

# YOUTH-ORIENTED MUNICIPAL SERVICES AND ITS CHALLENGES:

*SHIDA KARTLI, AUTONOMOUS REPUBLIC OF  
ADJARA AND SAMTSKHE-JAVAKHETI*



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## ABOUT US:

Founded in early 2011, the Georgian Institute of Politics (GIP) is a Tbilisi-based non-profit, non-partisan, research, and analysis organization. GIP strives to strengthen the organizational backbone of democratic institutions and promote good governance and development through policy research and advocacy in Georgia. It also encourages public participation in civil society-building projects and democratic processes. The organization has quickly become a major center for scholarship and policy innovation, not only for Georgia, but for the wider Black Sea Region as well. To this end, GIP sets itself apart through relevant, incisive research; extensive public outreach; and a brazen spirit of innovation in policy discourse and political conversation. Since December 2013 GIP has been a member of the OSCE Network of Think Tanks and Academic Institutions and the Network of Think Tanks on the EU's Eastern Partnership launched in September 2020 by the German Council of Foreign Relations (DGAP) with the support of the European Commission.

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## ABBREVIATIONS:

<b>CRPD</b>	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>EECMD</b>	Eastern European Centre for Multiparty Democracy
<b>FES</b>	Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung
<b>GIP</b>	Georgian Institute of Politics
<b>IRI</b>	International Republican Institute
<b>ISSA</b>	Institute of Social Studies and Analysis
<b>OGP</b>	Open Government Partnership
<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>USAID</b>	United States Agency for International Development

## A BRIEF SUMMARY

The report assesses and examines the extent of youth participation in local self-governance and the quality thereof, as well as the efficacy of youth-focused programs and services across three regions of Georgia: Shida Kartli, the Autonomous Republic of Adjara, and Samtskhe-Javakheti.

Data collection methods, such as focus groups with vulnerable youth living in the target regions and in-depth interviews with representatives of Shida Kartli, Adjara, and Samtskhe-Javakheti local governments, media, and non-governmental organizations, were used to develop the report.

To compile this report, the focus groups were conducted with vulnerable youth residing in the specified regions, and the in-depth interviews with representatives from local governments, media outlets, and non-governmental organizations in Shida Kartli, Adjara, and Samtskhe-Javakheti.

Findings from the study indicate a common trend across the target regions, characterized by a deficiency in youth-oriented programs within local municipalities. These programs primarily target school-aged youth and are predominantly centered around cultural and sporting events. Furthermore, none of the municipalities have at this stage implemented a mechanism for evaluating public services. A prevalent issue is the lack, or nonexistence, of municipal transportation, posing mobility challenges, particularly for individuals with disabilities. Additionally, there is a disconnection between the perspectives and expectations of local government representatives and the youth population in all three municipalities, leading to ineffective youth programs.

The study proposes that to enhance youth-focused programs and services within these municipalities and to foster broader youth involvement in local decision-making processes, the establishment of an effective feedback mechanism is imperative. This mechanism could encompass various forms of communication, such as face-to-face interactions, telephone surveys, or online platforms. The report also suggests potential mechanisms for evaluating municipal services and other feedback avenues to facilitate the democratic engagement of young people.

**Keywords:** youth, municipal services, involvement in self-government.

## MAIN FINDINGS

### **Shida Kartli region**



In Shida Kartli, young people lack sufficient information about available services, hindering their ability to utilize benefits effectively. This is particularly notable in villages with limited internet access, where the population cannot access digitized information.

Frequently, the priorities of the municipality and the population, including young people, do not align. While the municipality may undertake numerous beneficial projects, these matters may often hold low priority for the population or young individuals.

At the moment, there exists no mechanism for evaluating public service delivery, and services are provided based on the previous years' experience. However, during the research process Gori Municipality City Hall initiated the development of a specific feedback mechanism, scheduled for implementation this year.

Additionally, the primary issue concerning youth-oriented services in local self-governments lies in budgetary constraints.

### **Autonomous Republic of Adjara:**



The absence of a feedback mechanism results in local government representatives being inadequately informed about the challenges and needs of the local population.

The frequent turnover of personnel within the public services poses challenges for receiving municipal services, considering that new personnel often lack sufficient competence to address the recipients' needs holistically.

Access to public information remains a challenge, with the municipality frequently failing to provide information in accordance with deadlines enshrined in legislation.

The local self-government is reluctant to receive feedback and recommendations to implement innovations aimed at enhancing the quality of life for the local population, particularly vulnerable groups such as people with disabilities.

## **Samtskhe-Javakheti region**



Youth-oriented public services and programs in Samtskhe-Javakheti predominantly revolve around sports and cultural events, which addresses an insufficient portion of youth needs adequately.

In municipalities with a dense Armenian population, young people face major challenges such as lack of information, language barriers, mobility issues, and social isolation from the rest of the community, preventing them from viewing themselves as full-fledged citizens of Georgia.

There is a disparity between the perceptions, expectations, and reality of local government representatives and local youth. Although many young people consider themselves active citizens, they lack sufficient knowledge about mechanisms for youth involvement in local self-government.

Municipalities lack post-service evaluation mechanisms and general feedback practices, leading to a failure to recognize the necessity for improving existing services.

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### ***Key findings related to young people with disabilities in target regions.***

**In the Shida Kartli region** one of the challenges pertains to the attendance of people with disabilities at City Council meetings. While the City Hall is mandated to ensure their attendance, young people with disabilities often rely solely on personal contacts for crucial program information.

**In the Autonomous Republic of Adjara,** local self-government struggles in some cases to offer suitable services for individuals with disabilities, such as materials in Braille and sign-interpreters for hard-of-hearing youth.

**The Samtskhe Javakheti region** lacks infrastructure adapted for people with disabilities, leading to mobility issues and impeding their integration in society.



