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LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN ARMENIA: REVIEW AND ANALYSIS OF FOUR-YEAR
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

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Abstract

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union Armenian local government has been passing a very long and hard path to become a strong public institution closest to the people, capable to provide quality services and address the needs of its constituents. In order to reach this benchmark Armenian local governments still need to improve the quality of their strategic planning, particularly four-year development programs, which are the consolidated plans for operation for the term of their office.

The study aims to explore whether the four-year development programs elaborated by the Chief of the community and approved by the newly elected Community Council address the pressing needs of the communities and whether the process of drafting, adopting, implementing the document includes public's participation. The study also tries to find out what portion of the projects incorporated in the development programs have been implemented since its approval for the sample of communities examined.

The study has found out that in many cases four-year development programs fail to incorporate some of the most pressing needs of the community that are within the competency of local government, people randomly participate in the design, preparation and realization of the projects and often times the projects remain on paper. Based on the findings and analysis, the paper ends with conclusion and a number of recommendations aimed at improving the drawbacks of community development programs.

Introduction

Any country needs development in different spheres: stable economic growth, competitive and healthy political life, interesting and active social life, caring, democratically elected, transparent and accountable government and active citizens. In order to ensure economic and social development any country needs efficient and good governance. Recent trends in democratic governance stress the necessity to decentralize power and bring it closer to the people. Therefore the increasing role of local government is evident. Particularly, in Armenia healthy and effective state government needs to be complemented with well-functioning and competent local government. Local governments in Armenia function in communities.

In the Republic of Armenia the Law on Local Self-government (2002) regulates the roles of local government bodies, including the mayor's and the council's responsibilities. The Law also regulates the relations between the State authorities and local self-government bodies. Local governments (Mayor and local council) are elected for four year term. One of the major documents that direct the activities of the local government is the four-year development program. This is the strategy of the local government for the term of office. The Chief of Community upon election elaborates four-year community development programs and submits for the approval of the newly elected Community Council. The development programs are of crucial importance as they express the needs of the community and based on them the annual budgets are elaborated (RA Law on Local Government, 2002).

The present study will try to explore how the four-year programs in select communities in Armenia are developed and implemented by analyzing and reviewing some of them through case studies.

Literature Review

Local government in Armenia is one-tier. It is the constitutionally guaranteed right and capacity of local government bodies acting at their own responsibility and as provided by the legislation, to manage the community's property and financial resources, and to resolve the issues of community importance with a view to improving the well-being of the population (RA Constitution).

To exercise people's power and achieve the community objectives local self-government bodies – Community Council, Chief of the Community – are elected in communities. A Community Council is a representative body. A Chief of a Community (equivalent to Mayor in English language literature) officially represents the community, is the executive body of the community (RA Constitution).

According to the RA Law on Local Self-Government (Chapter 6, Article 53, 2002), the Chief of Community shall elaborate a *community four-year development program*, which s/he shall submit for the approval of the newly elected Community Council within a period of three months after the latter has assumed its office. If the period of assuming the office by the newly elected Chief of the Community falls within the period of three months of assuming the office by the newly elected Community Council, then the newly elected Chief of the Community shall submit the four-year development program for the approval of the newly elected Community Council either within a period of three months after assuming the office by the Council or within a period of two months of his/her assuming the office. Community Council shall discuss the presented program, introduce amendments and approve it in its decision.

The four-year program is medium-term and is a constituent part of strategic planning. It is a document, which reflects all the feasible steps from the viewpoint of strategic planning in the result of brief analysis of the socio-economic conditions of the community and the

analysis and identification of the existing issues, financial, economic and human resources. The document assumes effective medium-term solutions to the problems of the community in accordance with the implementation of problem-oriented budgeting process. The basis of the four-year program is the evaluation and analysis of the socio-economic conditions of the community. The purpose here is to create a complete picture of local financial, material and labor resource evaluation, potential opportunities, the weaknesses and strengths of the community and based on it to define short-term and long-term strategic goals of the community (Tumanyan, 2010).

The four-year development program also necessarily includes the surrounding environment which affects the development of the community. The program should include the cost estimates for the projects meant to be implemented during four years. Actually the four-year programs serve as basis for developing annual budgets of the community. The program includes budget details for four years, and every year the annual budget is formed more precisely based on the prioritized projects (Tumanyan, 2010).

To sum it up, a good four-year development program should include the following:

- General analysis of the socio-economic conditions of the community
- Community strategy and the main goal of the program
- List of community projects including those to be funded from local and state budget
- Cost estimate for each individual project
- Formulation and prioritization of the sectoral problems and projects for implementation
- Basic indicators of the community development program implementation.

The creation of the development program is a very serious and responsible job which needs high precision and responsibility. Besides, a community based and citizens-oriented approach should be used when drafting the development program. The process of drafting the

program should be participatory for good governance. The community should involve citizens to know their needs and the problems they face and formulate these problems as a prioritization in the development programs. Communication with the citizens should also be underway, as without it participation cannot exist (Ghukasyan et. al, 2011).

Participation can be divided into several types: active versus passive, conventional versus unconventional, symbolic versus instrumental (Tumanyan and Shahbazyan, 2011). In the planning process of the community development program, active participation can include writing letters to the Community Council, Chief of the community, being a member of non-formal groups who will represent the problems of the citizens in the meetings with municipality or directly meeting local government officials in order to tell about their problems. Passive participation can include being aware of the development program purposes, attending meetings and/or informal discussions (Tumanyan and Shahbazyan, 2011).

A good example of the citizens-oriented and community based approach can be the Czech Republic. A few years ago a community approach in the planning of social services was introduced. It is based on finding consensus among the three main stakeholders: the providers of services, the users of services and the public authorities. Users are especially encouraged to participate in social services planning. New or existing social services are redesigned afterwards to meet their needs and wishes. Local governments are indirectly forced to start community planning. Social services mentioned in the community plan will have a priority in financing (Ghukasyan et. al, 2011).

Another important issue is the reviewing process of the development programs. These documents can be changed throughout the four years, as new urgent problems may occur. It is of utmost importance to discuss the new problems and to make amendments to the development program upon necessity.

Thus, in elaborating the annual budgets of the community, the Chief of Community should take into consideration the crucial needs of the community population, four-year community development program, as well as the resources available.

Besides, according to the Article 54 of the RA Law on Local Self-Government (2002), there should be an identified community budget, which is a financial plan of revenues (inflow) and expenditures for a period of one year targeted at implementation of the four-year program of the community and powers ascribed to a community by the legislation.

A community budget should be approved by the Community Council on a yearly basis. The Community Council shall introduce changes and amendments to the community budget at the initiative of the Chief of Community. The statement on execution of the community budget shall be approved by the Community Council. Supervision over the budget execution shall be carried out by the Community Council, who is entitled to check out any budget operation, efficiency and quality of the works done, as well as require reports on the expenditures performed (Article 68). An annual report on budget execution shall be submitted to the Council after the end of the budget year, together with the quarterly report of budget execution for the next year (Article 69).

These are the legal requirements for each community. However, in Armenia strategic planning in local governments, which is reflected in four-year development programs has a number of shortcomings and needs to be studied and improved. Evidence collected from number of studies (including studies made by a number of international organizations implementing local government support programs in Armenia) shows that these programs are quite often a mechanical repetition of the Mayor's election campaign program, not feasible and not backed by appropriate financial resources. As the baseline review of the USAID Armenia Local Government Program, Phase 3, implemented by RTI International, revealed the programs were "no more than a "wish list" and were not supported by a project feasibility

analysis or committed revenues for operational expenditures. In most instances, there was no public input” (USAID LGP 3, 2006).

Besides, these four-year programs quite often remain fictional documents, which do not have any implication for the community budgeting process. For instance, community development programs and budgeting for 2009 in some of the communities under study were not different from the previous years too, in terms of four-year community development programs continuing to remain fictitious documents, and the programs not playing virtually any role in compilation of municipal budgets, like before (CFOA, 2010).

