

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

4th Round

Introduction

From November 1, 2004 until November 15, 2005 the International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED) implemented a wide-ranging project “Active Citizens – Accountable Government” throughout the whole territory of Georgia.

The project 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 administered a quarterly questionnaire on the activities of majoritarian Members of Parliament of Georgia in their respective rayons. The aim of the questionnaire was to identify the main problems facing majoritarian MPs in their constituencies and the kind of assistance that would be most effective in helping them improve their work.

Questionnaires studying the activities of the majoritarian MPs caused different reactions and were interpreted differently by the majoritarian MPs. Despite of this, most of them demonstrated willingness to co-operate with us. A significant number of the majoritarian Members of Parliament (58 Members) participated in the first round of the questionnaire. The number of respondents decreased on the next stage of questionnaire and was reduced to 53 in the second round. 50 MPs participated in the third round and 54 in the fourth round.

Quarterly questionnaire allowed us, by means of the comparison and analysis of answers to the same questions, to identify progress and deterioration in the work of MPs and their bureaus. For this reason, the questions of the questionnaire were not changed during the implementation of the project.

After each round of the questionnaire, the results were published and presented to the public (Members of Parliament, media, local and international organizations). The public was informed about the main difficulties which the majoritarian MPs are facing during the implementation of their duties and the need of assistance needed for improving the performance of MPs’ activities.

It is worth mentioning that the publication of the results and analysis of questionnaire helped citizens to establish relations with the majoritarian MPs and their local bureaus and also provided different organizations which work on these issues with valuable information. . This is shown by the high public interest in the published majoritarian MPs’ questionnaire results.

Sincerely,
Tamar Zhvania
ISFED Executive Director

Summary of Findings

The results of the fourth 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 hamper the functioning of 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, the majority of offices that have a computer do not have access to the Internet or e-mail, which indicates that the use of modern technology is limited. As observed by ISFED coordinators, if the offices were equipped with generators, sufficient office furniture, equipment and other basic working conditions, (i.e. heating, water supply, etc.), they would function more efficiently.

Due to the inability of the offices to provide sufficient salaries to its staff, the recruitment of qualified personnel is not possible. Therefore, the majority of MPs emphasized the need to raise the qualification of their personnel in different fields.

b) As it appears, bureaus of majoritarian MPs receive citizens on a daily basis, but the MPs themselves meet with citizens quite rarely. Two reasons were put forward to explain this issue: 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. This factor reduces the ability of the majoritarian MPs to carry out effectively their primary responsibilities: legislative duties and relations with citizens.

c) The attitude of majoritarian MPs toward parliamentary work remains the same in the fourth 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. Unfortunately, the number of majoritarian MPs who are dissatisfied with the parliamentary agenda has increased again. Nevertheless, the top priorities for the improvement of the parliamentary agenda remain the same. These priorities are: allocating more time for legislative discussions and for the involvement of citizens in the legislative procedures.

d) MPs have stated that the local problems they have raised were in most cases fully or partially resolved. Nevertheless, only three MPs (as in the second round) stated that their initiatives caused amendments to the law or the adoption of the new law. This indicates that majoritarian MPs are quiet passive in proposing legislative changes.

In comparison to the previous rounds, the number of MPs who participated in town hall meetings has remained the same in the fourth round. An absolute majority of MPs expressed their desire to participate in town hall meetings organized by ISFED in the future.

Methodology

The questionnaire was created by the International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED) and the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI). The fourth round of questionnaire was run from July 15, 2005 to October 15, 2005 by 75 ISFED rayon coordinators, who approached constituency offices of majoritarian Members of Parliament with the request to complete the questionnaire.

According to the Constitution of Georgia, there are 85 majoritarian MPs in the 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, during the reporting period, re-run and by-elections had not yet been held in single mandate election districts of Kobuleti, Batumi, Shuakhevi, Tkibuli and Isani, and thus, these rayons were not represented by majoritarian MPs in the Parliament. Therefore, at the time of the administration of the questionnaire, there were 70 acting majoritarian MPs in the Parliament of Georgia.

Out of the 70 MPs, ISFED representatives were able to collect completed questionnaires from 54 MPs (77%). This analysis is based on the answers provided by majoritarian MPs or their authorized staff from the local bureaus. All percentage data is calculated based on the information provided by the 54 majoritarian MPs who participated in the fourth round of the questionnaire.

The questionnaires were not filled out in 16 rayons due to different reasons. These rayons are: Abasha, Ambrolauri, Baghdati, Borjomi, Zugdidi, Lagodekhi, Martvili, Mestia, Ninotsminda, Oni, Sagarejo, Sachkhere, Keda, Kharagauli, Khelvachauri and Khulo.