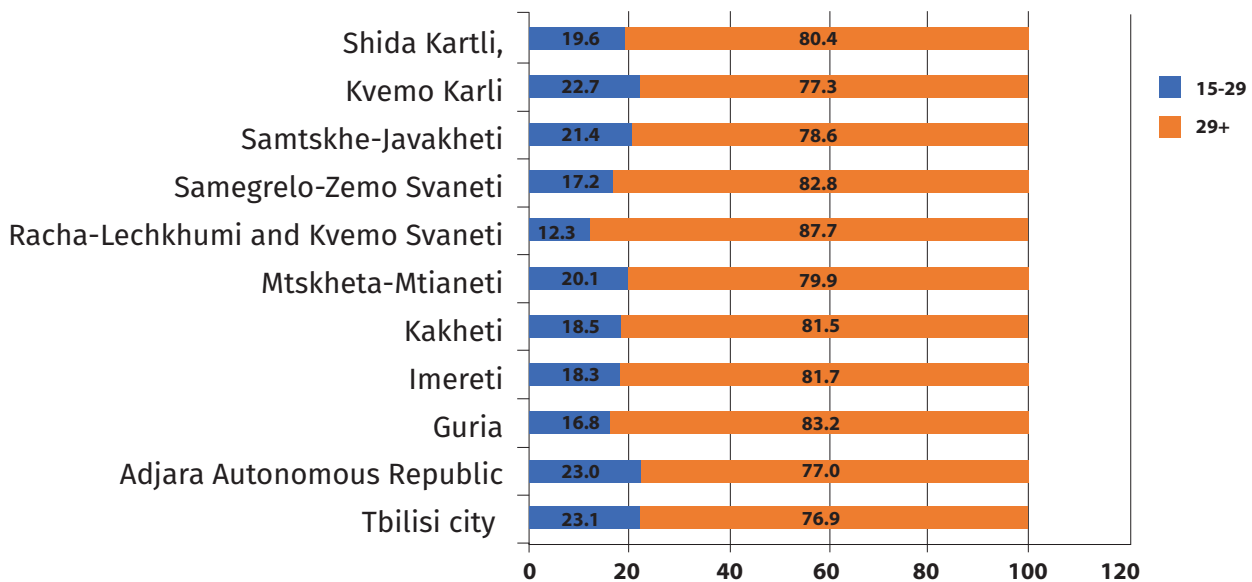
## INTRODUCTION

Young people in Georgia represent one of the most vulnerable demographic groups. They often face challenges in realizing their potential and engaging fully in public life. Adapting public services and programs to meet the specific needs of young people within their local contexts remains a significant challenge. Factors such as geographical location, physical abilities, cultural nuances, and ethnic or religious differences can further complicate their participation in social or political life. Moreover, the absence of a mechanism for evaluating public services at the municipal level hampers young people's ability to assess the effectiveness of existing services and contribute to their enhancement.

Therefore, this report examines the existing barriers hindering the involvement of young people residing in Shida Kartli, the Autonomous Republic of Adjara, and Samtskhe-Javakheti, in local self-government. It also evaluates municipal services targeting young individuals and the associated challenges. Additionally, the report proposes potential mechanisms for evaluating municipal services to address these issues.

According to the data of January 2023, there were 702,544 young people aged 15-30 living in Georgia, representing approximately 19% of the total population (Geostat, 2023). The percentage of youth in the following target regions is as follows: Shida Kartli 19.6%, Autonomous Republic of Adjara 23%, and Samtskhe-Javakheti 21.4% (Cheishvili and Gogoladze 2020).

**Figure #1: share of 29-year-olds in the population of the regions, 2020**



source: UNFPA. 2020. Youth index. Available at:

[https://georgia.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/youth\\_index\\_geo\\_2021\\_pdf.pdf](https://georgia.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/youth_index_geo_2021_pdf.pdf)

The majority of active citizens typically possess at least a secondary, or higher education, are employed or engaged in volunteer work, and participate in elections. Notably, according to 2022 data, 31% of young people aged 15-29 in Georgia are neither employed nor enrolled in education (IDFI 2023). Despite this, the IRI public survey indicates that 80% of young people have expressed a desire to participate in previous parliamentary elections, although 38% lacked knowledge about the current electoral environment (IRI 2020). Furthermore, in various regions of Georgia, a significant portion of young individuals refrain from participating in decision-making processes, often due to a lack of awareness regarding municipal youth programs and services (FES 2021). Thus, to enhance youth involvement in decision-making, it is crucial to increase their understanding of democratic participation and the related tools, bolster their practical skills in democratic engagement, and develop municipal services or programs tailored to their specific needs (EECMD 2021).

The engagement of young people in democratic processes, particularly in local self-government, is supported by the "Code of Local Self-Government", outlining measures to "promote youth policy development at a local level" (Legislative Herald of Georgia 2024, Article 16, Clause 4).

As per the legislation, the following forms of citizen participation in local self-government implementation are delineated:

a) a general Assembly of a settlement.

b) a petition.

c) the council of civil advisors.

d) participation in the sessions of the municipality Sakrebulo and the sessions of its commission;

e) hearing reports on the work performed by the Mayor of the municipality and by a member of the municipality Sakrebulo.

According to research conducted by the Georgian Institute of Politics (GIP) in Shida Kartli, the Autonomous Republic of Adjara, and Samtskhe-Javakheti, young people predominantly utilize petitions as a form of involvement (Appendix 1, focus groups 2023). Additionally, findings from a study conducted by the Center for Social Research and Analysis reveal that when asked about the implementation of measures by local self-government to enhance youth involvement for better decision-making opportunities at the local level, 24.1% of 18-24-year-old people surveyed across Georgia responded affirmatively, while 35.1% answered negatively. Similarly, 25.5% of citizens aged 25-34 provided a positive response, compared to 28.8% who did not (ISSA 2021). Therefore, it is evident that to enhance the participation of young people in local self-government, it is imperative to actively engage them in the development and subsequent evaluation of programs and services tailored to their needs.

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During the pandemic, it became evident that remote communication and feedback mechanisms between citizens and administrative bodies are indispensable in public administration. Currently, the primary type of indirect citizen communication with local government remains telephone calls, particularly through hotlines. Notably, research conducted by the Association of Young Lawyers of Georgia involved test calls to hotlines in various municipalities, as well as sending letters, revealing that while some feedback mechanisms exist on official websites and social media platforms, they generally offer limited information (Menabde, Shinde 2021). Considering that electronic communication poses fewer challenges for the majority of young people, municipalities should strive to deliver various services remotely through their official websites. This can be facilitated by leveraging the functionalities of unified electronic management systems available on these websites. Ideally, municipalities should regularly update user-friendly instructions for each service and administrative process, disseminating them both electronically and in print. This approach aims to simplify the interaction between citizens and local self-government bodies during service delivery and evaluation.

This paper provides an analysis of youth involvement in local self-government and municipal services in three specific regions, namely Shida Kartli, the Autonomous Republic of Adjara, and Samtskhe-Javakheti. It examines existing mechanisms and barriers to youth participation, evaluates the level of youth engagement, reviews municipal services and programs tailored to youth, and explores methods for their assessment.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### ***The Research purpose and the selection criteria of the participants***

The study aimed to assess the current accessibility of municipal programs and services for youth, pinpoint barriers, and propose viable solutions.

For research clarity, municipal services were categorized into three primary domains:

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- ▶ Examination of existing mechanisms for youth engagement in local self-government.
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- ▶ Analysis of youth-oriented services and barriers within local municipalities in target regions.
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- ▶ Proposal of methods to enhance the evaluation mechanisms of services at the local municipality level in target regions.
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For the research, three regions in Georgia housing various vulnerable youth populations were selected. While youth generally fall under the vulnerable category, these regions allow for the inclusion of additional vulnerable groups. Specifically, the study focused on youth residing near the occupation line in Shida Kartli, the highland population in Adjara, and ethnic minorities in Samtskhe-Javakheti. Furthermore, the research aimed to ensure the inclusivity and flexibility of youth involvement in local self-government by considering the experiences and perspectives of individuals with disabilities.

Data collection primarily involved requesting public information (FOI requests), processing official reports and statistics, and analyzing other secondary sources. The core analysis relied on findings from research conducted with the target groups.

