

The Conceptual Framework of the Participation

In the preparation of the Poverty Reduction and Economic Growth Program in Georgia

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I. General Statements

1 Definition of the participation

The participation is a joint work of different interested parties with the same purpose. The interested parties in general can be government structures and civil society.

The participation can be considered as a virtual space: the real activities take place in different time and space dimensions. The series of meetings, debates, editorial work is not one physical process. Therefore the participation is a conglomerate of separate physical activities spread in time and space which has to lead to the concrete, tangible result: the improved program with civil society's ownership.

The virtual nature of participation requires specific order of organizing and communication considering the diversity and number of participants and activities.

1.1 Types of the participation

The typology proposed by the Social Development Department of the World Bank can be used to describe different levels of participation:

Low Level Participation	1. Information sharing	One way communication
	2. Consultations	Two way communication
High Level Participation	3. Collaboration	Shared control over decisions and resources
	4. Empowerment	Transfer of control over decisions and resources

1.2 The scope of participation in PREGP

In general, the poverty reduction strategy includes several phases and sub-phases [¹]:

1. Formulation
 - 1.1. Preparation: Analytical and/or diagnostic work

- 1.2. Formulation of poverty reduction strategies
- 1.3. Approval of poverty reduction strategies
2. Implementation
3. Impact assessment or evaluation

The scope of participation presented in the paper covers only the first phase, specifically the preparation and the formulation sub-phases.

1.3 Participation and Communication strategy

Conceptually the participation as defined above is a segment of the broader communication strategy under the implementation in Georgia.

Schematically relationship between the participation and the communication is as follows:

	COMMUNICATION	PARTICIPATION
PURPOSE	Increase general <u>public</u> awareness about and interest in the poverty reduction and economic growth program in Georgia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Improve the program through effective contributions of, and o Increase the ownership of the program by the <u>active part of civil society</u>
STAKEHOLDERS /TARGET GROUP	Entire population, specifically poor	Organized active part of civil society, such as NGOs, local elected governments, research & scientific groups, businesses
MESSAGE /INFORMATION	Adapted, short message, easy to disseminate and get feedback	Full technical document
APPROACH /ACTIVITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mass media campaigns Brochures/leaflets Public meetings in regions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exchange of technical information Working meetings, debates, technical workshops

The participation, as a more technical process, supplements and embeds in the general communication campaign enabling certain groups of civil society to contribute to the improvement of the PREGP document in the preparation phase.

At operational level the participation component supports the communication strategy in the preparation of regional meetings through:

- the broader representation of civil society
- the initiation of a dialogue between the civil society representatives and the government/secretariat

- the provision of opportunities and means to contribute to the preparation process remotely

2 Main principles

The participation of the civil society along with the government agencies in the preparation of the Poverty Reduction and Economic Growth Program in Georgia (hereinafter referred to as “Program”) has to be based on the following principles:

- Accountability
- Equality
- Being Organized
- Transparency
- Productivity

2.1 Accountability

Participant’s rights increase as the participation moves up to higher levels. Responsibilities increase as well along with rights.

Definition of, agreement on and following the accountability principles means the participation to run as a team work.

Accountability during the preparation phase entails high qualification of comments and suggestions, compliance with the participation rules such as responding timely and in due form, respect of the working and relationship ethical norms.

Responsibilities of the participants are described in details below (see section I. 3 on page 6).

2.2 Equality

All participants have equal rights and opportunities to:

- Provide comments and suggestions

- Receive justified response on the comments and suggestion

2.3 Being organized

The participation needs coherent and mutually accepted contributions of different actors considering the complexity of the process and the requirement of being constructive.

The participation can't be productive without being properly organized. Being organized means to define, agree and follow the participation format.

The participation format includes (but not limited to):

- Submission of written comments and suggestions in specific form and time frame
- The form of responding on suggestions and comments (duration of the review, response procedure, terms for remote and face-to-face discussions, etc.)
- The forms of communication/information sharing between actors

It can be desirable to make memorandum between main actors and the government in order to assure that the participation format is understood, accepted and respected.

2.4 Transparency

Constructive participation is impossible without trust. Openness, transparency is needed the trust to exist.

The participation and the entire process of preparation should be transparent and open. For example, any participant should be able to learn what was the rational behind any decision (rejection or acceptance of alternatives).

2.5 Productivity

The participation is not an end itself. External aspects (quantitative) of the participation are not important but its fruitfulness (internal aspects).

