

Stories from the field



The capacity development approach, from theory to practice: The Kvemo Kartli experience



Strengthening regional and local governance in the Kvemo Kartli region United Nations Development Programme Georgia



In 2006, a new era of local governance was introduced in Georgia following substantial legislative changes and the introduction of a two-tiered system of governance. However, many challenges remained. There was no lead agency responsible for decentralization reforms, creating ambiguity around the roles and responsibilities of central and municipal levels of government. Secondary legislation to enable implementation and enforcement of the legal framework was incomplete, and government at the central level still had extensive informal control over local institutions.

As a result, the newly created municipal institutions grappled with their new functions and roles, further compounded by a lack of clear guidance and an incomplete structural framework. Strategic planning, budgeting, and coordination were not carried out with a long term vision in mind, and citizen participation in local governance processes was at a low. An

estimated 30 percent of all local government officials had previous experience with local governance but even with this experience, they were operating in a completely different environment as of October 2006. To ease the burden on municipalities during this critical transition, UNDP started to work with local partners in the Kvemo Kartli region of Georgia to come up with innovative solutions for their most pressing capacity needs. Staff working in all seven municipalities took part in focus group discussions and filled out a comprehensive questionnaire in order to identify capacity assets and needs. Baselines for functional capacities were established in order to measure progress, and the information was compiled in an institutional baseline mapping report.

Through consultations with local, regional, and central authorities, 35 capacity needs were grouped into four categories: human resources, strategic planning, external accountability and organizational arrangements. Based on this, a capacity development response strategy was developed, which describes the short, medium and long term responses, activities, responsible persons and as well as the cost of activities. National partners were supported to design their long term strategies, review functions of departments and design individual job descriptions. Training was organized where necessary for staff to ensure that they possessed the competencies mentioned in the job descriptions.

The local and regional administrations are starting to streamline systems and procedures on data management, communication, coordination and budgeting, with assistance from UNDP Georgia. New projects have been started to address some of the capacity needs mentioned in response strategy.

When it came time to start implementing activities, the reasoning behind the initial investment of three months allotted for dialogue and establishing relationships with national partners became clear to everyone involved. It allowed both municipal and regional partners, as well as UNDP Georgia, to learn the new approach, and to agree on what they wanted the end result to be. Partners felt responsible for the activities that they had defined in the response strategy, which came as a result of an assessment that they led, based on the initial dialogue, in which they advocated for development goals in their region. Involvement and interest increased noticeably once capacity needs, as well as responses to address them, were identified.

Regional and local administrations nominated focal points for smooth implementation of capacity development activities, supported by local coordination assistants recruited by the project who will be absorbed into the local administration.

Working groups were established to serve as an advisory committee on strategic planning and other capacity development initiatives after the project is closed. A statute of the executive formalized the working groups, and in addition to members from the local, regional and central administration, representatives from the private sector and civil society are also included. Relevant central ministries were involved from the beginning, in order to influence some of the existing policies and procedures at the national level.

Many of the activities laid out in the response strategy have already been included in the long-term strategic document of the municipal administration, which will be implemented using their own funding.

UNDP Georgia also realized that integrating the capacity development approach in the Country Programme, and not just at the project level, would help to ensure that development activities are structured and systematic.



Development priorities for the Kvemo Kartli region: improving roads, drinking water and electricity supplies and developing tourism

Useful links

Project page

http://undp.org.ge/new/index.php?lang_id=ENG&sec_id=40&pr_id=45

UNDP Georgia

Institutional Baseline Mapping Report (pdf)

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Capacity Development Practice

Bratislava Regional Centre RBEC

<http://europeandcis.undp.org/cd>