Within the research scope, five focus groups were conducted with individuals aged 15-30:

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- ▶ Two focus groups were convened in Shida Kartli, specifically in Gori, involving a total of 11 participants (9 women, 2 men) from Gori and Khashuri, including individuals with disabilities.
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- ▶ In the Autonomous Republic of Adjara, two focus groups were held in Batumi, engaging 10 participants (6 women, 4 men) from Khelvachauri, Khulo, Keda, and Batumi, - and also included people with disabilities.
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- ▶ One focus group was organized in Akhalkalaki, in Samtskhe-Javakheti, with 17 participants (14 women, 3 men) from Akhalkalaki, Akhaltsikhe, and Ninotsminda, - including ethnic minorities.
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As part of the research, a total of 10 in-depth interviews were carried out with representatives from local authorities, non-governmental organizations, and local media outlets.

▶ In Shida Kartli, in-depth interviews were conducted with representatives from Gori City Hall, a non-governmental organization, and a local media outlet.

▶ In Adjara, one in-depth interview was conducted with representatives from the local government, a local media outlet, and a non-governmental organization.

▶ In Samtskhe-Javakheti, one in-depth interview was conducted with a representative from the local council, as well as two representatives of non-governmental organizations, and one media representative (refer to table #1).

Additionally, consultations were held with the Kutaisi municipality, where the Open Government Program is being implemented.

**Table 1: Distribution of in-depth interviews and focus groups conducted within the framework of the GIP study by region.**

Region	In-depth interviews/focus groups by sectors			
	Local self-government	Local non-government organization	Media	Focus-group
Autonomous republic of Adjara	1	1	1	2 (10 participants, 6 women; 4 men)
Shida Kartli	1	1	1	2 (11 participants, 9 women; 2 men)
Samtskhe-Javakheti	1	2	1	1 (17 participants, 14 women, 3 men)

## RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

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### INACCURATE STATISTICS AND LACK OF MATERIAL

One significant limitation we encountered during the research was the scarcity of literature documenting Georgia's experiences with feedback mechanisms implemented in local self-governments and access to public services. Desk research relied on studies conducted by various organizations at different times, complicating the analysis of regional contexts according to consistent criteria. Furthermore, the existing studies are quite outdated and fail to present an accurate portrayal of the current situation. Additionally, the statistics available are imprecise and outdated, posing challenges to quantitative data analysis and hindering a comprehensive understanding of the severity of the issue.

### REPRESENTATIVENESS:

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The participation of municipal representatives from diverse regions in the focus groups prevents generalization in a regional context. However, it is notable that in focus groups conducted within the same region, responses often echoed each other, indicating a prevailing trend. Despite the active and motivated nature of the young participants in the study within their respective regions, generalizing results within a regional context is invalid. Moreover, regarding representativeness, it is essential to acknowledge that the information provided by young people reflects the realities of specific cities and villages, potentially differing slightly from the overall regional situation.

## CHAPTER 1: MECHANISMS OF YOUTH INVOLVEMENT IN LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT

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### SHIDA KARTLI REGIONS

A stylized map of the Shida Kartli region in Georgia, showing its geographical outline in a light beige color against a darker beige background.

The budget income of Gori municipality stands at 90 million GEL. The majority of it is allocated towards infrastructural projects, with educational and social programs coming in next (Legislative Herald of Georgia, 2023). The City Hall endeavors to support local-level small-scale projects and youth involvement through various programs. Additionally, there are frequent instances of collaboration with numerous non-governmental or international organizations. Despite these efforts, young residents of Shida Kartli encounter various daily challenges.

Respondents' experiences regarding involvement in local self-government vary based on their workplace and age. It's crucial to distinguish the opinions of schoolchildren from those of adult participants, given their differing perspectives. According to students from the Shida Kartli region (Khashuri municipality), youth involvement in local self-government entails participating in initiatives or projects that impact regional/municipal infrastructure and other pertinent issues, often tied to involvement in budgeting.

Local organizations strive to foster the engagement of schoolchildren and youth across the municipality (Gori, youth, July 6, 2023). During focus groups, emphasis was placed on the role of the American Corner in promoting youth initiatives. In general, American Spaces aim to cultivate connections between the United States and local communities through diverse engaging activities and programs (US Embassy in Georgia).

Participants showcase various levels of experience regarding involvement in local self-government. For instance, one of the school students initiated putting up signboards across the city (Gori, youth, July 6, 2023). Additionally, they said that weekly training sessions take place in Khashuri municipality that cover topics such as the needs of disabled individuals, and the school-based social worker consistently provides students with diverse information. It has to be noted that social workers have been active in Georgian schools since 2021 (Ministry of Education, Science, and Youth of Georgia).

***"The municipality taught us how to write a statement, and similar stuff. The school social worker took us to the court and talked to us about the procedures there" (Gori, youth, July 6, 2023).***

In terms of cooperation with the mayor's office, adult respondents from Gori have been involved in projects co-funded by the mayor's office, including those related to reproductive health. Furthermore, the City Hall's "Council for Youth" initiative promotes local-level small-scale projects and tries to engage young people in discussions on various issues (Gori, Youth, July 6, 2023).

Participants noted that the Gori Municipality Advisory Council convenes every 2-3 months, and diverse information is provided during these meetings. However, many young people lack the necessary information and/or competence to engage with the municipal services. For example, there's an electronic form, titled "Your Idea to the Mayor", which is available for public use, yet its requirement for an electronic signature renders it challenging for residents. Moreover, young individuals can present their initiatives during camps organized by the City Hall or sign up for meetings with the Mayor with regard to social issues on every Wednesday, although the latter is perceived as less accessible to the general public (Gori, Youth, July 6, 2023).

The representative of the Gori Municipality City Hall said that the City Hall offers various types of services to the local population, including healthcare, social, cultural-recreational, educational programs etc.. The establishment of the child protection service within the City Hall marks a recent development (Gori, municipality, July 6, 2023).

In 2023, Gori City Hall initiated over 40 youth-oriented projects, which have had more than 6,000 beneficiaries in total (Gori Municipality City Hall, list of projects 2023).

Concerning youth-focused programs in particular, the City Hall hosts a "League of Leaders", bringing together youth from different municipalities. They have developed a policy document which defines priority issues, which are addressed through collaborative efforts with the youth (Gori, Municipality, July 6, 2023). Furthermore, the City Hall organizes camps, sporting and educational events, with particular emphasis on facilitating participation of youth from socially vulnerable families during summer camps (Gori, municipality, July 6, 2023)

It must be noted that local self-government collaborates with local civil society organizations. This collaboration was underscored both during the focus group and in direct discussions with the City Hall representative. During the focus group, it was mentioned that joint efforts, with the cooperation of City Hall and the support from the non-governmental organization "Civil Society Institute" (CSI), interested individuals in Shida Kartli had been enabled to undergo training on local self-government and subsequently implement their own initiatives. The City Hall representative also focused on this cooperation, and highlighted the partnership with CSI under the "Civic Budget" project. This initiative, based on co-financing principles, selects and funds various youth-driven projects. The chosen projects are managed by the City Hall (Gori, Municipality, July 6, 2023).




Nevertheless, some respondents expressed the sentiment that elected officials in the municipality fail to grasp their duty to serve the population adequately. They believe that merely addressing basic issues and launching initiatives before elections is insufficient (Gori, youth, July 6, 2023).

