

# **The Analysis of the Local Government Questionnaires Results**

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## **I Round**

### **Introduction**

This questionnaire and its analysis are part of the International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy's (ISFED) "Active Citizens – Accountable Government" project. The purpose of this project is to promote active citizenship by enhancing citizen participation in decision-making process and increasing the accountability and transparency of the government in general.

The goal of the questionnaire is to evaluate the working conditions of local government officials and their constituency outreach. In addition, the questionnaire will provide citizens with the contact information and reception house for their local government officials, as well as the problems local governments face during the performance of their duties.

ISFED will administer and publish the results of the questionnaire quarterly so that citizens will have the opportunity to evaluate the work of local governments based on concrete information.

In addition, this questionnaire will be available for the benefit of other organizations that work on local governance issues. This will allow for additional recommendations and solution to problems that face local governments in Georgia.

### **Methodology**

The questionnaire was created by the International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED) and National Democratic Institute (NDI). The questionnaire I round covered the period from October 15, 2004 to January 15, 2005. ISFED rayon coordinators delivered the questionnaires to local government representatives and each questionnaire was personally filled out by the rayon Gamgebelis and Mayors of those towns that are not subordinate to rayons.

ISFED coordinators collected sixty-three completed questionnaires out of sixty-nine rayon or town governments. All percentages are calculated based on total of 63. Questionnaires from Gori, Ninotsminda, Terjola, Mestia, Tskaltubo and Kutaisi were not filled for several different reasons. First, Terjola rayon did not have a Gamgebeli for two months. Second, Tskaltubo Gamgebeli rarely appeared at the workplace to personal problems. Finally, ISFED's coordinators did not collect completed forms from Ninotsminda, Kutaisi, Gori and Mestia.

ISFED plans to conduct four rounds of questionnaires, which will allow our organization to compare and estimate the deterioration or improvement of working conditions and the performance of local governments in general. The results will be posted and presented to the public quarterly.

## Summary of findings

Local government is directly responsible for solving social, economic and other local problems of citizens. Thus, the relationship between citizens and local government and soliciting the input from citizens while making local decisions bear a big importance. Rayon Gamgebeli and town Mayor have a direct relationship with the rayon and town population, since their workplace is located in the rayon. Unlike majoritarian MPs, who are also responsible for meeting with citizens on a regular basis, Gamgebelis/town Mayors do not need to travel long distances to do so. However, the questionnaires show that local government representatives also face problems that prevent them from working efficiently. These problems can be divided into 3 categories:

- a) Relationships with citizens;
- b) Rayon Gamgebelis/town Mayors' working conditions;
- c) Work of rayon Gamgebelis/town Mayors.

a) The questionnaires show that majority of the Gamgebelis/town Mayors devote more than 10 days per month to the reception of citizens. According to their responses, every Gamgebeli/town Mayor has a specified time for reception of citizens and this is certainly appreciated. The fact that only one Gamgebeli uses electronic mail clearly shows the low level of modern technology usage.

The questionnaire also stated that Gamgebelis/town Mayors get large amount of appeals and letters from the citizens and respond to them to the best of their ability. Unfortunately, local government representatives face problems when they demand the responses from other state institutions – the responses to the forwarded letters arrive late, or their appeals are totally ignored that shows that state bodies do not work efficiently enough.

b) In general, Gamgebelis/town Mayors estimate their working conditions as normal, but a majority of them think that the conditions need to be improved. They state that better technologies (generator, computer, fax, internet, etc) and more qualified staff are needed to improve their performance.

We assume that Gamgeoba staff has enough salaries, because only one Gamgebeli noted that the salaries should be increased. However we think that increased salaries would result in attracting more qualified staff.

c) The questionnaires show that rayon Gamgebelis/town Mayors are more active in solving problems that exist in the social sphere and infrastructure of the rayon. However, it is desirable that they actively participate in draft law discussions. Furthermore, they should initiate this kind of discussions in their rayon. In this case, public opinion and notes from citizens would be considered by the Parliament of Georgia more than it is today.

The decisions of Gamgeobas are communicated to citizens via local press, television and other means, which is welcomed. Despite this, many Gamgebelis/town Mayors avoided answering the question about the ways of communicating the decisions of local executives

to the citizens that allows us to say that not everybody cares enough for public accessibility of information.

An absolute majority of the Gamgebelis/town Mayors responded that they provide citizens with the information on local budget accomplishments. However, it is desirable to post this information on a monthly basis, rather than quarterly or yearly.

## **Analysis**

### ***1. General Information***

The questionnaires were filled out by 91.30 % of local government representatives (63 Gamgebelis/town Mayors out of 69). ISFED is satisfied with the number of responders, since this was the first attempt to do systematic research on local governments.

### ***2. Relations with citizens***

All of the representatives of local governments stated that they have a specified time for citizen reception. According to their responses, 57.14 % of rayon Gamgebelis/town Mayors devotes more than 10 days to reception, 28.57% - 5-10 days, and 15.87% - less than 5 days. 90.48% of Gamgebelis/town Mayors receive more than 50 citizens in a month and 9.52% receive less than 50 citizens.

All of the Gamgebelis/town Mayors receive letters and complaints from their citizens and all of them react to these letters and demand responses from the relevant state organs. 49.21% of local government representatives face problems when they demand responses and 39.68% - do not. The majority of those who face problems reported that state departments respond late; 9.52% said that sometimes it is vague which department is responsible for a specific issue; a few Gamgebelis reported that state departments ignore their statements.