The productivity can be defined as demonstrating two major results:

1. Improved PREGP document:
 - 1.1. The program is useful
 - 1.2. The program is alive
2. The national ownership of the program increased

3 Participants

3.1 Governmental sector

The preparation is the government's (executive branch) task. The government bears political responsibility for the development and implementation of PREGP.

At the same time, the government, particularly the secretariat and sectoral sub-committees are charge of technical soundness of the document.

The sectoral subcommittees actually write (or should write) the document. Therefore, the review of and responding on the specific suggestions and comments (on sectoral issues) is their competence.

The secretariat of the governmental committee is responsible:

1. To assure:
 - 1.1. The coordination of efforts of sub-committees
 - 1.2. The standard requirements to the program (document) are met
2. To promote the participation in the preparation of PREGP

The legislative branch of the government – elected governing bodies, especially at the district level are considered as a part of the civil society in the context of the preparation of PREGP and not as a part of the government.

It is noteworthy, that according to the Presidents Decree #678 (July 1, 2001) participation of the Parliament members (namely of the Chairmen of Parliament Commissions) in the working process of the Sub-Commissions is clearly defined. As to the representatives of lower level of elected governance bodies, their involvement is not mentioned by the President's Decree #678.

3.2 Non-governmental sector

Any member of civil society can be involved in the preparation of PREGP. In the current context of participation only organized members of civil society are discussed, so called civil society organizations (CSOs).

For simplicity, CSOs who can participate in PREGP can be grouped in the following way:

1. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) sub-divided:
 - 1.1. by profile/scale of activities
 - 1.2. by representation
2. Scientific and academic groups
3. Business sector
4. Trade unions
5. Elective governing bodies:
 - 5.1. The Parliament
 - 5.2. Local self-governing bodies (“sakrebulo”)
6. Religious organizations
 - 6.1. Georgian Orthodox Christian Church
 - 6.2. Other religious organizations

From practical standpoint, it is more important to divide CSOs by the mode of activity in respect to the involvement in the preparation of PREGP:

- Active organizations – capable of and demonstrate self-initiatives
- Passive – capable of participation (having potential and willingness), but are not involved at this stage
- Indifferent – have neither interest/willingness nor potential

The participation principles propose different approaches for active and passive organizations. Indifferent organizations are excluded itself.

Almost all types of CSOs listed above are suitable for the 2nd level of participation: consultations. The higher level of the participation – collaboration is possible to be achieved with only active actors having appropriate capacity (resources and/or qualification).

II. Measures promoting the participation

Measures promoting the participation can be grouped as follows:

- Assuring proper arrangements
- Providing access to participation
- Providing appropriate communications

1 Organization of the participation

There are two approaches (supplemental, not mutually exclusive) to organize CSOs' participation:

1. Engagement of CSOs in the RPEGP preparation
2. Introduction of the optimal format of participation

The first approach is designed solely for passive organizations, or actually for non-active organizations: after the attempt to involve non-active CSOs (as described below in section 1.1).

1.1 Involvement of non-governmental structures in the participation

To involve CSOs in the preparation process the actors should be activated through direct contact/invitation and provision access to and means of participation.

The list of necessary activities is given below.

1.1.1 The catalogue of non-governmental organizations

- 1) The catalogue of existing and operating NGOs is created using existing databases (for example databases owned by "Horizonti" Foundation, Open Society - Georgia Foundation, ITIC) as sources.
- 2) The primary selection of NGOs is done based on the criteria of activity level and capacity.

- 3) The special package including a letter of invitation and a questionnaire is developed and sent to each selected organizations (via e-mail and/or ordinary mail). Estimated number of addressees is 600.
- 4) The responses are received via e-mail or ordinary mail. The data will be processed and the willingness to and capacity for participation of different organizations will be assessed. Estimated response rate: 20-25%
- 5) The organizations expressing readiness to participate will be encouraged to joint network/coalition of CSOs by the place of operation or by the profile.

1.1.2 Access to the participation

- 6) It is very important to provide to CSOs an access to the latest version of the program – the discussion materials. Therefore, any interested CSOs should be aware where and how to get the document.
- 7) Because of the scarcity of hard copies of the document publishing of the paper on the internet can be more convenient in terms of access (for majority of CSOs in the capital and regional centers)¹
- 8) The discussion materials can become available in the regional and district centers through the network of public libraries
- 9) Besides of the discussion materials the instructions on participation format (conceptual framework) should be accessible for CSOs (either via internet or upon request by ordinary mail)

1.1.3 The participation of elected governance bodies

The participation of the Parliament was defined from the beginning (as defined in section I. 3.1 on page 6): the Chairmen of different Parliamentary Commissions were nominated as members of the Governmental Sub-Committees.