"We wanted to build a youth center in the village of Didi, in Gori municipality, but the local authorities considered the issue of outdoor lighting to be a higher priority. It was a great disappointment for these young people" (Gori, Youth, July 6, 2023).

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## AUTONOMOUS REPUBLIC OF ADJARA



In the Autonomous Republic of Adjara, young people constitute 23% of the total population (UNFPA 2020), reflecting a significant demographic segment, aged 15-29. Despite initiatives undertaken by local self-government, creating services tailored to the interests of local youth while ensuring inclusivity remains a challenge. In 2019, an LEPL Regional Youth Center was opened in Adjara, with the primary objective of engaging youth in economic and cultural spheres, fostering volunteerism, and developing programs for career advancement and skill enhancement. Various international donors and organizations implement diverse development projects in the Adjara region; however, the absence of youth engagement and citizens' feedback mechanisms impedes identifying their dispositions and needs.

Citizen involvement in service development processes, as per municipal practices, occurs predominantly in the final stages, proving somewhat ineffective. Occasionally, focus groups involving thematic groups, including youth and individuals with disabilities, are conducted. However, such involvement tends to be informational in nature, yielding limited tangible improvements in services (Tech 2021). Furthermore, a study conducted by the Youth Agency and the Friedrich Ebert Foundation (FES) highlighted that 69% of Adjara's youth are unaware of available programs and services within local municipalities (FES 2021). Notably, local television serves as the primary source of information for those aware of such offerings. The main activities designated for young people, including sports competitions, concerts, and cleanup campaigns, primarily target school-aged individuals, thus failing to address the interests and needs of youth aged 15 to 29 (FES 2021).

As part of the focus groups conducted by GIP, young people who have sought services from the municipality at least once were interviewed. These individuals had varied experiences regarding their collaboration with the local government. Opinions were split; some described their interactions with the local self-government positively, while others expressed dissatisfaction with its performance. The absolute majority of young people interviewed consider themselves to be active participants in civic affairs. They view youth activism as attending City Council meetings, contacting the relevant department at City Hall, and collecting signatures (Batumi, Youth, July 3, 2023).

As a positive example of collaboration with the local mayor's office, young people mentioned the painting of zebra crossings (marked crosswalks) and the allocation of space for handicrafts exhibitions. They noted that City Hall itself has initiated involving active young people in specific events. However, young people find it challenging to receive requested public information within a reasonable timeframe and send timely responses. For instance, focus group participants cited a specific incident where they requested a geological report for the construction of a secondary road connecting a village in Khelvachauri to the central road, which was delayed by four months. Moreover, the young people claim that despite severe consequences having come into light in the geological report, and despite a following municipal inspection, the problem has not received an appropriate response (Batumi, young people, July 3, 2023).

The research also revealed that young people primarily approach local self-government to address infrastructural issues. The vast majority of them negatively evaluate the city's urban and transport policies, believing that the population's interests are not adequately considered in decision-making processes. In many cases, City Hall representatives avoid discussing pressing issues during public discussions. "Chaotic construction and the absence of city planning are significant problems. When you step outside, you're directly on the street; there's no yard" (Batumi, media, July 6, 2023).

Regarding vulnerable groups in the regions, - advocates for people with disabilities frequently engage with local self-government - through advocacy and lobbying efforts, Batumi implemented a personal assistant program. However, the advocates indicate that the local self-government is not open to receiving advice, considering recommendations, or implementing innovations aimed at enhancing the quality of life for vulnerable groups. A participant in the focus group remarked: "Working with local self-government was very difficult at first, but when we got to know each other's activities, cooperation became relatively easier" (Batumi, young person, person with a disability, July 5, 2023).

Feedback is a vital tool for enhancing communication with local governments. Many young individuals feel that local self-government representatives often lack adequate awareness of the challenges faced by the local population and are unwilling to enhance their efforts in this regard. The absence of an evaluation mechanism for City Hall's services and programs further compounds these challenges. For instance, key issues remain unaddressed in areas such as gathering statistical data related to employment or infrastructure adaptation, particularly concerning persons with various forms of disabilities.

## SAMTSKHE- JAVAKHETI REGION

Among youth-oriented services available in the local municipalities of Samtskhe-Javakheti, two main directions stand out. Firstly, there are sports-related opportunities aimed at promoting a healthy lifestyle among young people. Secondly, there are cultural activities, where youth are involved through various means, play a significant role (ACT 2021). In particular, these activities involve concerts to showcase local talent or events held during holidays to uplift and socialize the community (Akhalkalaki, Municipality, July 27, 2023). Furthermore, services and programs related to healthcare and civic education were highlighted by the youth in focus groups. Notably, the youth themselves or their family members have benefited from the universal healthcare program at least once. The summer school program, which engages approximately 100 local young people in cooperation with the municipality, receives positive feedback. However, concerns were raised regarding language barriers and the perceived isolation from youth in other regions, hindering integration efforts (Akhalkalaki, youth, July 27, 2023). These concerns were echoed by a representative from the local non-governmental sector, who emphasized the importance of allowing children the opportunity to leave the region, meet others, and feel a part of the broader community (Akhalkalaki, media, July 27, 2023).

Rather than mentioning the services and programs provided by the municipalities, young people found it easier to recall projects initiated by various international or local organizations at the local level. Among these projects, participants in the focus group highlighted humanitarian programs by the Red Cross, the "Young Idea Center" for generating ideas, the Zhvania Center for language-learning, and initiatives under the USAID Youth Center, facilitating discussions with municipal council (Sakrebulo) representatives about their concerns. Additionally, they mentioned the Akhalkalaki media space, where they can contribute articles suggesting ways to enhance the region (Akhalkalaki, Youth, July 27, 2023).

It is noteworthy that the majority of the youth involved in the focus group identify themselves as active citizens, active youngsters. They substantiated this by mentioning activities they have engaged in or aspire to join. For instance, they referred to a campaign where posters were used to disseminate information about public services. According to them, an active individual is someone who takes part in training sessions and projects and shares the knowledge gained within their cities and villages. However, it's important to highlight that they lack adequate information about the diverse tools that could enhance their involvement in the local decision-making process.

During an interview, a representative from a local non-governmental organization highlighted that the young mayor of Akhalkalaki is highly motivated to seek out young individuals who can not only assess particular programs but also contribute ideas and initiatives to the mayor. However, such instances, according to the representative, are quite rare (Akhalkalaki, non-governmental sector, July 27, 2023).

This claim is supported by the findings of the survey conducted among young people in Samtskhe-Javakheti. Specifically, when asked if they had been involved in significant decision-making processes within their municipality in the past 1-2 years, the majority responded negatively (FES 2021). However, it's important to note that there is a willingness among young people to be more active, despite lacking the necessary knowledge and skills to make their involvement more effective and outcome-oriented.

