G E O R G I A

ACTION PLAN

2012-2013

Introduction

Georgia welcomes the launching of the Open Government Partnership and joins the aspirations of participating countries in making their governments more transparent, accountable, innovative and open to citizen participation.

The cornerstone principles of the Partnership have been on the agenda of the Georgian government long before the OGP. Since the Rose Revolution of 2003 all-embracing and successful measures were implemented to fight corruption, completely alter the mindset for the public service delivery and increase the professional integrity among civil servants. From being one of the most corrupt countries in Eastern Europe by 2003, now Georgia has 4% corruption perception among its citizens, only 2% have experienced bribery and 77% of Georgians are satisfied with government's actions towards fighting corruption.[1]

 Georgia's existing political system is based on openness, citizen involvement, transparency and cooperation with civil society. Most advanced and sophisticated technologies and innovative tools are used in all fields of governmental activities.

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[1] *Life in Transition Survey*, EBRD, 2011; Transparency International's *Global Corruption Barometer 2010*.

The OGP is an excellent opportunity for Georgia to move beyond current achievements, undertake new commitments and share experience with the partner countries.

The Georgian Action Plan is the result of thorough consultation process with local and international NGOs, students and academia throughout the country.

The Georgian Government commits itself to take action within the framework of four "grand challenges":

- ❖ **Improving Public Services**
- ❖ **Increasing Public Integrity**
- ❖ **More Effectively Managing Public Resources**
- ❖ **Creating Safer Communities**

1. Public Service of the Future

According to 2012 World Bank case study, prior to 2003 public services in Georgia were dysfunctional, corrupt and full of bureaucratic barriers. Systems of public registries, would it be registration of birth or a new business, were chaotic and corrupt. Inaccurate information was stored in Soviet-era archives. Registration of property involved visits to various offices for stamps and signatures and notarizations. Responses often took up to two months. "To obtain a passport, citizens had to go to one public office, only to be sent to another to get proof of residency before returning to the first office to stand in line for hours and to bribe some official just to do his or her job". [2]

Chaos was over after the Rose Revolution in 2003, when the attitude towards public service delivery changed altogether: corruption was eradicated, transparent and business-type registries were introduced with new, qualified and well-earning staff. Time for service delivery was significantly cut. Sophisticated information technologies were implemented. [3]

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[2] Paragraph is taken from the World Bank case study: "*Fighting Corruption in Public Services: Chronicling Georgia's Reforms*", 31 January 2012: http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/2012/01/15647088/fighting-corruption-public-services-chronicling-georgias-reforms

[3] *Ibid.*

The consequences were there to follow and according to EBRD 2011 *Life in Transition Survey,* 92% of Georgian citizens are satisfied with the quality of official document issuance and Georgia holds respective first place among surveyed countries.

Though the results of the reforms were quite impressive, it was felt that there was a room for further improvement:

A. Public Service Hall - Hub of Public Services

In 2011, the Ministry of Justice started to implement a new concept of Public Service Hall (www.house.gov.ge), which is based on the idea of "everything in one space": though new and reformed agencies were operating under one-stop shop principle, there were still several of them. Several one-stop shops actually meant many stops and a wasted time for an individual. From now on there will be only one stop: the Public Service Hall.

Architects of this model heavily utilised various business approaches that are essential to ensure fast, efficient and comfortable service delivery. 215 individual service attributes and procedures were analysed, described in detail, upgraded and interconnected where possible.

Georgian Government believes that – as a matter of principle - public service should not be different from the private service and should equally focus on the easiness, speed and quality. Public Service Hall will allow individuals (both Georgian nationals and foreigners) to receive any service from the state under the single roof: including personal documents (ID, birth certificate and passport), business or property registration, notary services, enforcement of court judgments. Driver's license, vehicle registration and the services from the municipality and Georgian Revenue Service will also be available at Public Service Halls.

Two new ideas that are currently being elaborated, serve as interesting illustrations of the government's attitude towards simplicity in public service delivery: these are the projects of *Just Drive* and *Just Café*. From September 2012 the clients of Tbilisi Public Service Hall

will be able to receive a document or service without leaving their car or while helping themselves with refreshments in the café.

