



SITUATION ANALYSIS OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN GEORGIA

(Full Report)

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List of Acronyms

AP: Action Plan

CBOs: Community based Organizations

CS: Civil Society

CSO: Civil Society Organizations

EC: European Commission

EIDHR: European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights

ENPI: European Neighborhood Partnership Instrument

EPF: Europe Foundation

EPRC: Economic Policy Research Centre

EaP: Eastern Partnership

EU: European Union

GDI: Georgian Democracy Initiative

GNPEP: Georgian National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum

GYLA: Georgian Young Lawyers' Association

HHRR: Human Rights

HRC: Human Rights Centre

INGOs: International Non-Governmental Organizations

JICA: Japanese International Cooperation Agency

MOU: Memorandum of Understanding

NGOs: Non-Governmental Organizations

ODA: Official Development Aid

PM: Prime Minister

SIDA: Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency

TI: Transparency International

USAID: U.S. Agency for International Development

Executive Summary

Georgia's civil society organizations (CSOs) are widely known as being stronger, more vibrant and active than most in the region. Regardless of who is in power, civil society has been able to operate without undue interference by the authorities and it has proved to be an effective counterbalance to governments (TI, 2010; USAID, 2014) and has contributed to regime change. In fact, organizations within the civil society sector have been acknowledged to be more capable than those in the public and private sector.

CSOs can act freely, without harassment from the authorities and they have had a number of significant advocacy accomplishments, such as ensuring peaceful democratic elections in 2012 (USAID, 2014). The legal framework, although not perfect, is favorable to CSO development, as well as tolerant to their activities. Favorable conditions for CSOs' participation in policy and decision making process are also in place. There exist a large number of policy dialogue mechanisms in various sectors where CSOs are present and there are no difficulties in accessing public administration. This allows CSOs to advocate for pro-human rights and governance reforms and hold state institutions accountable, creating a healthy environment where the relationship between the government and CSOs is one where cooperation and opposition takes turns. Participatory mechanism for CSOs' engagement at local level should be further strengthened with the implementation of the Self-Governance Code. International development community has supported favorable environment for CSOs' participation. Most relevant aid agencies in the country, mainly supported by the EU and the US, have contributed through financial and political support as well as facilitating CSOs' engagement in policy process.

Enabling factors for CSO participation in public policy making coexist with non-enabling factors. Even with the existence of vibrant CSOs, there is great division within civil society landscape, between HHRR and governance CSOs that mainly play a 'watchdog' role and those CSOs that work in social sectors and combine roles of citizens' awareness, provision of services and advocacy. This division seems to determine access to resources, the media and international development agencies for political support. Additionally, political and religious cleavages are further hampering cooperation among CSOs within the same group and across the groups.

In general terms, CSOs enjoy limited legitimacy and weak internal governance. Internal governance is mainly hampered by weak organizational structures, which are, in best case scenario, only accountable to the donor community for some of their activities. Neither state institutions nor development partners have been paying enough attention to the issues of CSO governance and integrity and, therefore, incentives to improve internal governance are limited to carrying out audits and publishing

financial statements and activity reports. Moreover, the existence of powerless citizens, combined with CSOs that have grown apart from them, has led to limited public trust and recognition for CSOs' work.

Whilst lack of technical skills and capacity is not a significant constraint, neither is access to public institutions and formal policy dialogues, there seem to be important political relationships and personal incentives that shape the behavior of both state and civil society, creating disincentives for cooperation (tensions within the ruling coalition, CSO popularity in the media, CSOs led by former public officials that are attempting to hold current government accountable, etc.). Although being able to monitor government reforms, increasingly confrontational attitude of the government towards 'watchdog' CSOs has pushed CSOs to adopt strategies of action-reaction, rather delve into key issues to hold government properly accountable. Further, it seems these dynamics are affecting CSOs' participation at regional level. Within this context, CSOs might be able to voice certain concerns and push a law reform with thoughtful recommendations, but, in spite of the positive attitude of officials towards CSO participation, political deadlock and/or gatekeepers may block CSOs' impact on policy and decision making process. At regional level, the context is even more complex. Although there are regional CSOs with a strong social component which work intensively with citizens, they operate with extremely limited human and financial resources. CSOs at local level experience difficulties and transaction costs when influencing national policies as well as reaching development aid agencies. They have also attempted to establish relations with regional authorities, but successful experiences vary from region to region due and mainly to lack of awareness of CSOs' role and weak local governments.