## CHAPTER 2: OBSTACLES TO DELIVERING SERVICES TAILORED TO YOUTH IN LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

**Table 2: Obstacles to Engagement in Local Government and Accessing Services for Youth from Various Vulnerable Groups - Based on Focus Group Results**

Region	Youth in general	Ethnic minorities	People with ~ disabilities	Youth living at the occupation line, internally displaced persons
<b>Shida Kartli</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Low availability of information tailored for young comprehension</li> <li>2. Low level of awareness</li> <li>3. Use of ineffective means of communication by the government</li> </ol>		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Lack of information</li> <li>2. Absence of adapted infrastructure</li> <li>3. Lack/absence of mechanisms of involvement of young persons with disabilities</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Limited access to the Internet</li> <li>2. Lack of information</li> </ol>
<b>Autonomous Republic of Adjara</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Frequent turnover in public service staff affecting service delivery.</li> <li>2. Failure to meet deadlines for providing public information.</li> <li>3. Urban construction chaos and related challenges pose difficulties for youth.</li> <li>4. Youth involvement in decision-making processes is not sufficiently encouraged.</li> </ol>		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Infrastructure inadequacy and lack of suitable services.</li> <li>2. Regular turnover in local government personnel.</li> <li>3. Limited competence among public sector employees regarding available services.</li> <li>4. Limited receptivity to critical feedback.</li> </ol>	
<b>Samtskhe-Javakheti</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Transportation issues.</li> <li>2. Information deficiency.</li> <li>3. Limited awareness.</li> <li>4. Communication gap between urban and rural areas.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Social exclusion</li> <li>2. Language barrier</li> <li>3. Limited freedom.</li> <li>4. Limited awareness</li> <li>5. Restricted access to public information.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Mobility challenges</li> <li>2. Lack of adapted infrastructure and pertinent services.</li> </ol>	

**Table 3: Obstacles to the Engagement of the Elderly in Local Governance and Accessing Services - Findings from Interviews with Representatives of Local Government, Media, and Non-Governmental Organizations in the Target Regions.**

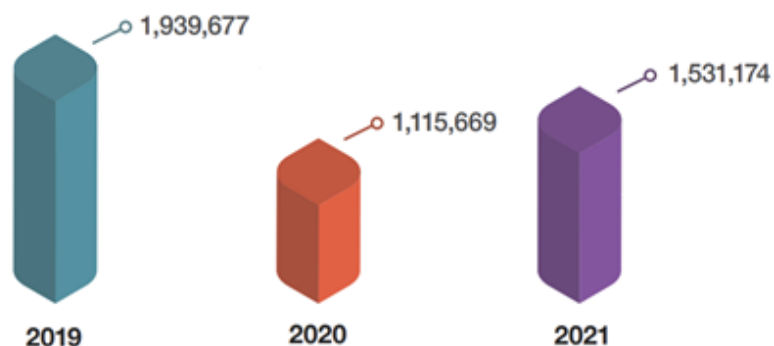
<b>Region</b>	<b>Local Government</b>	<b>Local Media</b>	<b>Local NGOs</b>
<b>Shida Kartli</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Decreased motivation among young individuals.</li> <li>2. Limited awareness levels among the youth.</li> <li>3. Elevated migration rates.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Limited awareness</li> <li>2. Nihilistic attitudes.</li> <li>3. Concerns about the potential negative impact of their actions on family or community.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Youth inactivity.</li> <li>2. Limited access to internet</li> <li>3. Apprehension about taking decisive actions.</li> </ol>
<b>Autonomous Republic of Adjara</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Inactivity among the youth.</li> <li>2. Limited awareness levels.</li> <li>3. Clear articulation of needs.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Limited awareness</li> <li>2. Hesitance to express critical opinions to avoid affecting family members' job prospects.</li> <li>3. Challenges in delivering information through appropriate channels.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Decreased interest among young individuals.</li> <li>2. Infrastructure malfunctions in Adjara's highlands.</li> <li>3. Reluctance to voice critical opinions.</li> </ol>
<b>Samtskhe-Javakheti</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Youth inactivity.</li> <li>2. Reduced interest of young individuals in self-governance matters.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Youth inactivity.</li> <li>2. Challenges in the effective dissemination of information by authorities.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Information scarcity.</li> <li>2. Insufficient public transportation.</li> <li>3. Ethnic minorities' isolation from the rest of Georgia.</li> </ol>

## AUTONOMOUS REPUBLIC OF ADJARA

The revenues of the Autonomous Republic of Adjara in 2024 exceeds 5 million GEL. Most of the priorities for the current year include elections, enhancing tourism infrastructure, promoting business and exports, as well as bolstering the youth sector, in addition to education. Specifically, the priorities mentioned included the development of relevant programs for the career development and qualification enhancement of young people, as well as uncovering and nurturing the intellectual and physical abilities of the youth in the Adjara region. Additionally, promoting proper time-management and a healthy lifestyle, encouraging youth employment, and providing social services for disabled and socially vulnerable young people for favorable conditions for inclusion and active participation in life (Legislative Herald of Georgia, 2023).

Youth issues in the City Hall of Batumi Municipality are overseen by the Department of Education, Culture, Sports, and Youth. Furthermore, it is important to highlight that, as per the application of the LEPL "Youth Agency," two employees from the City Hall of Batumi Municipality are directly designated to participate in the implementation process of the "Municipal Youth Policy Development" sub-program. Their responsibilities include the development, implementation, and management of municipal policies and programs related to youth. In 2019, the expenditure for various activities within the framework of youth policy in Batumi Municipality exceeded 1.9 million GEL, while in 2020 it amounted to approximately 1.1 million GEL. Looking at the budget allocated in previous years, in 2021, the budget allocated for youth activities exceeded 1.5 million GEL (FES 2021). Despite this increase in funding, there are still numerous challenges that hinder young people from realizing their full potential.

**Graph #2: Budget Allocation for Youth Projects and Programs in Batumi Municipality (2019-2021) (in GEL).**



Source: Youth needs and challenges at municipal and regional level, 2021.

Available at: <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/georgien/18399.pdf>

The specific projects and programs for which funds were allocated are diverse, with a primary focus on sports activities. However, it is important to note that there are also activities planned and implemented in the areas of professional training and non-formal education.

In the Adjara region, the integration of persons with disabilities remains a challenge. However, the successful implementation of the home care program stands out as an achievement resulting from the advocacy efforts of the local community group. Notably, Georgia ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2014, affirming its legal commitment to ensure that all individuals with disabilities can enjoy human rights and fundamental freedoms. The passing of the Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2020 marked another positive step towards protecting their rights and welfare. Following the ratification of the Convention, there was an improvement in the legal and political environment to some extent: mechanisms were introduced to support the inclusion of persons with disabilities in society, the process of transitioning to the social model and deinstitutionalization began, and social assistance and healthcare programs were initiated.

Despite these changes, the daily lives of persons with disabilities in Georgia have seen only slight improvements. They remain one of the most vulnerable groups, facing limited access to education, employment, and healthcare, as well as enduring stigma and prejudice. The disability assessment system in Georgia has primarily adhered to the medical model, neglecting independent existence and environmental factors that significantly impact the well-being of these individuals (Kukava, 2022).

As part of the study, focus group participants identified several barriers preventing them from accessing various services and programs. Among them, disabled individuals face numerous challenges in accessing information and integrating into society as full members. In addition to the absence of a feedback mechanism, the respondents interviewed identified access to various resources and unqualified personnel as the main challenges.



