Accountability	None	Minor	Moderate	Transformative	Not Started	Limited	Substantial	Complete	Worsens	No Change	Marginal	Major	Outstanding
Overall			✓		✓	✓		✓					✓					✓			

Commitment Aim

Overall Objective & Relevance

Tbilisi City Hall has been changing their approach to service delivery in the past few years, improving public access to government services and fostering a better relationship between civil servants and citizens.¹¹⁶ For example, multiple websites were created for the provision of electronic services, such as a platform for issuing construction permits and another for disposing of municipal property.¹¹⁷ However, in 2014, as reported by the Open Society Georgia Foundation, journalists, citizens and non-governmental organizations raised concerns about the limited access to information and government communication (especially related to financial documents and information on projects from subordinate agencies).¹¹⁸ In 2015, City Hall created a new city portal, in partnership with the Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI), to increase access to information through a centralized platform and encourage civic participation (<http://www.tbilisi.gov.ge>).¹¹⁹ This platform provides information on existing government services and the possibility to participate in polls and assessments of public works.

However, during public consultations for the formulation of the action plan, citizens requested more civic control and accessibility to services provided by the government and third-party contractors. The issue was mainly raised due to the lack of a mechanism for citizens to actively monitor the government and service providers in the delivery of municipal services. For example, participants stated a need to monitor public spending and administration of canteens (public cafeterias) for the socially vulnerable. In Tbilisi, this has been a subject of public debate, considering that the number of beneficiaries from this program has risen from approximately 15,000 in 2015 to more than 30,000 in 2016 and the budget continues to increase accordingly.¹²⁰ This commitment proposes the creation of a civic mechanism to monitor and evaluate the performance of services provided by the city government. To do so, City Hall planned to create and authorize ‘civic monitoring groups’ to undertake some type of monitoring of current services provided by the government (in healthcare, social services, education, sport and youth affairs – specific projects include: homeless shelters, homecare and free of charge canteens for the socially vulnerable). The action plan does not provide an explicit methodology for this monitoring process.

The action plan specifies that City Hall is to create a web platform and mobile application that integrates all services provided by the different departments of City Hall. Citizens would be able to voluntarily join a group through a registration process for residents and organizations. These groups would have access to privileged information to carry out their functions of studying and understanding how the programs are being run and prepare relevant conclusions and recommendations to City Hall. According to the commitment language, all reports from the monitoring groups should be periodically analyzed, aggregated and made public, including all information related to responses to citizen requests or concerns.

The commitment is relevant to the OGP values of access to information, civic participation and technology and innovation for transparency. The civic monitoring groups invite citizens to oversee the performance of service providers and civil servants by providing access to government-held information. In addition, the commitment calls for the publication of results from the monitoring groups' investigation. Civil servants are to respond to the groups' results, requests and concerns and publish general information about their response. However, the commitment text does not specify what this response should contain and whether it would be enough to ensure justification of the government's actions, act upon criticisms or requirements made of citizens, and accept responsibility for failure to perform with respect to laws or commitments.

Specificity and Potential Impact

The commitment is of medium specificity as most milestones are, to some extent, objectively verifiable and represent subsequent steps to form civic monitor groups with a unified electronic portal, to describe and document the processes of municipality services, testing of system and civic monitors' electronic tools, and to train civic monitors' coordinators and employees from relevant departments at City Hall. However, the commitment could be clearer in defining which services are to be accessible online. The commitment requires interpretation from the reader, especially as it speaks about providing monitoring groups with the capacity to undertake "some type of control" over services without defining the extent to which stakeholders will participate in oversight, what information they will be privy to, what 'consensus' means and among whom, and other important details.

The commitment has moderate potential impact. The idea of civic monitoring is an innovative concept to actively integrate citizens and make service providers and civil servants accountable to taxpayers. Moreover, the integration of all services under one platform, to meet the one-stop shop principle (also known as one window policy), is a significant step forward that, coupled with the monitoring efforts, could signify an important change in the status quo. However, the commitment is limited in scope, as it does not explain how the monitoring groups will be formed and exactly what information citizens will be provided with to fulfill the monitoring role.

Completion: *Limited*

The level of completion of the commitment is considered as limited. While some activities have taken place, the intended system has not started functioning and the overall implementation level is low.

