

**Analysis of the Questionnaire
Related to the Work of Majoritarian Members of Parliament of Georgia**

2nd Round

Introduction

The International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED) implements the project “Active Citizens – Accountable Government” throughout the whole territory of Georgia.

The project is aimed at promoting active citizenship by enhancing citizen participation in decision-making processes and increasing the accountability and transparency of government.

Within the framework of this project, among other activities, ISFED administers a quarterly questionnaire on the activities of Majoritarian Members of Parliament of Georgia in their respective rayons. The aim of the questionnaire is to identify the main problems facing majoritarian MPs in their constituencies and the kind of assistance that would be most effective in assisting them improve their work. The results and analysis of the questionnaire will be publicized in order to provide information regarding the work of majoritarian MPs and their local offices to the larger community.

Making the information regarding the work of majoritarian MPs available to the public promotes communication between citizens and majoritarian MPs and their local offices, and provides different organizations that work on these issues with insightful and valuable information.

A significant number of Majoritarian Members of Parliament (58 Members) participated in the first round of the questionnaire. Unfortunately, only 53 MPs completed the questionnaire in the second round.

We hope that the majoritarian MPs will cooperate more actively with ISFED in the future and will participate in the following rounds of the questionnaire, bearing in mind that the aim of this project is to assist and improve their activities on the local level.

Sincerely,

Tamar Zhvania
ISFED Executive Director

Summary of the Findings

The results of the second round of the questionnaire indicate that majoritarian Members of Parliament continue to face many problems that prevent them from working effectively with their electorate and properly functioning their local offices. These problems can be divided into the following categories:

- a) The functioning of MPs' constituency offices;
- b) Relations with citizens;
- c) Parliamentary work;
- d) Working in rayons.

a) The functioning of the local offices of majoritarian MPs is hampered by inadequate funding. A great majority of offices do not have a computer, which most definitely decreases their efficiency. Moreover, some offices that have a computer do not have the access to the Internet or e-mail, which indicates that the use of modern technology is limited. Moreover, as observed by ISFED coordinators, many offices do not have generators, sufficient office furniture and other equipment necessary for proper functioning of the offices (i.e. heating, water supply, etc.)

The staff of many constituency offices is underqualified, largely due to the inability of the offices to provide sufficient salaries to its staff. The majority of MPs emphasized the need to raise the qualifications of their personnel in different fields.

b) The work of majoritarian MPs in the local offices during parliamentary non-session weeks merits special attention. The second round showed that the time allocated for receiving citizens by majoritarian MPs, as well as the number of received citizens has increased. ISFED welcomes this positive development.

Nevertheless, similar to the first round, in the second round, majoritarian MPs could not indicate the specific time established for receiving citizens. As it appears, bureaus of majoritarian MPs receive citizens on a daily basis, but the MPs themselves meet with citizens quite infrequently. The same reason was put forward to explain the inconsistent reception hours: the existing Parliamentary schedule, which does not provide enough time for MPs to meet with their constituents; and the overwhelming number of laws that are being discussed in the Parliament. These factors hamper the ability of MPs to effectively carryout their primary responsibilities: legislative duties and constituency outreach.

c) The attitude of majoritarian MPs toward parliamentary work has not changed since the first round – the majority of MPs are content with the work of the parliament; nonetheless, MPs have identified several areas in which the work of the parliament could be improved. The number of majoritarian MPs dissatisfied with the parliamentary agenda has increased slightly. Nevertheless, the

percentage of the MPs who identified allocating more time for legislative discussions by MPs and soliciting citizen's inputs as top priorities in the improvement of the parliamentary agenda remains almost the same.

d) As compared with the first round of the questionnaire, approximately 13% more MPs stated that the local problems they have raised were in most cases fully or partially solved. However, a very small number of MPs indicated that they have initiated a law or an amendment that was subsequently adopted by the Parliament, which indicates that majoritarian MPs are more active in solving local problems than in legislative drafting.

After the first round of the questionnaire, the number of MPs who participated in town hall meetings has increased slightly. In addition, unlike the results of the first round, this time it appears that draft laws considered by the Parliament were discussed at these meetings more often than local socio-economic issues.

Methodology

The questionnaire was developed by the International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED) and the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI). It was run from January 15 to April 15, 2005, by 75 ISFED rayon coordinators, who approached constituency offices of Majoritarian Members of Parliament with the request to complete the questionnaire. Those MPs who were not reached at their constituency offices, received the questionnaire in their Parliamentary offices.

According to the Constitution of Georgia, there are 85 majoritarian Members of Parliament elected in single mandate constituencies (rayons). Out of 85 rayons in Georgia, the 10 majoritarian Members of Parliament from Abkhazia and South Ossetia were not elected in November 2, 2003 elections, and therefore, the questionnaire was not administered in those territories. In addition, re-run elections have not been held in single mandate election districts of Kobuleti, Batumi, Shuakhevi and Tkibuli, and therefore these rayons are not represented by majoritarian MPs in the Parliament. Thus, currently there are 71 acting majoritarian MPs in the Parliament of Georgia.