Another important issue concerning local self-government is the budget process. The budget process provides for a set of steps, not all of which are respected or implemented while many are not implemented in a timely manner. Nevertheless, shortcomings in budgeting more frequently take place in securing publicity of the overall process. Chiefs of the communities are most of the time inclined to take decisions on their own hence are reluctant to inform even the members of community councils about their actions. In such circumstances it is difficult to imagine that population might be genuinely engaged in budget process (Tumanyan, 2011).

Although several attempts have been made by different NGOs and the government to develop the capacity of strategic planning with the local governments, it still needs to be developed. A lot of research should be done to discover the underlying causes for this kind of ignorance towards the importance of the well-functioning of the local self-government, particularly in communities.

To fulfill the purpose of the present paper the study will answer the following research questions:

RQ1: Are local governments' four-year development programs addressing the most pressing needs of their communities?

RQ2: Is the process of drafting and implementing the four-year local development program participatory?

RQ3: What portion of the projects incorporated in the local government four-year development programs in select communities has been implemented since its approval by the Community Council?

Methodology

This study concentrates on the process of development and implementation of community four-year development programs in Armenia. It also looks into, the way local governments engage public in the process of designing the programs, the way the community prioritizes its needs and incorporates them into the development program in the form of projects. Finally the study aimed at revealing what portion of projects incorporated in four-year development programs is accomplished since their approval by the community council.

For the purposes of this study the exploratory multiple case study approach was employed as a qualitative data. Ten communities of Armenia, both rural and urban, have been chosen randomly for separate case studies proportional to their population size. The universe from which the communities have been chosen is the pool of Counterpart International's (CPI) 43 target communities. The select communities are listed in Table 1.

Table 1. List of selected communities

	Population Size as of January 1, 2011¹	Marzes
URBAN		
Akhtala	2,399	Lori
Vayk	5,928	Vayots Dzor
Sevan	23,361	Gegharkunik
Kapan	45,459	Syunik
RURAL		
Gomk	263	Vayots Dzor
Debet	917	Lori
Getap	2,385	Vayots Dzor
Gandzakar	3,511	Tavush
Aragats	3,793	Aragatsotn
Nor Geghi	6,345	Kotayk

As a primary data, ten in-depth interviews have been conducted with staff responsible for finance, administration and/or mayors of the communities. The aim was to discover the participation level of the public in the development of the four-year development programs, the progress in the implementation of the named programs. Overall eight open-ended questions about the four-year community development programs have been asked to respond (See the questionnaire in Appendix 1).

In-depth reports of Local Government Institutional Capacity Assessment (2011) developed and conducted by Counterpart International have been used as a primary data. These assessments were conducted through individual interviews with community heads and deputy heads, round table discussions and self-administered knowledge test by Avagani (Community Council) members, document review and interviews with municipality staff responsible in financing, HR and administration, service delivery, legal matters and

¹ RA National Statistical Service data, www.armstat.am

PR/communications. The reports indicate specific strengths and weaknesses and offer tailored interventions for institutional development.

The results of the Baseline Assessment (2011) developed and conducted by Counterpart International have also been used. It included Baseline Public Opinion Survey of Households on Knowledge and Attitudes toward Local Governments (CPI, 2011) and Baseline Rapid Local Government Unit Assessment (CPI, 2011).

Findings and Analysis

Akhtala

Akhtala is a small town in Lori marz with 2,399 inhabitants in 2011. It is situated on the left bank of Debet River at a distance of 186 km north of Yerevan and 62 km north of provincial centre Vanadzor. Akhtala was a village until 1939 when it was granted the status of urban community. In 1995 Armenian Law on Territorial Administrative division reaffirmed the status of Akhtala as a city. The community has two secondary schools, a “house of culture” (community center), two libraries, a kindergarten, a sports ground, a hotel, a dispensary and a hospital. The town is home to the “Akhtala” Health Resort. Copper mining is the main specialized branch of the city.

Last local government elections in Akhtala were held in 2009. The Mayor is Haykaz Khachikyan and the community council consists of seven members. According to the requirements of the law on Local Self-government the town has an annual budget and four-year development program. According to the 2011 Baseline Rapid Local Government Unit Assessment by CPI, public hearings on draft budgets of the community are held whenever there is a need to make any change in the budget. Last public hearings on draft budget were organized in December 2010-January 2011. Public is informed through announcements that

are posted on the Town Hall's wall. Besides, the heads of budgetary institutions are informed in advance and then they inform their staff.

Last time the public participated in the Council deliberations of the four-year development program in January, 2009. Next time it is envisaged in January, 2013. There is a meeting room for the council and public/media in the Town hall which is used for monthly meetings between public, media and Community Council upon need. However, no details were provided of how public was informed.

Open-door receptions of citizens by Mayor are held only upon need. One of the successes is that it provides the opportunity to organize more frequent meetings and receptions between the Mayor and community residents thus deepening the interrelations of community and community residents. There are also open-door receptions by Community Council, held on last Wednesday of each month, from 12:00 to 14:00. This provides the opportunity to get acquainted with the work of local government bodies at the same time allowing the Community Council members to reveal citizen problems on the spot and to jointly find solutions.

The interviewed official claimed that local government encourages opinions on services. The impact is that people value their opinion and view themselves as participants of local governance processes. The success can be taking into account the valuable comments of community residents which sometimes positively influence the activities of local government. Citizens are included in committees like Committee on sport and youth issues, Administrative-penal committee, etc. In this way community residents are filled with confidence toward local government activities. Public involvement in local government's operations is increased. This mechanism is prescribed by the Law on Local Self-Government which ensures its sustainability. Citizens are continuously involved in solving such problems as those associated with preschool institutions, health sector, local government services, etc.

According to the Local Government Institutional Capacity Assessment reports (CPI, 2011) the city has a four-year development program for 2009-2012. It was developed by the staff and presented for Council approval by the Mayor, which is a shortcoming, because for the program to be effective it should have input from the public and thus should be based on community needs. However, as the survey showed, 88% of respondents didn't know whether the public participated in the creation of the program or not, and the other 12% answered no (See Appendix 2, Table 1). The document partially corresponds with the criteria for a good strategic program document. These criteria as mentioned in the literature review suggest that a four-year program is likely to have general analysis of the socio-economic conditions of the community, community strategy and the main goal of the program, cost estimate for each individual project, formulation and prioritization of the sectoral problems and etc.

Four-year program is the main guiding document of LG. One of the shortcomings of the program is that it misses any review and revision procedures. No changes have been made since its initial approval.

The four-year program of Akhtala has a short evaluation of the community condition with historical overview, demographics, assets, subordinate organizations. The weaknesses and strengths of the community are introduced, however, there are no implications about opportunities and threats of the community in terms of SWOT analysis. Problems are prioritized, however no timeline is provided for their solutions.

According to the in-depth interview with the lead financial specialist of Akhtala community, 5 out of the 10 projects and problems developed in the community development program have been implemented. Particularly, in 2009 street lights have been installed, in 2010 kindergarten number one has been renovated and a playground has been built. In 2011 kindergarten number two, apartment buildings' roofs have been renovated, and water pipelines have been installed. However, 50% of the plans have not been implemented due to

scarce financial resources. Half of those that remained unfulfilled are going to be implemented during 2012. One of these projects is the 24 hour water supply to the public. Nowadays it is provided only for six hours per day. Funding for implementing the project has been provided by the state budget, private charities, and NGO's like World Vision.

In preparing and formulating the four-year development program availability of finances was the main criterion for considering a problem as a priority. Besides, meetings have been held with the representatives of the community. For finding out the needs of the community surveys have been conducted, public meetings have been held (CPI, 2011). However, during the CPI survey with the public to the question whether they themselves participated in the process of program creation only one person answered yes (See Appendix 2, Table 2). Besides, as the survey suggests, 98.7% of the public didn't participate in the implementation of the projects (See Appendix 2, Table 3). Moreover, one of the pressing needs for 16% of the residents was the unemployment and bad socio-economic conditions, while for another 16% it was the building problems (See Appendix 2, Table 4). Besides, during one of the town hall meetings with the residents organized by CPI, some of the problems voiced by the residents were the absence of the ambulance, the poor condition of the multi-apartment building roofs and etc. Nevertheless, comparison showed that none of these needs were reflected in the program. After the creation of the development program, no urgent problems have occurred, so no amendments have been made to the program.