Timeline: **Currently Public Service Halls are operating in four cities. Eight more will be opened in 2012 (including the capital) and the remaining four will follow by 2013. In total this makes 16 Public Service Halls covering all major cities in the country.**
*Responsible Agency***:** Ministry of Justice

B. E-Governance in Local Governments

It's believed, that Georgian Citizens should have access to innovative public services not only on central level or in the big cities but even small rural areas, therefore the Government of Georgia takes following commitments:

a) **Georgia's municipalities will gradually be integrated into the e-governance system. Municipal institutions will improve their management and services by optimized and simplified procedures. Besides, they will be provided with all necessary information via direct access to various databases;**

b) **Village Development Centres (VDC) will be built in remote villages with relatively big population. This is a totally innovative concept bringing a large number of services locally to the rural population. Specifically, VDCs will offer all services of Local Government, top services of Central Government and many critical services that are provided by the private sector.**

Timeline: **Implementation started in 2012 and will continue throughout next two years.**
*Responsible Agency***: Civil Registry Agency**

C. Citizens' Portal

Public service will also be available online. Citizens will be able to use their electronic ID Cards to access <u>citizenportal.ge</u>, where individuals will have their own e-space that they can manage online and receive services.
Timeline: **Portal will start functioning by 2013.**
*Responsible Agency***: Data Exchange Agency**

2. Easily Accessible and Better Healthcare

The Georgian Government is working on the overhaul of the entire healthcare system and the complete refurbishment of its infrastructure.

Instead of existing state-owned 600 hospitals that are mainly dysfunctional, 150 new and well-equipped hospitals will be built by 2014, which will fully correspond to international standards.

Unified online healthcare database is being created: http://ehealth.moh.gov.ge that will provide individuals with exhaustive information about available services in various healthcare institutions.

Timeline: Implementation is ongoing and will continue throughout next two years.
Responsible Agency: Ministry of Health

3. Be informed and advance your country

This part of the Georgian Action Plan owes most ideas entrenched in it to non-governmental organisations. Georgian government is open towards cooperation with the civil society and citizen engagement in decision-making. Our freedom of information legislation is very liberal and sets the high standard for the accountability of administrative agencies. The law allows for the maximum time limit of ten days for providing an individual with the requested public information - which is one of the shortest time frames in the world for the obligation to deliver public information. [4]

Georgia scored second after New Zealand in a global survey analyzing public access to government information, out-ranking almost all developed states. In a study conducted by the *Center for Law and Democracy*, Georgian government officials were positive, compliant, and thorough when responding to the Center's requests for budgetary information. [5]

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[4] General Administrative Code of Georgia.
[5] http://www.law-democracy.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/6QC-Report-Publication-version-September-2011.pdf

Georgia will create breakthrough possibilities for the public participation in legislative, executive and judiciary branches of the government by creating new platforms for direct citizen engagement.

A. Ichange.ge

A well-informed citizen is one of the major forces behind the development of a state. Therefore, it is planned to publish information of high public interest pro-actively on the web-site of each administrative agency.

A unified public information database will be created: data.gov.ge, where citizens can easily access public information which is sorted under thematic sections. The same web-site will allow visitors to request public information online. The rationale behind this project is to simplify the task of locating information among numerous entities for individuals. Everything will be available on the same web-site.

It is highly expected that the information that will be available online will boost further discussions and help to identify the need for introducing changes wherever necessary. For this reason the government will launch ichange.ge   - a platform where citizens will be able to express their opinions, criticism or ideas. A project team will work on this web-site to tackle the most discussed topics, identify major concerns and inform responsible authorities.

Ichange.ge will also give the possibility to create and submit e-petitions. When an e-petition reaches a certain number of signatories (depending on the scale of the issue under question) authorities will be under the obligation to react.

Timeline: Proactive disclosure will be started in 2012 by several agencies and will cover all of them by 2014. Data.gov.ge and ichange.ge will be launched in 2013.
Responsible Agency: Ministry of Justice

B. Platform for participating in legislative process

A direct dialogue between legislators and an individual will be enhanced: the web-site of the Legislative Herald (www.matsne.gov.ge) will have a special module allowing everyone to comment on any article of draft or enacted laws and bylaws and provide their opinions. Understanding laws will become easier as it is planned to link landmark court judgments to the respective articles within the legislative acts on the mentioned website.

A team of legislation drafters in the Ministry of Justice will closely monitor the developments, will identify most discussed legal issues raising concerns and if needed, will prepare legal drafts for the parliament.