The Municipal Services Development Agency (MSDA) was responsible for the development of all the technical tasks required for the completion of the commitment. MSDA created a unified system and created a web-platform that was tested and introduced to the members of the working group. The government launched the pilot versions of the portals that intended to be integrated as two separate

modules: *a civic participation mechanism and the services on online platform*. The sub-portal services on online platforms are developed and integrated as one of the modules under the my.tbilisi.gov.ge and registered citizens will have access through their personal user pages to any online service. The pilot version of the sub-portal included services from healthcare, youth affairs and education, which are broken down into sub-categories for easy accessibility. It also enables citizens to enter service-related comments, and publish them.

According to the government, within the registration process, the rules and conditions will be defined for Tbilisi residents or organizations to be able to monitor the services and evaluate the performance of the services provided by the government. During the specified period, citizens will have the opportunity to register as members of the volunteer monitors for the specific program.

The draft legal act presented to the working group in October 2017 defined the recruitment policy of the volunteers. The working group was supposed to work as a recruiter, and was eligible to select candidates that would be able to become members of the civic monitoring volunteers' group. The government wanted the selection criteria to be basic to ensure that volunteers are able to proceed with the monitoring activities.¹²¹ However, CSOs argued that the government should not be involved in the process of recruitment, instead an independent commission should be in charge or a random selection method should be used.¹²²

The next step included sending the selected volunteers to be trained and get the specific knowledge characteristic for the program/service to be monitored. Each department coordinating the program has elaborated specific monitoring regulations, which will make it easier for volunteers to start the monitoring process. The selected volunteers would have full access to the facilities to monitor the services and activities, and request and obtain certain types of information. The plan was to register through the my.tbilisi.gov.ge web-portal following the same registration portal, but additional access will be provided with the facilities within the programs. For example, if an individual wants to monitor the performance of a free canteen program, by registering as the volunteer, the monitor enables citizens to gain full access to the facilities such as the kitchen, served meals, etc.¹²³ The plan was to publish the findings of the groups and communicate them to City Hall. The information will periodically be analyzed and summarized, with general information related to response actions from City Hall, as it is obliged to respond publicly.

However, due to the municipal elections and changing of the government of Tbilisi, the process of approval of the legal acts (scheduled for December 2017 in the action plan) has been delayed. According to the government, most of the recommendations suggested by CSOs have been taken into consideration. However, CSOs do not know how their feedback was incorporated as they have not seen the final drafts of the legal acts.¹²⁴

USAID GGI mentioned that they have no clear understanding of the process of selecting volunteers for the monitoring group, and the watchdog organizations already have the opportunity to be involved in, and monitor, the process. The researcher considers that due to the lack of a developed volunteering culture in the country it will be hard to find volunteers to dedicate time to conducting monitoring activities free of charge. It is not clear what the participation incentives would be for random citizens given that, in general, public participation rates in government affairs are low. According to the government, any watchdog organization can also be registered as a member of the civic monitoring groups, which will make the process to undertake some type of monitoring over current services provided by the government easier.¹²⁵ OSGF argues that the adopted recruitment policy would

significantly impact on the results of the monitoring process, as the selected volunteers could be biased and only report in a positive way. In addition, there were no predefined measures on how the results of the monitoring will impact on the process of solving the identified problems, or whether it will impact at all.¹²⁶

The preparation of the video clip about the portal and other OGP commitments, scheduled to be prepared by December 2017, has been delayed.

Early results: did it open government?

Access to Information: No change

Civic Participation: No change

Since this commitment has had only limited completion, there are no early results to indicate any changes in government practice on access to information or civic participation.¹²⁷ According to the CSO representatives, after the election and the change of the city government, there has been no publicly available information about plans for the next steps of implementation.

Recommendations

The idea of creating a public monitoring tool for the services provided by the city is a welcome step. However, the implementation of this commitment showed that the concepts and specific activities for creating such a monitoring mechanism need to be better thought through and carefully planned.

Given the skeptical perception of stakeholders on the effectiveness of civic monitoring groups, the IRM researcher does not recommend continuing this commitment in the next action plan without major modifications. Moving forward, City Hall could consider making a better designed commitment, including the following:

- The portal could start with a few selected areas that are deemed to be most critical, such as construction, urban planning, environmental issues, including green spaces and air quality.
- City Hall should continue efforts to publicly launch the services portal where users can leave feedback and start discussions on various services provided by City Hall; the portal could be complimented with a mobile app that could give opportunity to specific target groups (e.g. parents of kindergarten children) to rate specific services and give feedback directly to the municipality.

