

SUPPORT TO DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE IN IMERETI REGION OF GEORGIA

UNDP Proposal 00012708
UNDP Project: 00012708
UNDP Sector: Governance
Duration: 2002 - 2007

Background:

Modernization of regional system of public administration through ensuring decentralization of power and transparency of governance is a cornerstone of sustainable democracy in Georgia. Imereti Region is the largest region of Georgia (comprising about 16% of the country's population up to 800,000). It was one of the main industrial regions of Georgia and has one of the highest unemployment rates due to the difficulties of the transition period. At the same time, the administration of the region has shown initiative in promoting modern management and administrative techniques. Besides, the project has support from the central authorities. The project is viewed as a pilot project to promote democratic governance at the regional level and may be replicated in other regions of Georgia and possibly other countries of South Caucasus.

Objective:

The overall goal of the project is to increase the capacity of regional and local administrations to exercise accountable and efficient public management in Imereti region. This is being achieved through improvement of internal management practices at regional and local levels ensuring the transparency of decision-making and better public accountability. The project can serve for Georgian Government and any donor organization as a pilot in the sphere of regional and local communities' development and decentralization. In the project implementation process the deployment of new information governance systems was used as a tool to improve overall governance policies and practices in the region through vertically integrated management systems. Development of appropriate competencies and skills among senior political and mid-level administrative staff has been and remains part of the project strategy.

The problems in Imereti were mainly related to the lack of delimitation and delegation of powers between the central and regional governments, the strategy and policy elaboration, planning, decision-making, coordination, control, personnel management, document movement, information support, and information and communication technologies. The problems identified emphasized the importance of democratization and transparency of regional governance, development of civil society and public relations.

Project Implementation phases:

During the first phase of the project, Kutaisi Mayor's office and city council were connected to Imereti Regional Administration via a first ever local area network (IRA-LAN). As a result, the Governor's Office, Regional Administration, Kutaisi Mayor's Office, Kutaisi Municipality and Council, and two dozens State Agencies were technically modernized and acquired the Regional Administration's Management Information System (INMIS), with over 200 properly equipped working places. In addition, a special municipal area network was developed for the regional centre Kutaisi. All that included the provision of modern computers, office and media technologies, special programmes and applications, 24 hour internet service, etc. The official web-site of Imereti Regional Administration www.imereti.ge was designed and operationalized. The deployment of modern technologies and related management applications helped change the structure of the regional administration, transform functions and provide new services. Hundreds of public servants went through training at specialized teaching courses, including in ICT literacy, with 70 receive special Certificates that are recognized by other employers.

The project second phase helped create an inter-agency network (Kutaisi State MAN) comprising 20 state institutions (branches of central government) such as Public Defender's Office, Chancellery of the Government, local branch of the Parliament located in Kutaisi and connect them to the LAN of Imereti Regional Administration. The local network of these organizations were designed and equipped with computer and office technologies, specialized programmes and 24 hour internet service necessary for their work. Training sessions and training materials were developed and delivered. The first Regional Training and Consulting Centre in the country was established and fully equipped. Tens of training courses for hundreds of public servants, seminars, and workshops organized and delivered in its premises; 11 issues of special guides and handbooks have been issued for public servants on various topics; the two handbooks on the Internet in Georgian were first of this kind in Georgia. The Regional Training and Consulting Centre strongly contributed to local human resources development.

The third phase was focused on the creation of Imereti regional informational network (Imereti WAN) to connect Regional Administration Management Information System and Kutaisi inter-agency network with 11 district councils coupled with the construction of the district administration LANs, including the introduction for the first time ever connectivity to the internet at this level. Additionally, connectivity was established with Tbilisi-based central government agencies uniting them all together.

The fourth phase led to the establishment of informational-consulting centres or *e-Clubs* in 11 pilot communities (rural villages, locations of local councils). They were equipped with computer and office technologies, furniture, and satellite internet service. The inhabitants of nearby villages (children and youth, farmers and peasants, housewives and the old, invalids and other social

groups) were given for the first time an opportunity to communicate with outside world, get and share information in such important for local life areas as veterinary, agriculture, medicine. Those 11 e-clubs that are operational in Imereti region are the pilot ones to test approaches and find workable solutions. The available pilots have worked well, thanks to (a) an emphasis on integrating e-clubs into wider information governance systems vertically and horizontally aligned, (b) investment into managers competencies and knowledge, (c) strong client and service orientation to meet local needs, (d) promotion of networking and mutual support culture among e-clubs, and (e) strong support from regional and local authorities. Also, Imereti regional informational network was connected to other important state institutions in Tbilisi – Parliament, Supreme and Constitutional Courts, National Bank, Central Election Commission.

The project activities include the following:

- Enhancing the capacity of regional and district administration for decentralized governance
- Developing better planning and implementation practices by ensuring transparency;
- Improving day-to-day implementation by providing advanced analytical tools;
- Providing government institutions with tools both in terms of transfer of technology and transfer of knowledge in order to improve accountability and transparency.

Expected results:

- Increased capacity of regional and local administration for decentralized governance;
- More efficient and accountable public administration in the region;
- Improved implementation of policy through increased knowledge of public officials;
- Improved coordination of efforts throughout the region through provision of up-to-date technical tools.