In distinction from other representatives of civil society the Parliament has legitimacy to require hearing of entire PREGP or its specific sections in the

¹ Published already (<http://www.curatio.com/pregp>)

Parliamentary Commissions. However judgment about how the Parliament uses its power and if the Parliament demonstrates an interest in the PREGP is beyond of the scope of the current document.

Regardless of the degree of interest or initiative expressed by the Parliament, their participation should fall in the common format prescribed to entire civil society.

As to the “sakrebulo” (elected governance body at district level), the involvement is of special importance in terms of regional coverage and is described in corresponding section (II. 2 on page 13).

1.2 Optimal format of the participation

The participation process can run in two forms:

1. Face-to-face: working meetings, debates, workshops, conferences
2. Remote (distance): exchange of comments and suggestions

The participation format is optimal if it enables participants to contribute effectively to the improvement of the PREGP. Basically, it is required that comments and suggestions between civil society actors and authors of the PREGP were exchanged in timely manner and in convenient form ensuring:

- smooth processing/review of comments and suggestions
- acceptance and incorporation into the document or justified rejection of comments suggestions after the due reflection

The working meetings and debates can run endlessly but without outcomes unless the face-to-face participation is not followed by the development and submission of written comments and suggestions to the Secretariat.

1.2.1 Exchange of comments and suggestions

The optimal format schematically can look as follows:

- 10) CSOs (after working meetings, debates or as a result of home work) prepare written comments and suggestion and submit them to the Secretariat (hard or soft copy) with standard application form (see III. Annex, Standard Application Form on page 17).

- 11) The Secretariat registers, filtrates and sorts submitted applications and redirects them to corresponding Governmental Sub-committees.
- 12) The Governmental Sub-committees (or subordinated working groups) are directly responsible for timely review of suggestions and comments and preparing written responses.
- 13) The Secretariat controls (monitors) the appropriateness of responses on submitted suggestions and comments.
- 14) In cases when the Sub-committees (or subordinated working groups) fail to fulfill their duties (timely response on comments and suggestions), than the Secretariat can facilitate face-to-face meeting of CSOs with the corresponding Sub-committee and make the appraisal of their performance public.
- 15) The authors of comments and suggestions receive responses within the defined time frame. The response should include:
 - 15.1. Which suggestion and comment was accepted and how will be incorporated in the document
 - 15.2. Which suggestion and comment was rejected and why (with justified arguments)
 - 15.3. The necessity in further elaboration/clarification of suggestions
 - 15.4. The necessity in arranging face-to-face working meeting with authors of suggestions and comments

1.2.2 Organization of face-to-face participation

Provisionally the face-to-face participation can be carried out in 3 forms:

- Working Meetings
- Debates
- Technical Workshops

These forms are not mutually exclusive and share common elements, but still have specific purpose and characteristics (in terms of content and process).

1.2.2.1 Working Meetings

The working meetings with CSOs can be initiated by any actor.

The working meetings are prepared in advance on ad hoc basis or can be a regular event (depending on the volume or complexity of an issue under consideration).

Any working meeting must serve either joint elaboration of comments and suggestions or deepening the discussion on already reviewed comments and suggestions (as described in review cycle 10)-15)).

1.2.2.2 Debates

In distinction from working meeting the debates can be called without relating them with previously elaborated and reviewed suggestions and comments.

The debates are proposed in order to have a public dialogue on fundamental issues when it is obvious that there is polarization of opinions among society members and especially among experts, and when building a consensus at least among experts is essential.

The debates should help the society and the government to elaborate policy recommendations in specific areas needing adjustment and/or improvement.

A consensus on concrete issue is the most desirable outcome of a debate. Debates are not required to be as productive as working meetings are supposed to be in terms of providing direct inputs to the document. From more idealistic point of view, successful debates should provide concrete recommendations to the government concerning changes in existing policy or formulation of new policies.

It is presumed that some issues (e.g. definition of poverty in Georgian context) require not a single meeting, but a whole series of debates scheduled in advance.

1.2.2.3 Technical workshops

Technical workshops are very specific form of face-to-face participation. The term “technical” refers to the necessity of using special techniques/instruments and involvement of corresponding experts/facilitators. Schematically they stand somewhere between working meetings and debates or represent their hybrid. In

terms of productivity the technical workshops resemble working meetings, but in terms of the degree of participation and nature of subjects under discussion they are closer to debates.

Technical workshops provide best opportunity to structure the PREGP using the commonly accepted tools such as log frames (logical matrixes).