¹¹⁶ For example: the “Local Governance with Rights Based Approach” program with the Swedish International Centre for Local Democracy in 2015-2016, which aims to train civil servants and reform public structures. For more information:

‘New Conception of Citizens’ Service Center’, Swedish International Centre for Local Democracy, <http://www.icld.se/en/article/new-conception-of-the-citizens-service-center>

¹¹⁷ These electronic services were available prior to the creation of the 2015 website and are still accessible on the following websites, www.iauction.ge and www.tas.ge, respectively.

¹¹⁸ “Transparency and Accountability of Tbilisi City Hall”, Open Society Georgia Foundation, http://www.osgf.ge/index.php?lang_id=ENG&sec_id=15&info_id=4017

¹¹⁹ “A new Portal of Tbilisi City Hall”, Institute for Development of Freedom of Information, <https://idf.ge/en/tbilisi-city-halls-new-portal-the-move-towards-transparent-and-open-government>

¹²⁰ Factcheck: Sevdia Uregkheldzie vs Rima Beradze, <http://factcheck.ge/en/article/sevdia-ugrekheldize-vs-rima-beradze/>

¹²¹ Khasia, February 2018.

¹²² Tsintsabadze, February 2018.

¹²³ Khasia, February 2018.

¹²⁴ Topuria, February 2018.

¹²⁵ Darchiashvili, Gorgadze, February 2018.

¹²⁶ Tsintsabadze, February 2018.

¹²⁷ Tsintsabadze, February 2018.

Method and Sources

The IRM report is written by well-respected governance researchers. All IRM reports undergo a process of quality control to ensure 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, and feedback from nongovernmental stakeholder meetings. The IRM report builds on assessments of progress put out by civil society, the government, the private sector, or international organizations.

The first and primary objective of the IRM is to verify completion of action plan commitments and the level of participation. Beyond this, the IRM seeks to assess potential impact and early changes in behavior around open government. There are two intended outcomes: accountability and learning. The method follows these aims. A second, important function of the IRM is to act as a “listening post” for the concerns of civil society.

Each report undergoes a 4-step review and quality control process:

- Staff review: IRM staff reviews the report for grammar, readability, content, and adherence to IRM methodology
- International Experts Panel (IEP) review: IEP reviews the content of the report for rigorous evidence to support findings, evaluates the extent to which the action plan applies OGP values, and provides technical recommendations for improving the implementation of commitments and realization of OGP values through the action plan as a whole
- Pre-publication review: Government and select civil society organizations (at the discretion of the researcher) are invited to provide comments on content of the draft IRM report
- Public comment period: The public is invited to provide comments on the content of the draft IRM report.

Interviews and Focus Groups

Each IRM researcher is required to hold at least one public information-gathering event. Care should be taken in inviting stakeholders outside of the “usual suspects” list of invitees already participating in existing processes. Supplementary means may be needed to gather the inputs of stakeholders in a more meaningful way (e.g. online surveys, written responses, follow-up interviews). Additionally, researchers perform specific interviews with responsible agencies when the commitments require more information than provided in the self-assessment or is accessible online. If IRM researchers wish to substitute a stakeholder meeting with another format, they should communicate this to IRM staff.

After a comprehensive review of the action plan, and collecting secondary research to gather and analyze relevant information to the background of the city and commitments, the IRM researcher undertook a number of in-person interviews.

The IRM researcher interviewed 14 stakeholders, including representatives of agencies responsible for the subnational action plan commitments, key actors from civil society and multilateral organizations. Specifically, the first round of interviews was conducted in June-July 2017 and the second round of interviews was conducted in the period between October 2017 and February 2018. Specifically, the IRM

researcher conducted qualitative interviews with four government representatives, and eight representatives from civil society and multilateral organizations.

In addition, the IRM researcher conducted two in-depth interviews with direct beneficiaries of the e-petitions, who were registered and used the online platform for starting a new e-petition and another one signed online. The key questions explored their experience of using the new mechanism, what the challenges were and the recommendations they have for improvement.

All stakeholders interviewed were eager and showed enthusiasm to participate. They were open to providing feedback. In addition, some stakeholders were interviewed several times due to preparation for the different parts of the IRM report. Moreover, some stakeholders emailed additional useful materials to the IRM researcher.