In the three rayons of Adjara region (Keda, Kelvachauri and Khulo) the questionnaires were not completed because the respective majoritarian MPs are

not in the country due to political or other reasons and thus do not fulfill their obligations.

ISFED coordinators clearly communicated the role and the purpose of the questionnaire to all majoritarian MPs in all rounds of the questionnaire. However, most MPs who were unable to complete the questionnaire in the fourth round did not visit their respective rayons and/or the representatives of their bureaus were unable to contact them. This fact is testified by the representatives of local bureau, as well as by ISFED rayon coordinators.

Analysis

1. General Information

The questionnaire was completed by 77% of all majoritarian MPs (54 out of 70). In comparison to the third round, 4 more MPs filled out the questionnaire in the fourth round.

2. Questions Related to the local bureaus of the MPs and the Working Conditions of MPs

According to the MPs who filled out the questionnaire 100% of local bureaus are working. 94% of MPs stated that the buildings for their local offices were provided to them on time. Only small quantity of MPs had problems in acquiring the office space.

70% of MPs evaluate their working conditions as normal, 20% think that their working conditions are good. Only a small quantity of MPs is dissatisfied with their working conditions. 81% of MPs are convinced that their working conditions need to be improved.

50% of MPs think that funds allocated from the state budget are sufficient for the functioning of the local office; on the other hand 41% think that funds allocated from the state budget are not sufficient. 50% of them stated that the effectiveness of their offices would increase if they had more staff; and 89% consider that the effectiveness of the bureau would increase if the staff was paid higher salaries.

61% of constituency offices have more than three employees. 85% of MPs think that their staff needs more expertise in order to effectively fulfill their duties. 48% consider that the staff should be trained in the research sphere, and 41% believe trainings in the public relations sphere is their priority.

61% of local bureaus do not have a computer, and 37% have one or two computers. 78% of the bureaus do not have access to the Internet and 63% do not have an e-mail address which could be used by citizens to contact them.

15% of MPs work in their offices 1-2 days per month; 24% work 3-5 days, 20% of MPs 6-10 days, and 41% work 10-14 days a month in their constituency offices.

Findings: *The amount of funding for the constituency offices of majoritarian Members of Parliament was constant throughout the questionnaire - the amount allocated from the state budget for the bureau is still 250 GEL per month. Although the majority of the respondents think that the amount of money allocated from the state budget for the bureau is sufficient, the analysis of situation and the ineffective functioning of the bureaus convinced us that this is a low amount of money and is not enough for the technical equipment of the office, can not cover staff salaries adequately and can not provide bureau with necessary working conditions.*

The majority of the bureaus do not have computers which prevents their effective functioning. Moreover, the majority of the offices that have a computer do not have access to the Internet or e-mail. The absence of modern technology in the offices impedes the ability of the staff to carry out research and decreases the overall effectiveness of the office

Another problem is the inadequate qualification of the staff of the local bureau. The effectiveness and the quality of the work decrease largely due to the inability of the offices to provide sufficient salaries to its staff. Because of the poor funding, it is not possible to recruit qualified personnel and therefore the majority of MPs emphasized the need to raise qualification of their personnel in different fields research, public relations, accounting, office work, etc.). Contrary to the previous rounds of the questionnaire, more and more MPs would like to have their staff trained in research instead of public relations.

According to the answers received in the fourth round, MPs continue to work in their constituency offices on a regular basis. It seems a bit surprising that 41% of MPs can manage to work 10-14 days in their constituency offices if we take into account very intensive working schedule of the parliament and also the fact that some rayons are quiet far away from Tbilisi. Moreover, it has to be mentioned that most of the rayons' citizens express their dissatisfaction because of the infrequent visits of the majoritarian MPs to their rayons.

3. Relations with Citizens

94% of MPs stated that they have an established time for receiving citizens; 6% do not. According to the answers, 59% of MPs receive citizens more than 5 days per month and 41% of MPs receive citizens less than 5 days per month. 50% of MPs receive more than 50 citizens per month; others receive less.

96% of MPs receive letters and complaints from citizens. 2 MPs chose not to answer this question. All MPs react to the complaints of the citizens and request

answers from relevant state services and bodies. 48% of MPs have experienced problems in this process, while 48% have not. 2 MPs chose not to answer this question. The majority of those MPs who face problems in this process stated that state bodies do not reply on time or sometimes it is unclear which state body has to resolve the issue.

100% of MPs provide citizens with answers they receive from relevant state bodies. 91% of MPs do so at meetings, 65% through the telephone, 44% use the post and only one MP replies to citizens by e-mail.

