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Supporting the Parliament of Georgia in Implementation of the Open Parliament Georgia Action Plan

Final Report

(December 28, 2016 – May 16, 2016)

INSTITUTE FOR DEVELOPMENT OF
FREEDOM OF INFORMATION



Project Name: Supporting the Parliament of Georgia in Implementation of the Open Parliament Georgia Action Plan

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Implemented by: Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI)

Partner Organization: Parliament of Georgia

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Introduction

After the Bureau of the Parliament of Georgia adopted the Open Parliament Georgia Action Plan (2015-2016) on July 17, the Inter-Factional Group and the Civil Society Working Group started the implementation process of the action plan. Parliament of Georgia implemented its first commitment in December, 2015 and by amending the Parliament's Rules of Procedure set the necessary legal grounds creating the Permanent Parliamentary Council on Open and Transparent Governance. The aim of this project was to enhance parliamentary openness and citizen engagement in the legislative activities of the Parliament of Georgia, to facilitate the effective functioning of the Permanent Parliamentary Council on Open and Transparent Governance and to support the Parliament of Georgia in implementing the selected commitments under the Open Parliament Georgia Action Plan.

Project Objectives

Objective #1: Facilitate the effective functioning of the Permanent Parliamentary Council on Open and Transparent Governance.

- Draft the Strategy and Action Plan of the Council
- Support the Council in Creating Working Groups
- Facilitate the Implementation of the Open Parliament Georgia Action Plan
- Presentation of Interim Results

Objective #2: Support the Parliament of Georgia in implementation of the selected commitments under the Open Parliament Georgia Action Plan.



Overview of Project Activities

Throughout the project performance period the project team carried out activities specifically complying with the objectives of the Project and supporting the Parliament of Georgia in the implementation of the Open Parliament Georgia Action Plan. Highlights included: formation of the Parliamentary Council on Open and Transparent Governance, adoption of the Charter of the Parliamentary Council, creation of small Working Groups (WGs) within the Council, acceptance of concepts of selected commitments by the Parliamentary Council, elaboration of amendments to the Parliamentary Rules of Procedure and endorsement of the Open Government Partnership (OGP) Joint Declaration on Implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the Parliament of Georgia.

Specific Activities

Objective #1: Facilitate the effective functioning of the Permanent Parliamentary Council on Open and Transparent Governance.

- ➔ The Permanent Parliamentary Council on Open and Transparent Governance was formed as a result of strong advocacy by the project team. The commitment to form the Council was an initiative of IDFI and aimed to support the sustainability of the involvement of the Parliament of Georgia in OGP. Furthermore, the Parliamentary Council became an effective instrument in coordinating and monitoring the implementation of the commitments of the Open Parliament Georgia Action Plan.
- ➔ The first meeting of the Parliamentary Council was held on February 12, 2016. The meeting was headed by the Chairperson of the Parliament of Georgia. The Council Charter was adopted during the meeting. Members of the Consultative Group of the Parliamentary Council were determined by the protocol of the first meeting. According to the Charter of the Parliamentary Council, the Consultative Group is composed of CSOs and International Organizations.
- ➔ The Action Plan and Strategy of the Council was drafted. The most important part of the Strategy was the appointment of the Council Secretary in the beginning of May, 2016. According to the Council Charter, an authorized person from the Cabinet of the Chairperson of the Parliament of Georgia shall perform the functions of the Council Secretary.
- ➔ Three Working Groups were created: WG on Legislative Amendments, WG on Technological Changes and WG on the Code of Ethics. Each Group had coordinators from the Parliament of Georgia and Civil Society. WGs were responsible for performing relevant tasks assigned by the Council.