Aragats

Aragats is a village in Aragatsotn marz, former Aparan region with 3,793 inhabitants (2011). It is situated 2,000 meters above the sea level at a distance of 40 km from Yerevan and 25 km from Ashtarak. The community has two secondary schools, a kindergarten, a

library, a health center and a community center (“house of culture”). Agriculture is the main specialized branch of the city economy.

Last local government elections in Aragats were held in 2011. The Chief of the community is Gagik Poghosyan. According to the requirements of the Law on Local Self-government the town has an annual budget and four-year development program. According to the 2011 Baseline Rapid Local Government Unit Assessment conducted by Counterpart International, public hearings on draft budget are held once a year. No draft budget is approved without public discussion. Public is informed with the help of the announcements on the bulletin board, word-of-mouth communication. The meetings are held for already two years and the positive impact is that the community is more active in discussions and identification of problems.

The process of drafting the four-year development program is the following: there are six drop-boxes in the village where people can drop their written suggestions. All suggestions have been discussed and included in the community 2008-2011 four-year program. This process is held once in four years. Public is informed by the announcements on the bulletin board. The positive impact is the awareness of the community which is raised and people have the possibility to raise issues of their concern. One bridge was constructed and rainwater sewage system was cleaned based on suggestions made.

Public also has an input in the agenda of Community Council sessions. The agenda is posted on two bulletin boards, people get aware of the agenda and if they have anything to add/suggest, they apply to the municipality. It is done once in two months when the community council sessions are held (starting from 1998). The mechanism is sustainable because people are able to get issues of their concern directly into agenda. Besides, the linkage between local government body and community is strengthened.

There are a large meeting room and a council office on the second floor of the village hall, and a larger hall in the culture house of the village for village-wide meetings. Operating from 1998, the positive impact is that it strengthens the local government body's linkage to people. However, there are no open door receptions by Mayor and the Community Council. There are no specific mechanisms or ways in which city/village engages citizens in decision-making processes.

There is a new program developed for the years 2012-2015. Compared with the previous one improvements have been made, however no major changes are seen. The SWOT analysis includes strengths and weaknesses, but the threats and opportunities of the community are not introduced. There is also no procedure for reviews. The program has a short summary of the community conditions with historical overview, demographics, municipal assets, subordinate organizations. Problems for implementation are prioritized, however no timeline is provided for their solutions.

According to the in-depth interview conducted with the lead financial specialist of Aragats community, 11 out of 12 projects and problems developed in the community development program for 2007-2011 have been implemented. The last project has not been implemented due to scarce financial means. Funding for implementing the projects have been provided by the state budget and private charities. One of the main strategic goals of the community has been developing the agriculture. However, it has been reached only partially.

The lead financial specialist claimed that in preparing and formulating the four-year development program the public opinion has been taken as a basis for prioritizing the problems. There are drop-boxes where people can leave their problems and demands in writing. Later the staff collects those letters. However, the results of the survey with the residents showed that no one out of 75 people surveyed participated in the process (See Appendix 2, Table 5). Moreover, it is the Community Council that prioritizes the problems.

Besides, the lead specialist also stated that there are groups of active residents who voice about their problems to the Community Council. For finding out the needs of the community students as active groups collect written problems from the households of each neighborhood and later submit those notes to the Community Council review. Anyways, as the survey shows, only 4% out of 75 people surveyed knew about the existence of the document (See Appendix 2, Table 6). However, during one of the town hall meetings with the residents organized by CPI, for the majority of people the pressing need was the gas supply which was included in the program. Anyways, changes are not made to the document. After the creation of the development program new urgent problems have risen which haven't been included in the program. For instance, as a consequence of flooding two bridges were destroyed and their renovation needed attention.

For this community it is particularly useful to follow these recommendations:

1. The SWOT analysis is likely to be developed and improved. It should be well classified what can be the threats to the community.
2. Raise public awareness about the process of drafting, adopting and implementing the program. It can be done through meetings and different awareness raising campaigns to ensure residents know that they can participate and have their input in classifying the problems and needs of the community.

Debet

Debet is a village in Lori with 917 inhabitants in 2011. It borders with Yeghegnut, Dsegh and Chkala communities. The river Hankadzor flows through the village. The community has two secondary schools, a community center (“house of culture”), a library and a kindergarten. Agriculture is the main specialized branch of the village economy.

The last local government elections in Debet were held in 2010. The Chief of the community is Kamo Petrosyan and the community council has five members. According to the requirements of the law on Local Self-government the village has an annual budget and a four-year development program. According to the 2011 Baseline Rapid Local Government Unit Assessment by CPI, no public hearings on draft budgets of the community are held. Public did not participate in the creation of the village's four-year development program. Meetings with the public/media take place in the meeting hall of the municipality. It may contribute to organizing more productive meetings between the community council and public/media, however there have been almost no meetings so far, as the hall wasn't repaired, and since the beginning of 2011 renovation is in process.

As a CPI study suggests (CPI, 2011), participation of the public is ensured only during the community council sessions. Meetings are also organized in case of the need to solve urgent problems. The impact may be positive, as community members are informed about community problems, and the decisions are not made only by the mayor and municipal staff. The LG official claims that they encourage citizens to express opinions on services. The mechanism is used in an informal way. It has been mentioned that the LG always encourages public comments on the quality of services and gives importance to public opinion, and if needed, makes appropriate changes. As a result, people may feel the importance of their opinions and participation in LG activities. However, as the survey showed, no one out of 50 residents surveyed participated in the process of implementing the projects incorporated in the development program (See Appendix 2, Table 7).

The interviewee also stated that citizens are included in such council committees as committee for keeping livestock records, committee for keeping population records, committee of pastures. The committee for keeping livestock records meets every year. The committee for keeping population records meets once a year. The committee of pastures

meets upon need. Public is informed about the mentioned mechanism verbally, and through announcements if needed.

According to the Local Government Institutional Capacity Assessment reports (CPI, 2011) the city has a four-year development program for the years 2010-2014 which has been formed based on the previous one mainly the staff of the municipality and the Council took part in the process of drafting the document. From an interview with the Council it turned out that the Council members do not quite realize what the four-year development program should consist of. There is no procedure for reviews. No changes and revisions have been made since its adoption.

The four-year program of Debet has a short evaluation of the community condition with historical overview, demographics and assets. The weaknesses and strengths of the community are presented; however, there are no implications about opportunities and threats of the community in terms of SWOT analysis. Besides, there is a lot of irrelevant information that could be removed and proper details could be added instead. For instance, the community chief's speech could be detached and the SWOT analysis could be developed more properly instead. Problems are prioritized, however, no timeline is provided for their solutions.

According to the in-depth interview with the accountant of the community out of six projects and problems developed in the community development program for the years 2010-2014 no one has been implemented yet due to scarce financial means. Funding for implementing the projects previously have been provided by the community budget, NGOs like Caritas and Counterpart International. One of the main strategic goals of the community has been providing the community with gas supply. However, it has been reached only partially because of scarce financial resources.

The accountant asserts that in preparing and formulating the four-year development program the public opinion has been taken as a basis for prioritizing the problems. Particularly, meetings with the residents have been held, surveys have been conducted and people participated in the council sessions. The accountant also states that for finding out the needs of the community discussions have been held with the active group of the community. However, as the survey shows, only 2% participated in the creation process of the document, and 80% didn't even know about the existence of the document (See Appendix 2, Tables 8-9). Besides, for 30% of the residents the stressing need was unemployment and bad socio-economic conditions, for another 42% it was the repair of the roads/streets (See Appendix 2, Table 10). Anyways, in the program only the repair of the roads was included as a problem.

Gandzakar

Gandzakar is a village in Tavush with a population of 3,511 in 2011. Crossing the Aghstev River by the bridge it borders with city of Ijevan. The community has one secondary school, a community center ("house of culture"), a kindergarten and a library.