All rayon Gamgebelis/town Mayors inform citizens of the responses from relevant state departments: 69.84 % do this using the post, 17.46% - by telephone, 60.32% - on meetings and only one Gamgebeli does this using electronic mail (it should be considered that respondents could mark several answers simultaneously).

Other ways of communication with citizens and considering their opinion are: private meetings for 80.95% of Gamgebelis/town Mayors; town hall meetings – for 76.19%, telephone – 44.45%; public surveys – 17.46%; mass media – 1 Gamgebeli (Respondents could mark several answers).

***Results:*** We have found out that private meetings are the most common way of communication with the citizens and a majority of Gamgebelis/town Mayors devote more than 10 days a month to this activity. All of them have specified time (days and hours) for citizen reception. The fact that only one Gamgebeli uses electronic mail to communicate with citizens shows a low level of modern technology usage. If the Gamgebelis/town

*Mayors used modern technologies, like the internet, telephone or surveys, they would have more time to perform their other duties.*

*It is clear from the responses that Gamgebelis/town Mayors react to the citizens' letters and contact relevant state departments. Unfortunately, these departments respond late and sometimes even ignore the letters. This indicates that state institutions do not function effectively enough.*

### **3. Working conditions**

11.11% of Gamgebelis/town Mayors stated that their working conditions are bad. 79.37% reported that the working conditions are normal and only 6.35% reported them to be good. An absolute majority (93.65%) of Gamgebelis/town Mayors stated that working conditions need to be improved.

60.32% of rayon Gamgebelis/town Mayors consider that the working conditions can be improved through better technical equipment; 44.45% think that this requires more qualified staff and 7.94% think that less staff is required.

**Results:** *According to the responses, it is clear that the majority of Gamgebelis/town Mayors consider their working conditions to be normal, but still think that they need to be improved. For this purpose, better technical equipment (e.g. electricity generators) and more qualified staff are required.*

*We assume that the salaries of Gamgeoba staff are satisfactory, because only one Gamgebeli reported a need for increasing salaries.*

### **4. Work of Gamgeoba/Mayor**

93.65% of local government representatives stated that they have participated in town hall meetings in the rayon and 88.89% have participated in more than 3 town hall meetings.

44.45% of Gamgebelis/town Mayors have participated in draft law discussions in the rayon. 63.49% stated that none of the citizens' initiatives have been considered in the draft, but 28.81% stated that citizens' initiatives were considered in drafts such as local and state budgets, the Law on Public Education, and the Administrative Code.

93.65% of Gamgebelis/town Mayors reported that they have participated in solving problems in the rayon. The list of these solved problems includes: repairing roads, bridges and schools, improving water and gas supply systems, and social programs.

84.13% of Gamgebelis/town Mayors stated that they inform their citizens about local government decisions through the local press; 36,51% use local television; 44.45% post the information on the Gamgeoba information board.

95.24% of Gamgebelis/town Mayors stated that the information on town/rayon budget accomplishments are accessible to citizens. 74.6% of Gamgebelis/town Mayors said that this information is posted in local newspapers. 19.05% said that local television stations are used. 28.57% said that the information is available at the Gamgeoba secretariat.

This information is posted monthly according to 17.46% of Gamgebelis/town Mayors, quarterly according to 44.45%, and yearly according to 7.94%.

**Results:** *Gamgebelis'/town Mayors' active involvement in solving local problems in the social sphere and infrastructure is satisfactory. Their active participation in town hall meetings is also appreciated. However, it is desirable that they actively participate in draft law discussions. Furthermore, they should initiate this kind of discussions in their rayon. In this case, citizens' opinions and suggestions would be considered more than it is today.*

*The most popular means to communicate Gamgeoba's decisions to citizens is through the local press, followed by local television. In many cases, several means of communication are used. However, the number of Gamgebelis/town Mayors that did not respond to this question suggests that public access to government information is not a priority for all officials.*

*An absolute majority of rayon Gamgebelis/town Mayors provides information on the local budget expenditure to the population. In the case of local decisions, local mass media are used for this purpose. However, it must be said that this information should be posted on a monthly, instead of quarterly, basis.*

### **Recommendations:**

For the purpose of improving working conditions in Gamgeobas, more funds must be allocated from the rayon budget and Gamgeobas must be equipped with modern technology. Because of the energy crisis in the country, Gamgeobas must have their own source of electricity as well as computers, fax machines and other technical means of communication. Improving working conditions will make Gamgeoba's work and relations with citizens more effective. At the same time, Gamgeoba staff members must be trained to increase their qualifications.

Although rayon Gamgebelis/town Mayors have specified times for citizen reception, it is necessary to use other means (local press, television, radio etc.) to inform citizens about where and when they can meet with Gamgebeli/Mayor. Thus, not only the population of rayon centers, but those of villages will have relevant information.

Gamgebelis/town Mayors must be more active in arranging discussion of draft laws in rayons and participating in them. This kind of discussions will ensure that the opinion of citizens' concerning laws and decisions of the Parliament are considered. This will ensure the participation of citizens in the decision-making process, a key principle of democratic governance.

For the purpose of transparency, all rayon Gamgebelis/town Mayors must make public the decisions taken on local level. Information on local budget accomplishments must be posted on a regular monthly basis.