### ***Lack of access to resources***

The majority of focus group participants highlighted that accessing various types of resources poses a challenge, primarily due to the scarcity in many cases of resources at the local level. This issue is particularly pertinent for persons with disabilities, as accessing services often requires a physical presence, which can be difficult as not all persons with disabilities have personal assistants. Moreover, the inadequacy of the city's road infrastructure and buildings exacerbates this problem even further

The issue of mobility in the country is directly correlated with access to resources. Due to the lack of accessibility in some centers and buildings, persons with disability are unable to access these locations. Additionally, it is not feasible to provide statements in Braille for blind people. The City Hall and the City Council do not provide a sign language interpreter to assist hearing-impaired citizens in accessing services.

Young people with opinions do not attend council meetings, and as a result there is a lack of discussion of critical questions. Consequently, decision-making becomes the prerogative of a few individuals (Batumi, media, personal communication, July 6, 2023). The Adjara region is unique in that public meetings are held in mosques, where women are not permitted to attend. Meetings of this nature should be held in neutral spaces to ensure that both women and men have equal opportunities to participate in the decision-making process (Batumi, youth, personal communication, July 3, 2023).

### ***The ineffective performance of local government staff***

The focus group participants discussed the competence of civil servants and identified it as a challenge that hinders citizens from accessing services. According to young people correspondences that are sent electronically are frequently either lost or left unaddressed. Additionally, obtaining a proper response is often impossible. even through the hotline. due to technical malfunctions.

***“A citizen who comes to the City Hall to receive a specific service is not provided with information about related services offered at other levels of government by the responsible employee” (Batumi, Youth, July 5, 2023).***

The participants of the focus group indicated that in many cases, the employees themselves are not informed about state services. Personnel turnover and frequent changes impact the level of training and awareness among new employees,

### ***Absence of a feedback system in local self-government***

According to the focus group participants, there is no feedback mechanism (digital or verbal) utilized in the local self-governing unit. According to them, City Hall is often not receptive to receiving feedback, and even when residents have the opportunity to provide input it is seldom reflected in the improvement of their activities or services, except for rare exceptions.

Young people living in Shida Kartli municipalities encounter several challenges in providing youth-oriented services in local self-governments. These include inconsistencies between municipality priorities and youth needs, low involvement of disabled individuals, and others. However, young people in these areas also face specific barriers due to their proximity to the occupation line, including limited access to the Internet and digital information in villages located along the occupation line. This is a small list of just some of the barriers that young people living in Shida Kartli face every day in terms of providing public services.

***The misalignment between the priorities of local government and youth***

When discussing youth-oriented public services, the focus group identified several barriers that young people encounter on a daily basis. In their view, the essence of the problem is in the misalignment between the priorities of the municipality and those of young people. Decision-makers and civil servants often prioritize infrastructural issues, whereas social issues are deemed much more significant by young people (Gori, Young people, July 6, 2023).

***“There is a lack of individualized approach in the municipality. It is more important for the municipality to please larger population and cover larger population, while the needs of specific individuals are lost.” (Gori, youth, July 11, 2023).***

***Limited access to information***

One of the challenges highlighted was the attendance of disabled individuals at City Council meetings. Young people with disabilities asserts that the sole means of obtaining information about the program’s services is through personal contacts, which they find inappropriate (Gori, youth, July 11, 2023).

In villages where Internet access is limited (near the occupation line and IDP settlements), residents face challenges in obtaining information online. Therefore, it is crucial to disseminate information through alternative means such as distributing leaflets and organizing face-to-face meetings, etc.

***“The website mentions the co-financing program, but lacks information on how and where to fill out the application. The application is not available online” (Gori, youth, July 6, 2023).***

In terms of providing information, the role of local media and television is crucial. For those who have limited access to the Internet, it is essential to disseminate information about public services and programs through local television channels. Given that senior citizens primarily obtain information through television, it is crucial to effectively utilize this platform. Additionally, as the older generation often serves as the conduit within families of specific information to the younger generation, this aspect should also be considered (Gori, youth, July 11, 2023).

### ***Scarcity of the municipality's budget***

From the perspective of local self-government, the main challenge in providing youth-oriented services is the size and allocation of the budget (Gori, municipality, July 6, 2023). The majority of the budget is allocated to infrastructural projects, followed by educational and social programs. Despite having relatively substantial funding compared to other municipalities, with a total budget exceeding 90 million GEL, this remains insufficient for the introduction and implementation of comprehensive youth-oriented services (Gori, municipality, July 6, 2023).

### ***Intersectoral cooperation***

Intersectoral cooperation is crucial for public awareness. The exchange and sharing of information between different sectors are prerequisites for providing the population with accurate and objective information to the fullest extent possible (Gori, media, July 15, 2023). The focus group also emphasized the role of local non-governmental organizations, universities, schools, and the private sector in the information chain. A comprehensive list of social programs is often compiled and published in the Legislative Herald of Georgia; however, a significant portion of the population remains unaware of these programs (Gori, youth, July 11, 2023).

"Often, business involvement and cooperation in ongoing projects and programs depends on personal contacts" (Gori, youth, July 6, 2023).

Furthermore, international donor organizations can effectively contribute to public awareness by producing informational booklets or campaigns for printing and distribution (Gori, media, July 15, 2023).

Finally, the criteria for inclusion in this or that program/project should be reviewed. According to the respondents, the requirements for inclusion in the activities are often so strict that it is impossible to meet them (Gori, youth, July 6, 2023). Ultimately, the criteria for inclusion in various programs or projects need to be reassessed.

## SAMTSKHE - JAVAKHETI REGION



Regarding access to municipal services in the Samtskhe-Javakheti region and the associated challenges, youth participating in the focus group emphasized three primary issues: a lack of adequate public transportation, language barriers, and insufficient access to information.

### ***The problem of moving and receiving information***

When discussing transportation issues, young people highlighted not only the absence of public transportation but also the affordability of services, which poses a challenge for a significant portion of the population. Additionally, they noted that the poor condition of road infrastructure and inadequate transportation options, coupled with the lack of accessibility, make it difficult for persons with disabilities to travel and participate in social activities. As a result, many individuals with disabilities are confined to their homes, hindering their social integration (Akhalkalaki, youth, July 27, 2023).

Non-governmental organizations also emphasized these issues, highlighting how the absence of transportation isolates rural populations. Disparities between urban and rural areas in the region are stark, as evidenced by the ACT survey findings, which revealed that 46% of young people surveyed in villages reported a lack of available services in their communities, compared to only 5% in urban areas of the same region (ACT 2021). The focus group participants highlighted this exact issue, noting that individuals in villages lack the information and opportunities available to residents of Akhaltsikhe and Akhalkalaki. They have an initiative to address the awareness gap among the village population by financing transportation for young city residents to rural areas. There, they will engage with the local population, particularly their peers, and share the knowledge acquired from trainings or various programs.

It's worth mentioning that media representatives undertook a project aimed at informing rural populations about various services. They collaborated with young people to disseminate information to target groups through their involvement, advocacy campaigns, and other means. The young participants were educated about available grants, local or regional programs, and social service agency activities for the socially vulnerable. However, they encountered a mobility issue among the general population. To address this, the youth received online training as part of the program objectives. Eventually, media representatives initiated a petition, presented it to the City Council, and after several meetings and compelling arguments, persuaded the local authorities to trial a public transport line. (Akhalkalaki, media, July 27, 2023).