Last local government elections in Gandzakar were held in 2009. The chief of the community is Shahen Shahinyan. The community Council consists of eleven members. According to the requirements of the law on Local Self-government the village has an annual budget and four-year development program. According to the 2011 Baseline Rapid Local Government Unit Assessment (CPI, 2011), public hearings on draft budgets are held twice a year. Public is informed through announcements that are posted on bulletin boards situated both in the municipality and center of the village. One of the successes of this mechanism is that public opinion is taken into consideration during the budget formulation processes.

Public's participation in the creation of village's four-year development program is very vague. It is mostly within two months after being approved only by the community council

that public can participate already in the phase of implementation. However, public should participate also in the creation process of the document. Public is informed through community active group members who verbally disseminated the information among community residents. There is no public input to the agenda of Community Council sessions. It was mentioned that the agenda of Community Council sessions is developed by the Community Council members and the Mayor. There is no Community Council hall for the public and media meetings too.

However, it was mentioned by the LG that they encourage opinions on services. For example, a citizen's suggestion related to domestic waste collection methods was approved: it was suggested to carry out waste collection not with specialized trucks, which would require additional spending, but with the tractor, since community residents pay for the tractor anyway.

Citizens are included in council committees like the committee on school issues. Public is informed about the sessions through announcements posted on bulletin boards and shops. One of the successes is that an active group of community intellectuals has been created that is engaged with solving problems related to school.

According to the Local Government Institutional Capacity Assessment report (CPI, 2011), the village has a four-year development program for the years 2009-2012, which was not created in a participatory way. The analysis in the plan are incomplete, financial estimates have been made only on the basis of the initial sources; no numerical financial prediction has been made. The deadlines for the implementation of the projects are not present. Though the format coincides with the classical criteria of strategic planning, there are a lot of omissions. There are no procedures for changes and improvements.

The four-year program of Gandzakar has a short evaluation of the community condition with historical overview, demographics, description of assets, subordinate organizations. The

overall document design is very poor and incomplete in terms of the wording and format. There are some unnecessary details which do not really concern the four-year development program. Particularly, the names of those people who leave the village every year are in our opinion unnecessary.

The strategic purposes of the program are illustrated. There is a SWOT analysis of the strengths and weaknesses, possibilities and dangers of the community. The weaknesses are even more. The main factors impacting on the poverty, prioritized according to the participatory evaluations and surveys, are elaborated. Problems are prioritized, however, no timeline is provided for their solutions.

According to the in-depth interview with the lead financial specialist of Gandzakar community, out of the 20 projects developed in the community development program about 10 have been implemented. It is a low indicator as the LG term ends in 2012 and there are upcoming elections in September, but half of the projects due for implementation during those four years still remain unimplemented. Among those implemented, particularly the renovation of secondary school and installation of street lights could be mentioned. Funding for implementing the projects have been provided mainly by the community budget, private charities, and grants. The other projects have not been implemented due to scarce financial means. Among those is the 24-hour water supply.

The lead financial specialist proved that in preparing and formulating the four-year development program the oral claims of the community residents submitted personally to the community council review has been taken as basis for prioritizing the problems. Besides, meetings have been held with the representatives of the communities. However, as the survey shows, only 21% of the residents know about the existence of the document and 96% didn't even participate in the creation process of the document (See Appendix 2, Tables 11, 12). For 26.7% of the residents the most pressing need was water supply (Table 13). However, this

wasn't included in the program as a problem. Some of the problems voiced during one of the town hall meetings organized by CPI have been included in the program. There have not risen any urgent problems after the creation of the development program, as there are still problems that haven't been addressed in the development program. Thus, no amendments have been made to the program.

For this community it is particularly recommended to increase public participation in the planning process of the development program. The mechanisms may vary from polls/surveys to meetings, which should be held frequently. The frequency of communicating with the public is very necessary as in case new problems arise they should be discussed and amendments to the development program should be made so as to include those current problems as well. Moreover, one of the problems of this community is that the public participates only after the approval of the document by the Community Council. Instead, public should participate and delegate its problems to the Community Council before the creation of the document, and the program should be based on those problems prioritized.

Getap

Getap is a village in Vayots Dzor with a population of 2,385 (2011). The river Yeghegis flows through the village. It is located on Yerevan-Meghri highway at a distance of 190 km from Yerevan and is surrounded with mountains. Agriculture is the main specialized branch of the village economy. The community has one secondary school, a community center (house of culture), a library, a kindergarten, one health center and a wine factory of Getap.

Last local government elections in Getap were held in 2009. The chief of the community is Gagik Aloyan. According to the requirements of the law on Local Self-government the village has an annual budget and four-year development program. According to the 2011 Baseline Rapid Local Government Unit Assessment (CPI, 2011), there have been no public

hearings on draft budgets. Public didn't participate in the creation of the four-year development program of the village. There is also no public input into the agenda setting of the village.

There is a Community Council space for the public and media. There is a special room in the municipality for meetings with public, but because it's not renovated it's impossible to organize meetings there and the council members meet people in public places. Possibility of meeting people will provide the council with the opportunity to identify community issues and proceed with the suggestions and complaints of the villagers.

Sometimes non-formal meetings are initiated by the Community Council, mainly 2-3 times a year. This ensures public participation in decision-making process and community issues are identified. One of the successes is an example of the irrigation water issue, which was raised and the problem has been solved in joint efforts.

According to the Local Government Institutional Capacity Assessment reports (CPI, 2011), the four-year development program of the village was approved in 2008 and included strategic problems for the years 2009-2012. Only the Mayor, the Council and the staff participated in the process of the creation of the document. The format of the program mainly coincides with the classical criteria of strategic planning. Though the program is for the years 2009-2012, the document contains some older dates, which means that the document needs review and revision. Apparently it was created on the template of the previous program. The development program is not reviewed and improved, thus there is no specific procedures for reviews.

The four-year program of Getap has a short evaluation of the community condition with historical overview, demographics, assets, subordinate organizations. The weaknesses and strengths, opportunities and threats of the community in terms of SWOT analysis are

introduced. Problems are prioritized, however no timeline is provided for their solutions. The strategy and main purposes of the community are developed partially.

According to the in-depth interview with the Chief of the community of Getap, out of four projects and problems developed in the community development program two have been totally implemented. Particularly, the house of culture has been renovated and water supply has been improved. However, the road construction has not been completed due to scarce financial means. Renovation of the kindergarten, which is the last project to be implemented before elections, is underway. Funding for implementing the projects have been mostly provided by the community budget, state budget, by the personal contribution of the Community Chief and Asian Development Bank credit to Government of Armenia. One of the basic strategic purposes of the community has been reached partially. Particularly, gas supply has been provided to 40% of the population.

In preparing and formulating the four-year development program the financial status of the community infrastructure and evaluation of the community conditions have been taken as a basis for prioritizing the problems. Besides, during Community Council meetings representatives from the population presented their urgent problems, suggestions and based on those suggestions problems are prioritized. However, as the survey showed, 70% didn't know that the community has a four-year program (See Appendix 2, Table 14). Besides, many of the problems identified as priorities by the majority of residents during a town hall meeting organized by CPI were not included in the program. Those problems include installation of street lights, building a cafeteria in the school, gas supply, places of entertainment, a computer center and etc. There have risen other urgent problems after the creation of the development program but they haven't been included in the program. Among them are the improvement of cemetery, construction of dams, a specially equipped room for the elderly and costumes for the dance ensemble.

Gomk

Gomk is a tiny village in Vayots Dzor with a population of 263 (2011). Agriculture is the main specialized branch of the village economy. The community has one secondary school, a community center and a library.