The development of logical matrixes requires active participation of key stakeholders – log frame specialists assist the participants during the interactive process in:

- Identification and correct formulation of problems
- Definition of and agreement on cause-result relationships
- Clarification of and building a hierarchy of objectives (in accordance with problems and cause-result relationships between those problems)
- Definition of and agreement on process monitoring and impact measurement indicators and targets
- Recognition and assertion of major risks and assumptions

The participation of CSOs with appropriate capacity (expertise and experience in development of complex programs as well as in development and implementation of sectoral projects) is preferable. The technical assistance is of crucial importance to conduct the workshop properly and to make it effective.

As usually, a technical workshop lasts 2 days and is preferable to be organized outside of the city.

2 Regional coverage

The involvement of regions in the preparation process is not important for the sake of increasing the scale of participation, but because it provides unique opportunity (along with other benefits) to reflect the regional peculiarities – their concerns, vision, expectations and capabilities. These aspects are more relevant to the part of the document where the plan of implementation is given and is mapped to geographical areas.

The regional coverage entails two sets of actions:

- Mobilization of CSOs in regions (using the scheme described in section 1.1 on page 8)
- Engagement of mobilized CSOs into the preparation of PREGP (using the scheme described in the section II. 1.2 on page 10)

It can be useful to identify so called “participation centers” in regions/districts on the basis of coalition of active NGOs, community based organizations (CBOs) and local governments (“sakrebulo”). Such centers will support the communication between the capital and periphery (at the governmental and non-governmental levels) and will enable more effective usage of scarce resources (human and technical).

The several local NGOs with nationwide network and specific mandate (e.g. Horizonti Foundation, having branches in most of regional centers and with a mission to increase the capacity of non-governmental sector) as well as current projects (e.g. The Georgia Community Mobilization Initiative implemented by MCI and CARE under USAID funding) provides good opportunity for mobilization and coordinated engagement of different groups of civil society in the preparation of the PREGP.

The participation process will also benefit from the cooperation with the communication strategy which provides an opportunity for starting dialogue between regional/district CSOs and the Governmental Sub-committees and secretariat (as mentioned above in the section I. 1.3 on page 3)

3 Communication

In the context of the current paper the communication means effective and organized system of exchange of working information (announcements, materials, suggestions & comments, etc) between actors.

It is preferable that the information designated to broad audience (e.g. announcement about or invitation to a working meeting or debate) to be concentrated and distributed in centralized manner upon the common agreement between stakeholders through:

- Mass media (TV, newspapers)
- Internet (web based forums/discussion, moderated mailing lists)

The provision of communication, at least on the basic level, is a primary responsibility of the Secretariat; however for full scale communication additional resources/assistance is required.

3.1 Internet

The main drawback of the internet is that it won't be equally accessible for all participants (in the center and on the periphery). However, the internet can be indispensable for:

- Quick and easy dissemination of materials
- Public discussions
- For ensuring transparency and accountability

From technology standpoint, the following is needed and/or is desirable:

- Web site – for publishing materials and on-line discussion/forum
- E-mail & Mailing Lists – for dissemination of announcements, or quick questions and answers

At the initial stage these approaches can be used without additional resources but additional resources/financing is necessary to use them fully.

3.2 Conventional forms of communication

The conventional forms of communication which can be used by the participants are:

- Ordinary mail (post service)
- Faxes
- Printed materials (brochures/newsletters)

The ordinary mail can be used to exchange suggestions and comments as well as to contact directly non-active CSOs in the mobilization phase.

As to a newsletter (electronic and hard copy), it can be very effective to disseminate the results of debates, e.g. policy recommendations among broader but targeted audience (political parties, research groups, etc.).

¹ Rosemary McGee with Andy Norton, “*Participation in Poverty Reductions Strategies: A Synthesis of Experience with Participatory Approaches to Policy Design, Implementation and Monitoring*”, IDS Working Paper 109, 2000

III. Annex

1 Standard Application Form

Sample

ORGANIZATION	
CONTACT PERSON:	
ADDRESS:	
TELEPHONE(S):	
FAX:	MOBILE: 8 (...) ...-...-...
E-MAIL:	
TYPE OF APPLICATION (p):	SUBJECT (p)
Comment	The document structure
Suggestion	General content
Question	Macro-economic policy
Other	Structural policy
	Social Policy
	Environment Policy
	Governance and Administration Reform
	Legislation
	Prioritization of Strategies
	Monitoring and Evaluation System
	Other
#1	
SIGNATURE: _____ DATE: .../.../...	