Timeline: Will be implemented in 2012.
Responsible Agency: Legislative Herald

C. Citizens and Justice

In 2011, Georgian citizens were granted with a much-needed opportunity to take part in the administration of justice through fulfilment of their jury duties. Currently jury trials are being conducted solely in the capital and covering only one type of a crime. Georgia plans to expand jury trials both geographically and according to the scope of their application.

Timeline: Implementation is ongoing and will continue throughout next two years.
Responsible Agency: Ministry of Justice, Supreme Court.

D. Transparent Party Financing

In 2011 Georgia adopted completely new framework for political party financing that was endorsed by the Venice Commission.[6] The new framework allows citizens to observe where the finances of political parties come from.

The System will ensure transparency of party financing. Financial declarations of political parties and the information about contributors will be open to public.

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[6] http://www.venice.coe.int/site/dynamics/N_Country_ef.asp?C=40&L=E

Timeline: Implementation will be started in 2012 and will continue throughout next two years.
Responsible Agency: Chamber of Audit.

4. <u>Innovation for efficient spending</u>

A. Home-grown concept of e-procurement

Before 2003 public procurement was the safe haven of corrupt agreements in Georgia. This system was abandoned and a new platform for public procurement was introduced: www.procurement.gov.ge.   Public procurement can be conducted exclusively online. There is zero possibility of corruption as the bidding process is being carried out online on the web-site and any interested party can follow it. The competitiveness is fully guaranteed.

In order to maximise transparency, a Dispute Resolution Board was created with civil society being equally represented together with public officials.

This innovative approach gave the State the possibility to save 202 million GEL of public money that amounts to 14% of the procurement budget.

It is planned to further fine-tune the system and find new ways of balancing criteria of price and quality and improve the analytical module of the system.

The Georgian Government uses an online platform and online bidding for auctions as well: www.eauction.ge. The principles are the same: full transparency, accessibility and equal competition. It is envisaged to make the e-auction system more user-friendly.

Timeline: Implementation is on-going and will continue throughout next two years.
Responsible Agency: Competition and State Procurement Agency

B. E-declarations

Civil servants are under the obligation to submit their financial declarations on the web-site www.declaration.ge where they are available to the public. The Georgian Government will improve the existing system and introduce new monitoring mechanism.

Timeline: Implementation is on-going and will continue throughout next two years.

Responsible Agency: Civil Service Bureau

5. <u>Technology cares for safety: ICCMS, Crime Mapping and *Safety in Your Neighbourhood*</u>

Safety of the citizens is one of the top priorities for Georgia. Considerable work was done in this direction. According to 2011 EU Crime and Security Survey, 70% of Georgian citizens feel safe and 95% are not worried about crimes.

In 2011, a dedicated team developed an Integrated Criminal Case Management System – ICCMS, which made criminal procedure paper-free. Investigation and prosecution stages are integrated into an electronic case management system. Pieces of evidence are also electronic. The e-statistics of crimes will be built on the basis of ICCMS, ensuring that the data is fully concise and comprehensive. Significant efforts must be undertaken to improve the system. Introducing Business Intelligence solutions for better analysis of the rich statistical and criminological database is among the identified goals.

Georgia will set up the system for crime mapping, which gives the police an efficient tool to monitor the geographic distribution of crimes and undertake tailored preventive measures targeting specific areas.

The Government aims at implementing the "Safety in Your Neighbourhood" project. Individuals will be able to communicate with their local prosecutors' offices online and inform them about general or specific problems in their neighbourhood.

Timeline: Implementation of the ICCMS is on-going and will continue throughout next two years. Implementation of crime mapping project and "Safety in Your Neighbourhood" will be started in 2012.

Responsible Agency: Ministries of Justice and Internal Affairs, Supreme Court.

1. **NGO Forum**

As it was mentioned above, the Georgian Government gives utmost importance and attention to the cooperation with the civil society. Leading national and international NGOs are members of Inter-Agency Coordination Council on Anti-Corruption and Good Governance. Additionally, within the framework of the OGP initiative, the Government will work closely with the non-governmental organisations: NGO Forum will be created to support and monitor the implementation of Georgia's commitments delivered in this Action Plan.

Timeline: Meetings of NGO Forum members will be held once in a month.
Responsible Agency: Analytical Department of the Ministry of Justice.