The last local government elections in Gomk were held in 2008. The chief of the community is Stella Akopova. According to the requirements of the law on Local Self-government the village has an annual budget and a four-year development program. However, the document is missing currently apparently being lost or destroyed. According to the 2011 Baseline Rapid Local Government Unit Assessment (CPI, 2011), public hearings on draft budgets were organized in January 2010 by the “Community Activity Center” NGO. It is organized 1-2 times a year. The public is informed through announcements on the bulletin board and Citizens’ Active Group members. This has a positive impact, as local government body’s transparency and accountability is ensured, community residents understand the importance of their opinions and participation in the process of drafting the community budget. One of the successes is that as a result of enhanced trust towards the local government body’s activities the effectiveness of tax collection system has increased.

However, there has been no public participation in the creation of the village’s four-year development program. As the survey shows, only 4% out of the residents surveyed participated in the creation process of the document. Public hasn’t had any input to the agenda of Community Council sessions either. There is no community council space for the public and media meetings.

According to the Local Government Institutional Capacity Assessment reports (CPI, 2011), the four-year development program of the village was approved in 2008. The LG claimed that the staff and almost 40 residents participated in the discussion of the program Council members. However, as the household survey shows, 96% out of 50 people surveyed

didn't participate in the process and only 28% knew that the village has a four-year program (See Appendix 2, Tables 15-16). The program doesn't have any procedures for reviewing and improving the development program.

According to the in-depth interview with the accountant, lead specialist of Gomk community, out of all projects and problems reflected in the community development program 50% have been implemented. Particularly, water supply has been improved, roads have been renovated but the community center has not been renovated due to scarce financial resources. Funding for implementing the projects has been provided by the community budget and donor organizations.

The LG also proved that in preparing and formulating the four-year development program the requests of the community residents have been taken as basis for prioritizing the problems. Besides, meetings have been held with the public, and the residents presented written suggestions. For finding out the needs of the community, the Community Council welcomes residents during their sessions. However, in the result of the survey only 4% of the residents told that they participated in the meetings. After the creation of the development program, urgent problems like construction of a kindergarten, playground, have risen but haven't been included in the program. It means no amendments have been made to the program. In fact it was impossible to review the document, as the document is currently lost.

It is recommended first and foremost to retrieve the lost document of the program, to make changes and improvements.

Kapan

Kapan is the administrative center of the Syunik marz with a population of 45,459 in 2011. The city is located 316 km from Yerevan. Kapan primarily is a mining city and its industry is dependent on the newly privatized polymetallic deposit. The furniture and textile

industries have grown recently. Kapan has archeological museums, a theater, school of arts and music, 15 public secondary schools, community centers, two sport and athletic schools, universities and 12 kindergartens.

The last local government elections in Kapan were held in 2008. The chief of the community is Arthur Atayan. According to the requirements of the law on Local Self-government the city has an annual budget and a four-year development program. According to the 2011 Baseline Rapid Local Government Unit Assessment (CPI, 2011), public hearings on draft budgets are held once a year in the city. The public is informed through local TV as well as through the notification sent to organizations. One of the positive impacts is that suggestions of participants are taken into consideration and people are informed about details. However, there has been no public participation in the creation of the city's four-year development program. As the survey showed, no one out of 125 residents surveyed participated in the creation of the document (See Appendix 2, Table 17).

Nevertheless the LG claims that all kinds of official meetings are open to public. During Community Council meetings a number of problems are being solved, when public participation is simply necessary. Meeting hours, venue and topic are announced in advance through television. During these meetings all parties try to express their viewpoints. There is a drop-box for suggestions posted on the first floor of the municipality but it is rarely used. However, as the survey showed, 90.4% of the residents didn't know about the existence of development program.

According to the Local Government Institutional Capacity Assessment reports (CPI, 2011) only the Council members participated in the process of creation of the four-year development program of the city. The community residents were not engaged. There are no procedures for reviewing the program.

The four-year program of Kapan has a detailed evaluation of the community condition with historical overview, demographics, assets, subordinate organizations. The weaknesses, strengths and opportunities of the community are introduced; however there are no implications about threats of the community in terms of SWOT analysis. The strategic purposes are also presented. There are 83 projects which are prioritized in tables and timeline is provided for their implementations. Besides, the 22 projects that have already been implemented are also introduced. The overall format of the document coincides with the criteria of classical strategic planning.

According to the in-depth interview conducted with the lead financial specialist of the city, most of the 83 projects planned to be implemented during 2009-2012 are still underway, e.g. repairing the elevators, roofs and yards of multi-apartment buildings. Some of the projects haven't been implemented due to scarce financial resources, e.g. constructing channels, dams for rainwater.

Financial resources for implementing the projects mainly stem from the community's budget, the grants, local NGO's and co-operation with Counterpart International and World Vision. One of the main strategic purposes of the community has been partially implemented. That is from 18-24 hour water supply. However, the quality of water is poor. After the creation of the program other urgent problems have risen which have been implemented but not included in the program.

In preparing and formulating the four-year development program mainly the geographical location of the community and public demands has been taken as basis for prioritizing the problems. No frequent meetings have been held with the residents of the community. According to the survey, for 45.6% of the residents the pressing need was the unemployment and bad socio-economic conditions, and for 17.6% it was repairing the streets/roads (See Appendix 2, Table 19). There were also other problems identified by the residents during the

town hall meeting organized by CPI, which mainly were included in the program. However, the four-year development program has been created mostly by the Community Council and the Mayor. As the survey showed, no resident participated in the implementation phase too.

For this community development program it is particularly recommended to remove some of the irrelevant information from the document. Moreover, having 83 projects seems too detailed and not feasible. Many of the projects can be merged. Thus, the format of classification should be improved.

Nor Geghi

Nor Geghi is a medium-size village in Kotayk marz with a population of 6,345 (2011). The village is located on the right banks of Hrazdan River at a distance of 25 km from Yerevan. Agriculture, farming, diamond production are the main specialized branches of the village economy. The village has a health center, a kindergarten, a community center and a library.

The last local government elections in Nor Geghi were held in 2008. According to the requirements of the Law on Local Self-government the village has an annual budget and a four-year development program. According to the 2011 Baseline Rapid Local Government Unit Assessment (CPI, 2011), public hearings on draft budgets are held once a year during a community meeting when the draft budget is put for discussion. Public is informed through the announcement posted on the bulletin board, with the help of Community Council members. This has a positive impact, as through public participation costs for solution of community issues are included and envisioned in the budget. One of the successes has been the fact that last year the rainwater drainage system construction expenses were included in the budget as a result of suggestion from community residents.

The LG claimed that the village's four-year development program was developed with active public participation. During the community meetings the development programs are also discussed because the issues are various and diverse, and those are included in four-year development program based on priority. However, as the survey showed, 100% of the residents answered they didn't participate in the creation process of the document (See Appendix 2, Table 20). Besides, there is no space in Community Council chamber for the public and media meetings.

Meetings are held 2-3 times a year. Public is informed through announcement posted on the bulletin board, with the help of community council members. One of the successes is that through public participation community issues are identified and included in the four-year development program through periodical updates. As a result of changes made, the provisions related to drinking and irrigation water system and construction of anti-hail station were included in the four-year development program. These issues were not considered priorities in 2008 when the program was developed, but became priorities last year. Since the development program is for four years, there is a need to revise it at least annually or on need basis, which raises its effectiveness.

Village hall meeting with the public has been initiated by Counterpart International. A working group was formed, which prioritized the issues identified during this meeting, e.g. playground construction. During the meeting an active group is formed, which follows up with solutions of the identified problems. As a result of the meeting the village obtained playground for children. The idea of computer center in the cultural house was also the result of the same meeting. Regular community meetings will ensure sustainability and the community will find funding for solving the identified problems.

According to the Local Government Institutional Capacity Assessment reports (CPI, 2011) there is a four-year development program for the years 2009-2012. In the creation

process of the development program members of the Council and the members of the community participated. There are no monitoring and evaluation procedures, effectiveness measures and no specific responsible people and timelines are identified for implementing the strategic goals. At the end of the development program it is mentioned that based on the program socio-political projects for the years 2009-2012 have also been developed. Those projects include the financial sources and some information about project implementation timelines.