It should be noted here that initially the initiators requested from the City Council a form for a petition, which was not available. Subsequently, the media and the non-governmental sector proposed various petition formats and eventually agreed upon one. Thus, the media and the non-governmental sector aided the local municipality, fostered youth engagement, and ultimately secured the establishment of public transport.

### ***Language barrier***

The language barrier presents a significant challenge, particularly for ethnic minorities who face restrictions in freely accessing services or programs. While municipal services in Armenian are available in regions densely populated by ethnic Armenians, the scope of these services is limited. Moreover, proficiency in the Georgian language is crucial for accessing public services and participating in larger-scale initiatives or projects. Nevertheless, it is important to highlight that unlike the older generation, young people demonstrate a greater willingness and have more resources to learn the state language (Akhalkalaki, youth, July 27, 2023; Akhalkalaki, non-governmental sector, July 27, 2023).

Media representatives also highlight the inadequacy of existing services as a significant challenge. They report frequent incidents of physical and psychological violence against young people and children in the region. Consequently, individuals affected often seek assistance from the media to obtain information about resources available to address psychological trauma or related issues. The media representative reported that although an office for providing psychological help to children was established in the City Hall, the service is non-operational. As a result, the media frequently conduct interviews with psychologists and produce programs addressing such topics (Akhalkalaki, media, July 27, 2023).

### ***Inactiveness of youth***

The issue of young people's passivity was further highlighted by a representative from the local self-government and a member of a non-governmental organization. The municipal representative noted that attracting and motivating young people to participate in local governance is a significant challenge. This sentiment was echoed by a media representative who shared an example involving the Gender Equality Council's initiative to celebrate Youth Day. Despite giving young people the opportunity to propose ideas for the celebration, there was little to no response or engagement from the youth themselves. This lack of initiative from young people reflects a broader pattern of inactiveness within the region. The root cause of their passivity could be attributed to a lack of basic understanding about democratic principles and mechanisms. Additionally, they may lack confidence in their ability to effect change.

## CHAPTER 3:

### ENHANCING SERVICE EVALUATION MECHANISMS IN LOCAL MUNICIPALITIES ACROSS TARGET THREE REGIONS

The research findings indicate a significant gap in service evaluation mechanisms across the municipalities of Shida Kartli, Samtskhe-Javakheti, and Adjara Autonomous Republic. According to the insights gathered from focus group discussions and individual interviews, none of the municipalities have established a formal system for evaluating public services. Instead, service provision largely relies on past experiences. For instance, services are considered needed and in demand even if they are used without comprehensive assessment or feedback mechanisms. Respectively, the local self-governments have no information on areas needing improvement or adjustments in service delivery (Gori, non-governmental sector, July 8, 2023). The absence of formal evaluation mechanisms leaves local self-governments uninformed about the necessity for improvements in service provision.

***“Individuals with health issues receive funding solely for specific medications, with no allowance for alternative medications required for the same condition, thereby restricting substitution options for financing” (Gori, non-governmental sector, July 8, 2023).***

The youth engaged in the focus group deliberated on implementing diverse feedback mechanisms, such as a phone application, an enhanced website feature, and a questionnaire form. Each method carries its own set of advantages and drawbacks, necessitating adaptation to accommodate individuals with varying demographics and levels of digital literacy. The existing platforms, which indirectly serve this purpose, are technically challenging, leading to reduced or no usage by the population. Additionally, conducting a campaign and delivering information in a comprehensible language are essential for effectively informing the population.

Respondents in the target regions of the study outlined various methods for evaluating different public services. They highlighted the complexity of the issue, suggesting a comprehensive approach. This involves utilizing diverse evaluation mechanisms and platforms, alongside selecting appropriate and clear terminology. Furthermore, accurately defining the target audience, understanding their needs, and providing relevant communication channels were emphasized as crucial aspects of the evaluation process.

The necessity to enhance youth-oriented public services has been recognized in the region. Additionally, young people, along with representatives from the media and non-governmental sectors, seek to establish a feedback mechanism. This mechanism would enable them to voice their opinions constructively and communicate their preferences regarding desired future services to local self-government authorities

### ***Developing evidence-based services***

In Shida Kartli and the Autonomous Republic of Adjara, there is a recognized need to engage the population in decision-making before developing public services. Conducting local surveys is deemed crucial before planning and budgeting specific programs or projects. This enables an assessment of the current situation and identification of local population needs based on research data. Respondents noted that local research is often lacking, leading to implementation of projects or programs that are disconnected from reality.

The lack of surveys tailored to the needs of persons with disabilities exacerbates the problem, as noted by respondents. There is a deficiency in utilizing approaches tailored to individuals, and the municipality's efforts are often limited to unproductive meetings, further complicating the situation for this demographic (Gori, youth, July 11, 2023).

The young people interviewed emphasized the importance of conducting periodic needs assessments and providing updated information about the programs and services offered by the local municipality to the population. They also stressed the significance of community involvement in city council sessions and the budget planning process.

### ***Phone call and/or SMS survey***

According to young people in Shida Kartli and Adjara region, one of the forms of evaluation acceptable to the respondents can be interviewing the beneficiary by phone call or short text message (SMS). In both cases, it is very important to prepare any questionnaire correctly and to ensure that the structure of the questions generates as short and specific answers as possible.

Telephone communication enables more in-depth responses and evaluations, whereas SMS surveys require less time (Gori, Youth, July 6, 2023). Additionally, conducting surveys at the beginning and end of service delivery would be beneficial to assessing expectations versus actual results and gathering more detailed feedback for program developers.

### ***Review section on website/social media and/or email survey***

During the discussions in the focus groups conducted in Shida Kartli and Samtskhe-Javakheti, the necessity of an online questionnaire was emphasized in both regions, one which could be administered via email or through an evaluation integrated into the website or social network. It is crucial to carefully design the questionnaire and accurately identify the beneficiaries to ensure that those with limited internet access are not excluded from the respondent pool. Additionally, various assessment schemes should be developed to cater for individuals with differing age and numerical competency levels.

In the context of Samtskhe-Javakheti, it is noteworthy that half of the youth participants in the focus group advocate for the development of an online feedback format. Given the region's specificity, they propose bilingual (Georgian-Armenian) evaluation forms. Moreover, they emphasize the importance of ensuring anonymity to avoid future cases of discrimination based on political affiliations.



Similarly to the young individuals interviewed in Adjara, those in Samtskhe-Javakheti, as well as representatives from the non-governmental sector, advocate the development of an online application for evaluation purposes that can be downloaded onto their mobile devices. In addition to this feedback channel, they express interest in establishing a public online platform where young people can anonymously or openly share their opinions about various services or programs. Moreover, they propose a monthly opportunity for young people to prioritize issues important to them, aiming to enhance their engagement in local governance (Akhalkalaki, youth, July 27, 2023).

According to the young individuals interviewed in Adjara and representatives of the non-governmental sector, an option for feedback could be integrated into the existing website of the City Hall. Similarly, according to the youth of Shida Kartli, a system could be developed that enables individuals to assess specific services using a "star" rating system, that considers various criteria. This system should be regularly monitored by the City Hall, with appropriate responses provided as necessary.