Out of the 71, ISFED representatives were able to collect completed questionnaires from 53 MPs (74,65%). This analysis is based on the answers provided by majoritarian MPs or their authorized staff. All percentage data are calculated based on the information provided by the 53 majoritarian MPs who participated in second round of the questionnaire.

The questionnaires were not filled out in 18 rayons due to different reasons. These rayons are: Abasha, Ambrolauri, Aspindza, Gurjaani, Didube, Zugdidi,

Terjola, Lagodekhi, Mestia, Oni, Rustavi, Sagarejo, Kutaisi, Chkhorotsku, Tskaltubo, Keda, Khelvachauri and Khulo.

In the three rayons of Adjara region (Keda, Kelvachauri and Khulo), the questionnaire was not completed because the respective majoritarian MPs are not in the country due to political or other reasons.

ISFED coordinators clearly communicated the role and purpose of the questionnaire to all majoritarian MPs. Nevertheless, several MPs refused to participate in the second round of the questionnaire citing the repetitiveness of questions in the two rounds as the reason for their unwillingness to participate. Receiving the answers to the same questions once in every three months provides us with the opportunity to track changes, positive or negative, in the work of majoritarian MPs during a given period of time.

All results will be published on a quarterly basis and presented to the public.

Analysis

1. General Information

The questionnaire was completed by 74,65 % of all majoritarian MPs (53 out of 71). In comparison to the first round, 5 less MPs filled out the second round of the questionnaire. Nevertheless, ISFED hopes that MPs will be more active in the future and that this number will increase.

2. Questions related to the constituency office and working conditions of MPs

98,11% of constituency offices are open. As indicated in the questionnaire filled out by the majoritarian MP from Poti, the local bureau was under repair and thus, was not functioning.

75,47% of MPs evaluate their work conditions as normal, 13,21% think that their work conditions are dissatisfactory. 83,02% of MPs are convinced that their work conditions need to be improved.

58,49% of MPs think that funds allocated from the state budget are not sufficient for the functioning of the local office; 49,06% of them stated that the effectiveness of their offices would increase if they had more staff; and 84,90% consider that the effectiveness of the bureau would increase if the staff was paid higher salaries.

60,38% of constituency offices have more than three employees. 81,13% of MPs think that their staff need more expertise in order to effectively fulfill their duties.

60,38% of the constituency offices do not have a computer, and 39,62 % have one or two computers. 84,90% of the offices do not have access to the internet and 58,49 % do not have an e-mail address by which citizens can contact them.

9,43% of MPs work in their offices 1-2 days per month; 35,85% work 3-5 days, 16,98% of MPs 6-10 days, and 28,30% work 10-14 days a month in their constituency offices.

Findings: *Nothing has changed in the funding of the constituency offices of majoritarian Members of Parliament - the amount allocated from the state budget for the bureau is still 250 GEL per month. According to the majority of the respondents, these funds are not sufficient for the proper functioning of the offices, and cannot cover staff salaries and technical equipment for the offices.*

A vast majority of the offices do not have a computer, which most definitely decreases their efficiency. Moreover, the majority of the offices that have a computer do not have access to the Internet or e-mail. The inaccessibility of modern technology in the offices impedes the ability of the staff to carryout research and decreases the overall effectiveness of the office.

The staff of many constituency offices is underqualified, largely due to the inability of the offices to provide sufficient salaries to its staff. The majority of MPs emphasized the need to raise the qualifications of their personnel in different fields.

According to the answers received in the second round, MPs continue to work in their constituency offices on a regular basis. Although in the spring it is easier to travel to the rayons, the Parliamentary schedule does not allow the majoritarian MPs who have to travel great distances from the capital, to visit their respective rayons and work in their constituency offices as provided by the law.

3. Relations with Citizens

84,90% of MPs stated that they have essentially established a time when they receive citizens; 13,21% have not. According to the answers, 64,15% of MPs receive citizens more than 5 days per month and 33,96% of MPs receive citizens less than 5 days per month.

58,49% of MPs receive more than 50 citizens per month, others receive less.

All MPs, except one, receive letters and complaints from citizens. All MPs who receive such letters and complaints request answers from relevant state services and bodies. 54,72% of MPs have experienced problems in this process, while 43,40% have not. Those MPs who experienced problems stated that state bodies

do not respond on time, which indicates that state bodies do not always meet their legal obligations.

All MPs provide citizens with the answers they receive from relevant state bodies. 84,90% of MPs do so at meetings, 45,28% through the telephone and only one MP replies to citizens by e-mail.

Findings: *During the last three months, the number of MPs who allocate more than 5 days for receiving citizens has increased by approximately 14%. The number of MPs who receive more than 50 citizens per month has also increased. An increase in the activeness of MPs in terms of their relations with citizens is also evident.*

Direct meetings with citizens are still the most popular way of communication for majoritarian MPs. Nevertheless, both in the first and the second rounds it was difficult for the majority of MPs to indicate a set time established for citizens' reception. Although the schedule for Parliamentary sessions and committee work does not allow MPs to devote sufficient time to personal meetings with citizens, we believe that if MPs determine a specific time for such receptions, the number of received citizens will increase and the MPs will be able to apply their resources more optimally.