Twelve projects are presented in the four-year development program of Nor Geghi. Sources of funding and the evaluated project costs are missing. The expected timeframes for the implementation of the projects are not specified. There is an evaluation of the community's current condition, e.g. historical overview, demographics, possessions, agriculture, environment, organizations, health, sports, culture and etc. The SWOT analysis includes the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the community.

According to the in-depth interview with the Chief of Nor Geghi, from the 12 projects mentioned in the four-year program eight have been implemented. Mostly the projects of the educational and construction spheres have been implemented, e.g. heating of the kindergarten, the house of culture, construction of the roads. These projects have been implemented mainly by the community budget. The other four haven't been implemented due to scarce financial resources. After the creation of the development program, new urgent problems have occurred which have not been included in the program. That means no amendments have been made to the development program.

One of the strategic goals of the community has been partially achieved, that is providing the public with 24 hour water supply. For instance, the district of Banavan didn't have any water supply but now they have it. In other districts the hours of the drinking water supply have increased.

As criteria for prioritizing the problems have been taken the number of the people in the interested groups, the level of the interest from the public towards specific issues and through the meetings of the Community Council. The needs of the community have been identified mainly through oral requests from the public during the Community Council meetings. Later the Council discusses the problems introduced by the public. After the discussions, the problems are prioritized and projects formulated. However, as the result of the survey, 88% of the residents didn't know that the community has a development program (See Appendix 2, Table 21).

For this community it is particularly recommended to develop some mechanisms to increase public participation in the creation of the development program for finding out the urgent problems of the community. For instance, besides oral requests during the meetings there can be a mechanism of written proposals about the problems from each household on monthly basis. At the end of each year those proposals can be discussed and problems prioritized. In case of urgent problems, new projects should be included in the development program by making changes to it. Surveys/polls are another mechanism for finding out the community needs.

Sevan

Sevan is a city in Gegharkunik marz with a population of 23,361 in 2011. It lies on the northern shores of Lake Sevan. It is located at a distance of 66 km from Yerevan. The community has a music school, athletic school, library, community center, art school, a kindergarten and children creativity center. Agriculture is the main specialized branch of the city economy.

The last local government elections in Sevan were held in 2008. The Mayor of the community is Gevorg Malkasyan. According to the requirements of the law on Local Self-

government the city has an annual budget and a four-year development program. According to the 2011 Baseline Rapid Local Government Unit Assessment by CPI, public hearings on budget drafts were held every time when drafting the community budget or making any changes to it. The last public hearings on the budget draft were held in December 2010 and lasted about a month. It was announced on local TV station “Sevan” that a meeting was going to be held in the culture house, which would be open to all those who were interested. Community members are also being informed about coming hearings on budget draft by the Councils during meetings. The impact is positive as it provides citizens’ participation in the life of the community. Chief of Staff responded that although the law does not require mandatory public hearings on the budget draft, Sevan municipality is open to each member of the community and the organization of such hearings should be continuous.

The LG proved that in drafting the city's four-year development program the public was involved in the preliminary discussion of the issues. In December 2010, a live discussion was held on the local media with community members participating through calls. The community has been informed of the coming discussion through the TV and the announcement posted in the local newspaper. It has had an impact on the level of public participation in the life of the community as well as in drafting the strategic program of the community. The most pressing issues are determined and community issues are prioritized with the residents of the community. Some cases have been noted when a problem was added to the four-year development program based on citizen suggestion and then was implemented. For example, the residents of the Urengoy district proposed to repair the roads as part of the city’s four-year development program, and this has already been implemented. Similar changes were made when with the initiative of the staff of school N3. Demirchyan Street was repaired within the framework of this four-year development program. Tree

planting and other actions were planned and implemented to meet the demands of the community members within this four-year program.

Meetings open to public are organized and people can take part in the meetings. Working meetings can be mentioned among these meetings. For example, when a strategy was developed in regard to the solid waste collection problem in the community, a 40-member working group was formed, including NGOs, active citizens, intellectuals and so on. The group meets as needed, there is no fixed timetable.

It's announced on the TV and local newspaper that if there are interested people who have a plan, observations or recommendations, they can participate. The PR Officer mentioned that it's of great importance when people feel their role in this mechanism which ensures the participatory process of the people. One of many successes as a result of the meetings is that "Sevan Youth Group" NGO has been formed and it's the third year that it has been working successfully.

LG claimed that it encourages opinions about the services. Its positive impact could be that people feel the importance of their opinions and participation in local activities. There are cases when a valuable opinion of a community member turns to have a positive effect on local activities. Citizens are involved in the committees like waste management strategy planning commission, Culture House renovating commission and so on. Each one functions according to necessity.

According to the Local Government Institutional Capacity Assessment reports (CPI, 2011), the four-year community development program was approved in 2009. Mainly the specialists of the Community Hall, the Chief of the Community and Community Council participated in the creation of the program.

During the formation of the program the opinions of the community residents have also been taken into consideration. There are no formal mechanisms for involving community

residents. Community budget is hardly covering community needs. The budget is not enough for social-cultural development of the community. There is a need to review and make changes to the development program.

There is a detailed description of the condition and evaluation of the community. Particularly, the municipal assets, organizations, demographic statistics, details of agricultural soil, transport, environment, culture are presented. The program contains analysis of the strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) of the community. However, it's not well-organized. The strategy and main purposes of the community are developed. The problems and purposes are prioritized and presented based on the different spheres.

There is an analysis and evaluation of financial resources of the community. However, the document contains too many excessive details. Eighteen capital projects are introduced. The budget of the projects is also present. Overall the format of the document can be improved so as to coincide with the classical criteria of the strategic planning.

According to the in-depth interview with the lead financial specialist, out of the 18 projects and problems developed in the community development program 70% have been implemented. Particularly, the kindergarten has been renovated, streets have been reconstructed and lights have been installed, roofs of multi-apartment building have also been renovated. Funding for implementing the projects have been provided by the community budget and grants. The projects due for implementation in 2012 haven't been fulfilled because of scarce financial means. One of the main strategic purposes of the community has been partially reached. Particularly, 24-hour water supply has been provided.

In preparing and formulating the four-year development program the community needs and resident complaints have been taken as basis for prioritizing the problems. For example, the kindergarten has been renovated after many complaints. Besides, meetings have been held with the representatives of the communities. However, as the survey shows, no one of the

residents participated in the creation of the document and more than 79% didn't know about the program at all (See Appendix 2, Table 22). The lead financial specialist also proved that for finding out the needs of the community public meetings have been held and the problems have been discussed during Community Council sessions. Mass media, interested groups and residents participate in the discussion. One of the urgent problems that emerged after the creation of the development program is the construction of the road to a district which doesn't have direct paved routes to connect with the city. However, no amendments have been made to the program and the problem hasn't been included in it.

For this community these particular recommendations could be taken into consideration:

1. In case new problems arise they should be discussed and amendments to the development program should be made so as to include those current problems as well.
2. It is also recommended to improve the SWOT analysis of the community.

Vayk

Vayk is a town in Vayots Dzor marz with a population of 5,928 (2011). It is located in the valley of River Arpa. The community has one secondary school, a community center, a library, a kindergarten, a sports ground, a hotel and a hospital. Agriculture is the main specialized branch of the city.

The local government of Vayk was elected in 2008. The Mayor of the community is Harutyun Sargsyan. The community council has eleven members. According to the requirements of the law on Local Self-government the city has an annual budget and a four-year development program. According to the 2011 Baseline Rapid Local Government Unit Assessment by CPI, the last public hearing on draft budget was held in December 2011 to discuss 2012 draft budget with the public. Public is informed through announcements prepared by the Youth Council and posted on the three bulletin boards in the municipality

and populous places in the city. As a result of hearings community issues are prioritized and funding is allocated to solve them. One of the successful results has been funds allocation for the environmental issues prioritized by youth.

According to the Local Government Institutional Capacity Assessment reports (CPI, 2011), the four-year community development program for the years 2009-2012 was approved in 2008. In the creation of the development program the Community Council, the Mayor, the staff and community residents have been involved. The public was involved through the discussion during public meetings. However, as a result of the survey, only 4% of the residents knew that the community has a program (See Appendix 2, Table 23). The program mainly coincides with the classical criteria of strategic planning. However, there are no reviewing and improvement procedures identified.