Findings: *In comparison to first, second and third round of questionnaire the number of MPs having an established time for receiving citizens has noticeably increased, which is most welcomed. In comparison to the third round the number of MPs who have an established time for receiving citizens has increased by 4% in the fourth round and the number of MPs who allocate more than 5 days for receiving citizens has increased by 3%. This demonstrates that the MPs claim to have more active relations with citizens.*

Direct meetings with citizens remain the most popular way of communication for majoritarian MPs. In contrast to the previous rounds, the majority of the MPs indicated an established time for receiving citizens which is welcomed.

The number of MPs who encounter problems when dealing with different state bodies has significantly decreased by 10% in comparison to the third round. Despite this, the significant number of MPs still faces problems when dealing with different state bodies which are basically expressed with delayed answers or complete ignorance. All stages of the questionnaire demonstrated that the incompetence of state structures prevents majoritarian MPs from implementing their obligations towards citizens.

4. Parliamentary Work

74% of MPs are satisfied with the work of the Parliament, while 26% are not. For the improvement of the Parliament's work, 19% of MPs think that MPs should have an opportunity for further education; 17% believe that the work of parliament can be improved with better research, 15% identify the need of a more qualified staff, and 13% - the need of better technical equipment.

69% of MPs are satisfied with the agenda of the Parliament, while 31% are not. 31% believe that the agenda can be improved by providing more time to MPs for legislative discussions; 17% request to allocate more time for public discussions and for the involvement of citizens in this process.

59% of MPs think that the top priority for the Parliament should be the adoption of laws on local government and self-government; 25% think that law on administrative-territorial arrangement is the most important; a substantial number of MPs name the Tax Code and the law on education as priorities.

89% of MPs have brought the issues raised in their respective rayons for parliamentary consideration. 64 % claim that the issue raised by them was partially or fully resolved. 15% state that there was not response from the parliament. 6 % say that as a result of their initiatives, a legislative amendment or a new law was adopted.

78% of MPs consider that further education will assist them in their work and 36% of them would like to improve their research skills.

Findings: *After first, second and third round of questionnaire Majoritarian MPs' attitudes toward parliamentary work have not changed – the majority of them are content with the work of the Parliament. However, generally, MPs think that parliamentary work needs to improve. Unlike previous rounds, in the fourth round, further education of MPs became the most popular way for the improvement of the work of parliament. Unlike previous rounds, in the fourth round improvement of the research skills became more important priority than more advanced technical equipment.*

In comparison to the previous rounds the number of MPs who are satisfied with the agenda of parliament has increased and the number of MPs who are dissatisfied with the agenda of parliament has decreased by 9%.

The list of priority issues, that according to the MPs need to be improved in the agenda of the Parliament, has remained unchanged and includes providing more time for legislative consideration by MPs and for the involvement of citizens in the legislative procedures.

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 received significant attention.

In the fourth round, 64% of the MPs stated that the local issues they brought to Parliament have been fully or partially resolved. Some of the issues raised, include the development of infrastructure, gas, electricity and water supply problems, local budgets, earthquake and flood damage, pension debts, etc. Only 3 MPs stated that as a result of their initiative, changes were made to the law or a new law was adopted, which means that majoritarian MPs are quiet passive in proposing legislative changes.

5. Working in the Rayon

94% of MPs have participated in town hall meetings since they were elected.

69% participated in discussions on draft legislation in their rayons. 46% claim that the demands of citizens were considered in the law, whereas 34% stated

that they were not. 20% did not answer this question. The issues discussed at meetings include the tax code, election code, law on local and self-governments, law on the socio-economic situation of mountainous regions, law on privatization etc.

98% of MPs addressed local governments with requests to solve a local problem. 89% stated that local government paid proper attention to the raised issue, whereas 7% believe that it did not.

Findings: *In comparison to the third round the number of MPs who participated in public discussions on draft proposals in rayons has not changed.*

In comparison to the third round the number of MPs who have participated in legislative discussion in their rayons has increased by 3% in the fourth round. This indicates that MPs have become more active in the rayons – soliciting citizens' input in the legislative process. In comparison to the third round, the number of MPs who stated that the demands of citizens were considered in the law has decreased by 2% in the fourth round.

The number of MPs who collaborate with the local government has increased by 2%. The number of MPs who said that local governments pay proper attention to raised issues has increased by 3%.

Recommendations: *The analysis of the fourth round shows that the remarks made by ISFED in the analysis of the first, the second and the third rounds of the questionnaire are still valid. The results of the quarterly questionnaires reveal that important changes were not detected in the work of majoritarian MPs and in the work of their constituency offices. Thus, our recommendations remain the same.*

In order to improve the working 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. In addition, providing higher salaries and necessary training to the staff would increase the efficiency of the constituency offices. Attention should be paid also to the further education of MPs.

All majoritarian MPs should have a set 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 the involvement of citizens in the legislative procedures.