Unfortunately, we have not observed progress in the interactions between MPs and different state institutions. In the majority of cases, MPs still face problems, which are mainly expressed in delayed answers or complete ignorance to their appeals. This incompetence of state structures prevents majoritarian MPs from implementing their obligations towards citizens.

4. Parliamentary work

69,81% of MPs are satisfied with the work of the Parliament, while 30,19% are not. 20,75% of MPs think that the Parliament's work can be improved by better technical equipment; 16,98% identify the need of a more qualified staff, and 7,55% state that the Parliament's research component must be enhanced.

66,04% of MPs are satisfied with the agenda of the Parliament, while 33,96% are not. 39,62% believe that the agenda can be improved by providing more time to MPs for legislative discussions; 16,98% request that more time be allocated for public discussions and the soliciting of citizen participation.

54,72% of MPs think that the top priorities of the Parliament should be the adoption of the laws on local government and administrative-territorial arrangement; 22,64% name the tax code as the priority.

88,68% of MPs have presented the issues raised in their respective rayons for parliamentary consideration. Some of the issues raised include the development

of infrastructure, gas, electricity and water supply problems, local budgets, earthquake and flood damage, debts to pensioners, etc. 11,32% of MPs noted that there was no response from the Parliament; 66,04 % claim that the issue raised by them was partially or fully resolved. MPs from Akhalkalaki, Borjomi, Zestaponi and Mtatsminda claim that as a result of their initiatives, a legislative amendment or a new law was adopted. MPs from Liakhvi and Poti stated that the issues presented by them are still under consideration. According to the MP from Bagdadi, the problem raised by him has not been solved, and the MP from Gldani rayon was not allowed to discuss the issue he raised.

81,13% of MPs consider that further education will assist them in their work and almost half of them would like to improve their research skills.

Findings: *Majoritarian MPs' attitudes toward parliamentary work have not changed since the first round – the majority of them are content with the work of parliament. However, although in the first round, the majority of MPs was convinced that more qualified staff was needed to improve Parliamentary work, in the second round MPs cited more advanced technical equipment as the most effective means of improving parliamentary work.*

The number of MPs dissatisfied with the Parliament's work has increased by almost 10%. The list of priority issues that according to the MPs need to be improved in the work of the Parliament has remained almost unchanged, and includes providing more time for legislative consideration by MPs and for soliciting citizens' inputs. It should be noted that the level of interest in the law on local self-government has remained the same. At the same time, the adoption of the law on administrative-territorial arrangement has emerged as a priority, and the Tax Code has moved to the third position in the priority list.

In comparison with the first round, 13% more MPs stated that the local issues brought up by them have been fully or partially solved. However, only a small number of MPs stated that as a result of their initiative changes were made to the law or a new law was adopted, which means that MPs are more active in solving local issues than in legislative drafting.

There was no change in the amount of MPs who consider further education. The priority is still the field of research.

5. Working in the rayon

88,68% of MPs have participated in town hall meetings since they were elected.

56,60% participated in discussions on draft legislation in their rayons. 49,06% claim that the demands of citizens were considered in the law, whereas 35,85% stated that they were not. The issues discussed include the tax code, the budget, general and higher education, etc.

88,68% of MPs addressed the local government with the request to solve a local problem. 86,79% stated that local government paid proper attention to the raised issue, whereas 5,66 % believe that it did not.

Findings: *After the first round of the questionnaire, the number of MPs who participated in public discussions on draft proposals in rayons has increased by approximately 12%. The level of cooperation between MPs and representatives of the local self-government is also satisfactory.*

Recommendations: *In order to improve the work conditions of majoritarian MP constituency offices, more funds from the state budget should be allocated to the local bureaus. All offices should have at least one computer, a printer, a fax machine and a generator. The office environment should not depend neither on the personal wealth of the MP, nor on the personal relations of the MP with local government bodies. The state budget should provide enough funds to at least satisfy the minimum requirements for the functioning of the offices. This will ensure that all MPs receive equal opportunities for exercising their duties. As well, providing higher salaries and necessary training to the staff would increase the efficiency of the constituency offices.*

All majoritarian MPs should have a fixed time for receiving citizens, and constituency offices should use all available means (local TV, radio, newspapers, flyers etc.) to inform citizens where and when they can meet with their majoritarian MP. In order to support the work of majoritarian MPs and enable them to meet with their constituents regularly, it is necessary to consider changing the Parliamentary agenda. For instance, the Parliament could develop a fixed session schedule and agenda several months prior to the sessions. In addition, if parliamentary committees would have a defined time for their sessions or hearings at the beginning or at the end of non-session weeks, majoritarian MPs would have more time to travel to their constituencies. Another option for solving this problem is to establish Saturdays as citizen reception days, which some majoritarian MPs have already done. All of the abovementioned recommendations would also guarantee that more time is provided for legislative discussions and for soliciting citizen's inputs.