The four-year program of Vayk has a short evaluation of the community conditions with historical overview, demographics, description of assets, subordinate organizations. The weaknesses and strengths of the community are introduced however opportunities and threats of the community in terms of SWOT analysis are not clearly defined. Problems are prioritized in the form of projects. There are cost evaluations for each of the project and community budget for each year is introduced.

According to the in-depth interview with the lead financial specialist of Vayk, out of the eight projects and problems developed in the community development program 80% have been implemented. Particularly, road construction, renovation of the roofs, renovation of the school of art has been implemented. However, 20% of the projects have not been implemented due to scarce financial resources. For implementing the projects the financial means have been provided by the state budget, community budget, GIZ and Counterpart International. One of the main strategic purposes of the community has been reached. Particularly, the water supply system has been improved.

In preparing and formulating the four-year development program the results of the community discussions have been taken as basis for prioritizing the problems. Besides, meetings have been held with the representatives of the communities. For finding out the needs of the community surveys have been conducted, public meetings have been held. However, as the survey shows, no one of the people surveyed participated in the creation of the document (See Appendix 2, Table 24). Besides, for 55% of the residents the most pressing need was unemployment and bad socio-economic conditions which was not included in the program (See Appendix 2, Table 25). After the creation of the development program new problems have risen that haven't been included in the program.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Having very different cases the overall picture is that though some of the communities had more or less good quality community development programs, none of the documents was perfect. Thus, the following conclusions can be made:

- RQ1: The local-governments' four-year community development programs mostly do not address the pressing needs of their communities and the process of drafting the document is not accompanied by active participation of citizens.
- RQ2: The process of drafting and implementing the four-year programs does not engage the citizens, as in most of the cases the majority of population is not even aware about the existence of the program.
- RQ3: Since the approval of the document by the Community Council, only a portion of the projects incorporated in the local government four-year development program have been implemented.

For addressing these problems, the following recommendations are suggested:

- It is recommended for the Community Staff, Community Council, Chief of the Community on the one hand and the residents on the other hand to get acquainted with the criteria of effective strategic planning and to make changes in the development program upon necessity. An annual review timeline should be created, which shows the level of professionalism while creating the four-year program, making it more realistic, feasible and need-based.
- Besides, the planning process of the development program should ensure citizen participation with the help of special mechanisms for increasing people's active involvement. Those mechanisms may vary from polls/surveys, focus groups to meetings and public hearings, which should be held frequently. The frequency of communicating with the public is very important as in case new problems arise they should be discussed and amendments to the development program should be made so as to include those current problems as well. In general the four-year program should be a live and dynamic document open to revisions in response to changing environment and needs of the citizens.
- It is also recommended to add cost estimates and possible sources of funding for each project in the program and to take it as a guide for implementing the projects.
- The overall format of the document could be improved, e.g. alignments, fonts, grammar. Increase the frequency and intensity of communicating with the public and get feedback on the progress in implementation of the four-year program.
- Formulate measurable indicators for evaluating implementation progress.
- Create annual work plans along with the programs which will indicate the detailed descriptions of tasks/actions, schedules, performance, budget, evaluation and monitoring of indicators of the current year.

- Develop long-term strategic community development programs for the next 15 years to have a further vision for community development.

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Appendix 1

Questionnaire for in-depth interviews with the community management regarding the four-year development programs

Community Name _____

Name Surname _____

Position _____

1. In the community development program of _____ there are specific problems and projects prioritized. During these years, how many of the projects have been implemented? If not implemented, what are the reasons?
2. Which projects have been implemented? Please provide details by specifying the sectors.
3. Which have been the financial resources?
4. One of the strategic goals mentioned in the development program is the following: _____ . Has it been reached? If not, what are the reasons?
5. What have been the criteria for prioritizing the problems and projects?
6. What have taken as basis when formulating the problems of the community in the program?
7. Have there been any urgent problems after the creation and adoption of the document that haven't been included in the program till now?
8. What kinds of meetings/surveys/polls have been organized to find out the needs of the community?

Appendix 2

Results of Public Opinion Survey of Households on Knowledge and Attitudes toward Local Governments Conducted by CPI (2011)

Table 1: Akhtala. During the past three years, has the public participated in the creation of your city's four-year development program?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
no	9	12.0	12.0	12.0
Don't know/can't say	66	88.0	88.0	100.0
Total	75	100.0	100.0	

Table 2. Akhtala: During the past three years, have you yourself participated in the creation of your city's four-year development program?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
yes	1	1.3	1.3	1.3
no	74	98.7	98.7	100.0
Total	75	100.0	100.0	

Table 3. Akhtala: During the past three years, have you yourself participated in the implementation of your city's four-year development program?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
yes	1	1.3	1.3	1.3
no	74	98.7	98.7	100.0
Total	75	100.0	100.0	

Table 4. Akhtala: What is the one most important problem facing your city today?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Unemployment/Jobs/Bad socio-economic conditions	12	16.0	16.0	16.0
Low pensions/social allowances	1	1.3	1.3	17.3
No gas supply	2	2.7	2.7	20.0
Water supply/system	3	4.0	4.0	24.0
Solid waste collection	1	1.3	1.3	25.3
Street lighting	1	1.3	1.3	26.7
Repair/Condition of roads/streets	3	4.0	4.0	30.7
Housing problems	6	8.0	8.0	38.7
Building problems	12	16.0	16.0	54.7
No schools/kindergartens, music/art/sports schools, libraries, cultural centers, clubs	4	5.3	5.3	60.0
No recreational facilities (playgrounds, parks, play areas)	3	4.0	4.0	64.0
Other	3	4.0	4.0	68.0
Don't know/can't say	22	29.3	29.3	97.3
Poor health assistance/facilities	1	1.3	1.3	98.7
No agricultural land, fertilizers/grains, machinery	1	1.3	1.3	100.0
Total	75	100.0	100.0	

Table 5. Aragats: During the past three years, have you yourself participated in the creation of your city's/village's four-year development program?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
no	75	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 6. Aragats: Does your city/village have a four-year development program?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
yes	3	4.0	4.0	4.0
Don't know/can't say	72	96.0	96.0	100.0
Total	75	100.0	100.0	

Table 7. Debet: During the past three years, have you yourself participated in the implementation of your village's four-year development program?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
no	50	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 8. Debet: During the past three years, have you yourself participated in the creation of your village's four-year development program?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
yes	2	4.0	4.0	4.0
no	48	96.0	96.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Table 9. Debet: Does your village have a four-year development program?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
yes	9	18.0	18.0	18.0
no	1	2.0	2.0	20.0
Don't know/can't say	40	80.0	80.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Table 10. Debet: What is the one most important problem facing your city/village today?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Unemployment/Jobs/Bad socio-economic conditions	15	30.0	30.0	30.0
Low pensions/social allowances	2	4.0	4.0	34.0
Water supply/system	1	2.0	2.0	36.0
Solid waste collection	1	2.0	2.0	38.0
Repair/Condition of roads/streets	21	42.0	42.0	80.0
Housing problems	1	2.0	2.0	82.0
Building problems	1	2.0	2.0	84.0
No schools/kindergartens, music/art/sports schools, libraries, cultural centers, clubs	4	8.0	8.0	92.0
Renovation of schools/kindergartens, music/art/sports schools, libraries, cultural centers, clubs	3	6.0	6.0	98.0
Don't know/can't say	1	2.0	2.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Table 11. Gandzakar: During the past three years, have you yourself participated in the creation of your city's/village's four-year development program?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
yes	3	4.0	4.0	4.0
no	72	96.0	96.0	100.0
Total	75	100.0	100.0	

Table 12. Gandzakar: Does your city/village have a four-year development program?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
yes	16	21.3	21.3	21.3
no	4	5.3	5.3	26.7
Don't know/can't say	55	73.3	73.3	100.0
Total	75	100.0	100.0	