The interviews conducted in all three regions highlighted the importance of adopting a comprehensive approach and utilizing assessment mechanisms tailored to the local context and the specific age demographic. It was recognized that social conditions and digital literacy levels vary across different regions of Georgia, emphasizing the need for adaptable evaluation strategies.

### ***Face-to-face meetings between youth groups and representatives of municipalities***

Face-to-face meetings with representatives of the City Hall, Sakrebulo, and Gamgeoba emerged as a key feedback mechanism, according to some participants across all regions. They emphasized the importance of providing young people with a platform to freely express their opinions on the services they would like to see improved. According to young people, this method facilitates dialogue, ensuring that feedback is not one-sided. It allows representatives of the local government to directly address concerns and discuss how problems can be rectified.

The participants noted that face-to-face surveys have the advantage of higher response rates, as respondents are more likely to answer questions in person. Additionally, conducting the survey at point of service delivery ensures greater sincerity in responses, as they have fresh memories (Gori, youth, July 6, 2023). Indeed, face-to-face surveys may pose the risk of respondents feeling less comfortable and being less honest compared to anonymous assessments. However, they can still be valuable, especially when conducted by local government representatives during field meetings with the population, allowing for direct interaction and feedback.

***„Question about satisfaction with services can be added to the meetings with the deputies”  
(Gori, youth, July 6, 2023).***



Conducting oral evaluations of service satisfaction in front of municipality employees or neutral individuals, as suggested by some young people, could provide valuable feedback. However, ensuring anonymity in such a scenario might be challenging. Additionally, the simplicity and technical nature of a rating system based on oral feedback could be limiting. On the other hand, the suggestion by media representatives to periodically question citizens could serve as a means to increase accountability among local authorities regarding public service provision and youth program development. At the suggestion of the media representatives, the interviews may be open or, if the respondent wishes, closed. Media representatives would, it was suggested, spontaneously record interviews with the representatives of the municipality about the quality of services and the flexibility of their delivery. However, media representatives are generally skeptical about this because they believe that municipal officials' responses will consistently be more positive than the feedback anticipated from the population.

Additionally, it's worth noting that during the research phase, Gori Municipality City Hall initiated the development of a feedback mechanism for public services. They plan to integrate a dedicated questionnaire on the City Hall website to solicit feedback from the population regarding the quality of various services. This project is currently in the implementation stage and is scheduled for completion within the year.

## CONCLUSION

The report delves into an analysis of youth-oriented municipal services and the associated challenges in Shida Kartli, the Autonomous Republic of Adjara, and Samtskhe-Javakheti. It also proposes potential mechanisms for evaluating municipal services and obtaining feedback in general. The research draws upon existing reports on the regions in focus, analysis of focus group findings with young people in these areas, and insights gleaned from interviews with representatives of local authorities, media outlets, and non-governmental organizations.

The research findings indicate a shared challenge across the municipalities in all three regions: the lack of a mechanism for evaluating public services and ineffective infrastructure or services tailored to accommodate persons with disabilities. When comparing the regions in focus, it appears that youth-oriented services and programs are most well-developed in the Shida Kartli region, followed by the municipalities of the Autonomous Republic of Adjara. However, when considering the involvement of young people in local self-government and the availability of services tailored to their needs, the Samtskhe-Javakheti region faces the most significant challenges. In Shida Kartli, the local self-government finances various programs and social projects supporting the implementation of youth initiatives. However, the persistent issue of an insufficient budget remains a challenge. In the municipalities of Adjara, certain programs exist, although they are tailored to the needs of only a portion of the youth in urban areas. Specifically, youth services in Adjara predominantly target school children and are relatively less focused on the needs of young adults. In municipalities of the Samtskhe-Javakheti region, inhabited by ethnic minorities, youth services are primarily limited to cultural and sports events, which is not a main demand from young people. Another shared challenge across all three regions is the lack of communication between employees of the local-governments and young people, resulting in divergent visions. Often, local government representatives make decisions on behalf of young people, independently determining what they believe to be important, which often results in existing services and programs failing and does not increase the level of youth involvement in the decision-making. In all three regions, the majority of young people perceive themselves as active citizens, although there are notable differences between the situation of ethnic minorities living in Samtskhe-Javakheti and residents of Shida Kartli and the Autonomous Republic of Adjara. In the latter two regions, young people often initiate discussions on various issues, actively participate in municipality-led programs, and benefit from services tailored to their needs. However, in municipalities of Samtskhe-Javakheti inhabited by ethnic minorities, despite the willingness of local authorities to accept youth initiatives, there is a lack of significant activity from the young people themselves. Local government representatives attribute the passivity of young people to various factors but lack a definitive explanation for its cause.

In reality, young individuals in these regions often lack the necessary skills, confidence, and freedom to confidently express their ideas to the government. Consequently, there is a pressing need to enhance awareness among young people in the mentioned region, focusing on foundational issues. Meanwhile, in the other two regions, efforts should be directed towards providing greater freedom and opportunities for the implementation of youth-driven ideas. To enhance youth participation in self-governance and customize services to their needs, the development of a robust feedback mechanism is crucial. A key aspect of this entails establishing a system for evaluating municipal services, as highlighted in the research by discussions among young people. Locals emphasized the significance of periodically conducting surveys to assess municipal needs and keeping the population informed about new services. In this regard, phone and SMS surveys were identified as the most accessible and effective methods for gathering data on needs and evaluating population satisfaction with services. Secondly, as a more effective and youth-oriented tool, they identified the establishment of an open or anonymous service evaluation system accessible through websites, social networks, or email platforms, to be integrated within municipal frameworks. Thirdly, young people emphasized the importance of face-to-face feedback sessions between municipal representatives and youth. They believe such direct interaction will enhance service quality and foster greater citizen engagement in democratic processes. Therefore, it can be concluded that establishing feedback mechanisms within local municipalities will play a pivotal role in developing and enhancing youth-oriented services, thereby ensuring greater inclusivity in the regions studied.

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## ANNEX 1

### ***The list of the interviews conducted throughout the study:***


1. Akhalkalaki, Municipality, Personal communication, 27 July, 2023.
2. Akhalkalaki, Non-governmental sector 1, Personal communication, 27 July, 2023.
3. Akhalkalaki, Non-governmental sector 1, Personal communication, 27 July, 2023.
4. Akhalkalaki, Media, Personal communication, 27 July, 2023.
5. Batumi, Media, Personal communication, 6 July, 2023.
6. Khulo, Municipality representative, personal communication, July 7 2023
7. Batumi, non-government sector, personal communication, July 8 2023
8. Gori, Municipality, Personal communication, 6 July, 2023.
9. Gori, Non-governmental sector, Personal communication, 8 July, 2023.
10. Gori, Media, Personal communication, Personal communication, 15 July, 2023.

### ***The list of the focus groups conducted throughout the study:***


1. Akhalkalaki, Youth, 17 participants, 27 July, 2023.
2. Batumi, Youth, 10 participants, 3 July, 2023.
3. Gori, Youth, 8 participants, 6 July, 2023.
4. Gori, Youth, 3 participants, 11 July, 2023.


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