- The first separate meeting of the Consultative Group was held on February 23. The Consultative Group discussed possible ways for supporting the Parliamentary Council in implementation of the Open Parliament Georgia Action Plan. During the meeting, IDFI was selected as Chair organization to represent the Consultative Group at the Parliament.
- On February 24-26 a conference was held in Slovakia titled - Open Parliaments, Engaged Citizens. The conference was attended by Giorgi Kldiashvili, Director of the Chair organization of the Consultative Group (IDFI) and MP Guguli Maghradze, Chairperson of the Permanent Parliamentary Council on Open and Transparent Governance. They presented Georgian experience regarding legislative openness and progress achieved within the framework of Georgia's engagement in the Open Government Partnership (OGP).
- Giorgi Kldiashvili took part (via Skype) in the 2016 Global Partners Forum: Social Accountability for Development Impact, where he spoke about the commitments of the Open Parliament Georgia Action Plan and the steps that the Parliament of Georgia took to increase parliamentary openness.
- Director of IDFI, Giorgi Kldiashvili, also took part in an annual meeting of the Board of Governors of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) that was held on May 2-5 in Frankfurt (Germany). Giorgi Kldiashvili was invited to participate in the panel: Space for Civic Society Engagement in Implementation of Sustainable Development Goals: will it Shrink or Expand? Speaking about the Georgian experience, he emphasized that in order to support the implementation of Agenda 2030 governments and civil society need a common platform where they can share ideas and support the implementation of the Agenda 2030. He also stated that in addition to governments the NGO sector should also endorse the OGP Joint Declaration on Open Government for the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda; "this will be an illustration that NGOs, together with governments, share the same belief and support the implementation of sustainable development goals."
- The project team communicated actively with the Open Government Partnership to support the Parliamentary Council. For example, the project team prepared 3 official letters for the Chairperson of the Parliamentary Council that were sent to the Legislative Openness Working Group and to the Support Unit of the OGP. Furthermore, the project team prepared a letter for the Chairperson of the Council to endorse the OGP Joint Declaration on UN Sustainable Development Goals.
- The Parliament of Georgia through the Parliamentary Council endorsed the Joint Declaration of OGP on Implementation of SDGs. Currently, the Parliament of Georgia is the only legislative branch among the OGP member countries which has endorsed this declaration. The project team has translated the Open Government Guide Special Edition: Implementing the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda from English to Georgian, which analyzes the experience of OGP countries regarding the SDGs.



Objective #2: Support the Parliament of Georgia in implementation of the selected commitments under the Open Parliament Georgia Action Plan.

- Three joint meetings of the Permanent Parliamentary Council and the Consultative Group, among them 2 workshops, were held during the Project Period.
- In addition, the Parliamentary Council held 1 separate meeting (first meeting), and the Consultative Group conducted 2 separate meetings.
- Concepts of selected commitments presented by the Project Group were adopted by the Parliamentary Council. These were: Commitment 1.1. - Allowing Comments on Draft Legislation (electronically and/or in writing); Commitment 1.2. - Submitting Legislative Proposals and Initiatives Electronically to the Parliament of Georgia and Implementing its Support Mechanism through the Official Website of the Parliament of Georgia; Commitment 2.1. - Easing Access to the Parliamentary Information for Persons with Disabilities; Commitment 3.1. - Posing Documents of the Website of the Parliament of Georgia in an Editable Format.
- Amendments to the Parliamentary Rules of Procedure were elaborated and sent to the Parliament of Georgia. These amendments will provide the necessary legal ground for further implementation of commitments of the Open Parliament Georgia Action Plan.
- Based on the monitoring of the Parliament website, the project team developed recommendations in accordance with the commitments of the Open Parliament Georgia Action Plan. The monitoring results assess the Parliament's compliance with the obligations set by the Parliament Chairman's Decree on Approving the Rule of Proactive Disclosure of Public Information and Standards for Requesting Public Information.
- During the project period 28 blogs were published on <https://ogpblog.wordpress.com/> regarding OGP updates, issues related to parliamentary openness, and meetings and workshops of the Parliamentary Council and the Consultative Group.

Summary

The Project - Supporting the Parliament of Georgia in Implementation of the Open Parliament Georgia Action Plan is one of the most consequential projects of IDFI. During a period of 4 months the Project team managed to set up the bases for effective functioning of the Permanent Parliamentary Council on Open and Transparent Governance. Furthermore, the Parliamentary Council moved ahead in the implementation process of the Open Parliament Georgia Action Plan and adopted concepts of selected commitments prepared by the Project Team. The Consultative Group and the Parliamentary Council also elaborated a draft version of amendments to the Parliamentary Rules of Procedure.



After the amendments of the Parliamentary Rules of Procedure will be adopted by the Parliament of Georgia, the Parliamentary Council together with the Consultative Group can coordinate the creation of electronic platforms envisioned by the Open Parliament Georgia Action Plan, which will be necessary for the implementation of the next phase of the selected commitments.

Project Director

Giorgi Kldiashvili

