

# *Final Learning Exercise*

## Gyumri Summary Report

### Section 1. Local Context

The implementation of Gyumri's OGP Local Action Plan occurred in a challenging political and socio-economic environment, influenced by both external and internal factors. External events, including the COVID-19 pandemic and the 2020 war in Artsakh, shifted municipal priorities and delayed planned activities. Local government elections further affected continuity: elections in October 2021, the mayor's resignation in 2024, and the appointment of an acting mayor, followed by new elections in March 2025, resulted in a **loss of institutional memory**. Interviews indicate that the newly elected authorities were largely unaware of previous OGP commitments, which hindered seamless implementation and knowledge transfer.

Internal factors also posed challenges. The introduction of the unified national property registry replaced local inventory plans, limiting municipal autonomy in executing certain commitments. Procedural bottlenecks, such as the lack of formal regulations for donations and grants, created additional delays, as funding decisions were made on a case-by-case basis by the council of elders. To date, no mitigation measures have been implemented to address these procedural or institutional barriers.

Looking ahead, the development of future commitments could benefit from broader outreach and consultation methods. For example, organizing at least one **town hall** or **open space-style discussion** in each settlement of the enlarged community would ensure that residents from all areas have the opportunity to contribute ideas and feedback. Such inclusive engagement would help strengthen community ownership, improve the relevance of the commitments, and enhance the overall effectiveness of the action plan.

### Section 2. Action Plan Co-creation Process

#### 2.1 Co-creation process review

The co-creation process in Vanadzor and Gyumri demonstrated several notable strengths. First, the municipalities established a working forum including government representatives, CSOs, and select international partners, enabling structured dialogue on the action plan. Meetings were organized both online and in hybrid formats to accommodate COVID-19 restrictions, ensuring participation despite the pandemic.

Despite these achievements, weaknesses persisted. The forum remained moderately inclusive, with limited engagement from the private sector, mass media, and the broader public. Many proposals from citizens were not fully integrated due to either duplication or non-compliance with

OGP principles. Furthermore, digital communication channels were underutilized, and the municipalities lacked a dedicated web section for OGP initiatives, limiting transparency and access to information for wider audiences.

The iterative dialogue between government and non-government stakeholders allowed some shared ownership over agenda-setting, particularly in sectors like budgeting, urban transport, and social services. However, certain government departments approached commitments as procedural tasks rather than fully embracing the philosophical intent, as observed with the green transport commitment. This limited the depth of co-creation and reduced the transformative potential of some initiatives.

Overall, the co-creation process met minimum OGP requirements and produced a formally endorsed action plan. Innovative practices included hybrid meetings and the classification of proposals into thematic categories. Yet, engagement gaps and uneven understanding of commitments highlight areas for improvement in inclusivity, communication, and conceptual ownership.

## 2.2 Co-creation process recommendations

- Establish a dedicated OGP section on municipal websites to centralize information and updates on co-creation and implementation processes.
- Conduct proactive outreach to the private sector, media, and other underrepresented stakeholders to ensure multi-sectoral participation.
- Expand digital engagement tools, including online forums and surveys, to facilitate wider citizen input in real time.
- Provide targeted capacity-building and orientation sessions to government departments to ensure full understanding of the philosophy behind each commitment.
- It is necessary to institutionalize the commitments and establish mechanisms for information dissemination that are independent of individual staff members.
- Implement structured feedback loops to report how citizen and CSO proposals are considered and integrated, increasing accountability and transparency.

## Section 3. Action Plan Commitments

### 3.1 Commitments implementation review

The action plan in Gyumri achieved very limited results. Out of five commitments, only two were implemented, and these were completed because they were carried out at the national level, with Gyumri participating in the process. These two commitments included **participatory budgeting** and the **unified property registry**. Other planned commitments were not implemented locally, which highlights the challenges in sustaining municipal-level action.

While these two national-level initiatives contributed to some progress, overall, the city's achievements in enhancing transparency, digital participation, and public access to municipal information remain minimal. The limited implementation underscores the need to institutionalize

commitments and establish mechanisms for information dissemination that are independent of individual staff members.

Overall, the action plan contributed to the strategic vision of open governance by introducing new practices, enhancing transparency, and fostering participatory mechanisms. While the initiatives laid the foundation for sustainable civic engagement, continued support and refinement are necessary to fully institutionalize these practices.

### **3.2 Commitments recommendations**

It is recommended to conduct a formal assessment of the new municipal leadership's commitment to OGP principles and values. This evaluation should determine whether the current administration fully embraces the objectives of open government and whether it intends to continue participating as a member of the Local OGP community. Understanding the level of political will and institutional support is essential to ensure continuity, sustainability, and effective implementation of ongoing and future commitments.