Table 13. Gandzakar: What is the one most important problem facing your city/village today?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Unemployment/Jobs/Bad socio-economic conditions	16	21.3	21.3	21.3
Low pensions/social allowances	2	2.7	2.7	24.0
No gas supply	1	1.3	1.3	25.3
Water supply/system	20	26.7	26.7	52.0
Sewage system	2	2.7	2.7	54.7
Solid waste collection	1	1.3	1.3	56.0
Repair/Condition of roads/streets	11	14.7	14.7	70.7
No schools/kindergartens, music/art/sports schools, libraries, cultural centers, clubs	7	9.3	9.3	80.0
No recreational facilities (playgrounds, parks, play areas)	1	1.3	1.3	81.3
Other	1	1.3	1.3	82.7
Don't know/can't say	9	12.0	12.0	94.7
No agricultural land, fertilizers/grains, machinery	3	4.0	4.0	98.7
Migration	1	1.3	1.3	100.0

Table 13. Gandzakar: What is the one most important problem facing your city/village today?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Unemployment/Jobs/Bad socio-economic conditions	16	21.3	21.3	21.3
Low pensions/social allowances	2	2.7	2.7	24.0
No gas supply	1	1.3	1.3	25.3
Water supply/system	20	26.7	26.7	52.0
Sewage system	2	2.7	2.7	54.7
Solid waste collection	1	1.3	1.3	56.0
Repair/Condition of roads/streets	11	14.7	14.7	70.7
No schools/kindergartens, music/art/sports schools, libraries, cultural centers, clubs	7	9.3	9.3	80.0
No recreational facilities (playgrounds, parks, play areas)	1	1.3	1.3	81.3
Other	1	1.3	1.3	82.7
Don't know/can't say	9	12.0	12.0	94.7
No agricultural land, fertilizers/grains, machinery	3	4.0	4.0	98.7
Migration	1	1.3	1.3	100.0
Total	75	100.0	100.0	

Table 14. Getap: Does your city/village have a four-year development program?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
yes	7	9.3	9.3	9.3
no	16	21.3	21.3	30.7
Don't know/can't say	52	69.3	69.3	100.0
Total	75	100.0	100.0	

Table 15. Gomk: Does your city/village have a four-year development program?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
yes	14	28.0	28.0	28.0
no	1	2.0	2.0	30.0
Don't know/can't say	35	70.0	70.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Table 16. Gomk: During the past three years, have you yourself participated in the implementation of your city's/village's four-year development program?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
yes	6	12.0	12.0	12.0
no	44	88.0	88.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Table 17. Kapan: During the past three years, have you yourself participated in the creation of your city's/village's four-year development program?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
no	125	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 18. Kapan: During the past three years, have you yourself participated in the implementation of your city's/village's four-year development program?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
no	125	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 19. Kapan: What is the one most important problem facing your city/village today?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Unemployment/Jobs/Bad socio-economic conditions	57	45.6	45.6	45.6
Low pensions/social allowances	3	2.4	2.4	48.0
High utilities fees	1	.8	.8	48.8
Water supply/system	1	.8	.8	49.6
Solid waste collection	5	4.0	4.0	53.6
Public transportation	3	2.4	2.4	56.0
Street lighting	1	.8	.8	56.8
Repair/Condition of roads/streets	22	17.6	17.6	74.4
Housing problems	1	.8	.8	75.2
Building problems	5	4.0	4.0	79.2
No recreational facilities (playgrounds, parks, play areas)	4	3.2	3.2	82.4
Environment issues	1	.8	.8	83.2
Other	1	.8	.8	84.0
Don't know/can't say	11	8.8	8.8	92.8
Poor health assistance/facilities	3	2.4	2.4	95.2
No civic/youth activism	4	3.2	3.2	98.4
Issues with different branches of government	1	.8	.8	99.2
High prices	1	.8	.8	100.0

Table 19. Kapan: What is the one most important problem facing your city/village today?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Unemployment/Jobs/Bad socio-economic conditions	57	45.6	45.6	45.6
Low pensions/social allowances	3	2.4	2.4	48.0
High utilities fees	1	.8	.8	48.8
Water supply/system	1	.8	.8	49.6
Solid waste collection	5	4.0	4.0	53.6
Public transportation	3	2.4	2.4	56.0
Street lighting	1	.8	.8	56.8
Repair/Condition of roads/streets	22	17.6	17.6	74.4
Housing problems	1	.8	.8	75.2
Building problems	5	4.0	4.0	79.2
No recreational facilities (playgrounds, parks, play areas)	4	3.2	3.2	82.4
Environment issues	1	.8	.8	83.2
Other	1	.8	.8	84.0
Don't know/can't say	11	8.8	8.8	92.8
Poor health assistance/facilities	3	2.4	2.4	95.2
No civic/youth activism	4	3.2	3.2	98.4
Issues with different branches of government	1	.8	.8	99.2
High prices	1	.8	.8	100.0
Total	125	100.0	100.0	

Table 20. Nor Geghi: During the past three years, have you yourself participated in the implementation of your city's/village's four-year development program?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
no	100	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 21. Nor Geghi: Does your city/village have a four-year development program?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
yes	5	5.0	5.0	5.0
no	7	7.0	7.0	12.0
Don't know/can't say	88	88.0	88.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Table 22. Sevan: Does your city/village have a four-year development program?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
yes	21	16.8	16.8	16.8
no	5	4.0	4.0	20.8
Don't know/can't say	99	79.2	79.2	100.0
Total	125	100.0	100.0	

Table 23. Vayk: Does your city/village have a four-year development program?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
yes	4	4.0	4.0	4.0
no	2	2.0	2.0	6.0
Don't know/can't say	94	94.0	94.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Table 24. Vayk: During the past three years, have you yourself participated in the creation of your city's/village's four-year development program?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
no	100	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 25. Vayk: What is the one most important problem facing your city/village today?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Unemployment/Jobs/Bad socio-economic conditions	55	55.0	55.0	55.0
No gas supply	1	1.0	1.0	56.0
Water supply/system	3	3.0	3.0	59.0
Solid waste collection	3	3.0	3.0	62.0
Maintenance of cemeteries	1	1.0	1.0	63.0
Street lighting	1	1.0	1.0	64.0
Repair/Condition of roads/streets	6	6.0	6.0	70.0
Building problems	4	4.0	4.0	74.0
Renovation of schools/kindergartens, music/art/sports schools, libraries, cultural centers, clubs	1	1.0	1.0	75.0
No recreational facilities (playgrounds, parks, play areas)	4	4.0	4.0	79.0
Environment issues	1	1.0	1.0	80.0
Other	1	1.0	1.0	81.0
No problem	1	1.0	1.0	82.0
Don't know/can't say	8	8.0	8.0	90.0
Poor health assistance/facilities	1	1.0	1.0	91.0
Migration	5	5.0	5.0	96.0
Human rights issues	2	2.0	2.0	98.0
Issues with different branches of government	2	2.0	2.0	100.0

Table 25. Vayk: What is the one most important problem facing your city/village today?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Unemployment/Jobs/Bad socio-economic conditions	55	55.0	55.0	55.0
No gas supply	1	1.0	1.0	56.0
Water supply/system	3	3.0	3.0	59.0
Solid waste collection	3	3.0	3.0	62.0
Maintenance of cemeteries	1	1.0	1.0	63.0
Street lighting	1	1.0	1.0	64.0
Repair/Condition of roads/streets	6	6.0	6.0	70.0
Building problems	4	4.0	4.0	74.0
Renovation of schools/kindergartens, music/art/sports schools, libraries, cultural centers, clubs	1	1.0	1.0	75.0
No recreational facilities (playgrounds, parks, play areas)	4	4.0	4.0	79.0
Environment issues	1	1.0	1.0	80.0
Other	1	1.0	1.0	81.0
No problem	1	1.0	1.0	82.0
Don't know/can't say	8	8.0	8.0	90.0
Poor health assistance/facilities	1	1.0	1.0	91.0
Migration	5	5.0	5.0	96.0
Human rights issues	2	2.0	2.0	98.0
Issues with different branches of government	2	2.0	2.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	