Last but not least is the persistent high level of aid dependency. Main source of CSO funding is international aid. While CSOs working at local level as well as in social sectors have concerns around economic issues, sustainability does not seem to be a priority for HHRR and Governance CSOs. Concentration of resources in HHRR and governance CSOs is not helping these CSOs to see sustainability as a problem in the long term. Limited diversification of CSOs benefiting from development partners' support seems to be further undermining the development of a plural civil society landscape. Development partners have also overlooked the context and structural features of the country when applying a western approach to promote democratic development based on democratic governance and HHRR. By financing CSOs to play roles of voice and accountability without taking into account context and formal and informal institutions, they have promoted the rise of strong 'watchdog' CSOs intended to voice people's concerns that have grown apart from citizens and are only held accountable for activities and resources spent, rather than for their integrity and impact on democratic development, progress in human rights and citizens' welfare at large.

1. Introduction

The overall objective of this assignment is to provide Europe Foundation with a comprehensive and detailed overview of the situation of CSOs, including the interests and incentives and disincentives of CSO participation, the role of formal and informal institutions as well as the impact of values, ideas (political ideologies, religion and cultural beliefs) on political behavior and public policy. The study will also provide a set of recommendations for Europe Foundation in order to enhance CSO participation in national and local level public policy making processes.

More specifically, the study aims to:

- a.* Understand formal and informal institutions that determine Government-CSO relations; identify existing structural issues related to intangible issues (religion, ethnicity, patrimonialism...) that block or favor the enforcement of formal rules, policy dialogue and CSO development (internal governance, relationship with constituencies...).
- b.* Identify key interests, incentives and disincentives for CSO participation and CSO development; the degree and impact of CSO influence on policy and decision-making processes.
- c.* Analyze the potential for change; identify key areas where change is more likely, actors which are 'drivers of change', but also actions/issues which are potentially harmful.
- d.* Provide recommendations on how to support CSOs in order to answer the needs and opportunities identified in the situation analysis.

Based on the above goals, the targeted audience by this study first and foremost consists of Europe Foundation staff. The study should help the organization to assess partners' place and role with regard to problems facing society and will stimulate further discussions on how Europe Foundation, as 'infrastructure' organization can enhance its support to civil society organizations in Georgia.

The paper aims to draw a general picture, without trying to make these pictures too detailed or complete. This, however, does not relieve the author of responsibility for any specific mistakes that may occur.

2. Theoretical Framework and Methodological Approach

The document was prepared in the framework of Europe Foundation civil society support programs with the aim to assess the present state of civil society development, summarizes ongoing discussions on relevant issues and offer recommendations for the next steps to foster the development of civil society in Georgia

2.1 Definition of CSOs

Civil society is commonly known as the 'third sector', distinct from the government and the private sector. It constitutes the aggregate of a group of individuals that come together to pursue shared goals and, hence, it entails collective action. As such, it comprises a wide range of organizations with different institutional activities, which can be formal or informal, transient or long-term, collaborative or confrontational. **Civil Society Organizations**, therefore, can be defined as: *All non-market and non-state organizations outside of the family in which people organize themselves to pursue shared interests in the public domain.* This definition includes membership-based CSOs, cause-based CSOs, movements, women's rights groups, farmers' associations, faith-based organizations, Labour unions, cooperatives, professional associations, chambers of commerce, independent research institutes and the not-for-profit media (OECD, 2003). Nowadays, this definition of CSOs is the most shared and used by development partners, including the UNDP and the European Commission.

In Georgia, there is no need to be legally registered in order to carry out charity activities, civic actions and receive funding for it and this has resulted into a civil society landscape composed by a wide range of formal and informal civil society organizations. For the purpose of this study, a more limited definition of CSOs has been used. The situation analysis focuses on the CS segment formed by organizations registered as legal entities, enjoy of minimum organizational structure and institutional setting. This definition could be considered as a restrictive interpretation of the notion of civil society as it left outside of the scope of the study organised groups that are not legally registered, or so-called, informal CSOs.

2.2 The origin of involving CSOs in policy making process

The role of CSOs in the democratization process and consolidation has been widely discussed among political scientists and scholars. The roots of this thinking lie mainly in theoretical analysis carried out by various American scholars such as R. Putnam, L. Diamond or F. Fukuyama and its subsequent influence on policy circles. The so-called neo-Tocquevillian position is that a vigorous civil society strengthens democracy and, hence, any democratic transition is only possible if there exists a civil society that is established in the course of one or if a CS leads a democratic transition from an authoritarian rule. Therefore, it is automatically assumed that CS is a counterweight to state power and CSOs a myriad of civic associations that forge social capital, a sense of community and civic engagement required for regime change and democratic consolidation (Diamond, 1994). Such importance given to civil society as an actor for democratization by political and social scientific discourse was essentially based on the political changes and transitions to democratic systems in Latin America (Argentina, Chile and Nicaragua) and Eastern European Countries (Poland, former Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia), where trade unions, NGOs, movements, student organizations and other type of CSOs were seen as a source to transition to and consolidate democratic systems (Mercer, 2002; Diamond, 1994).

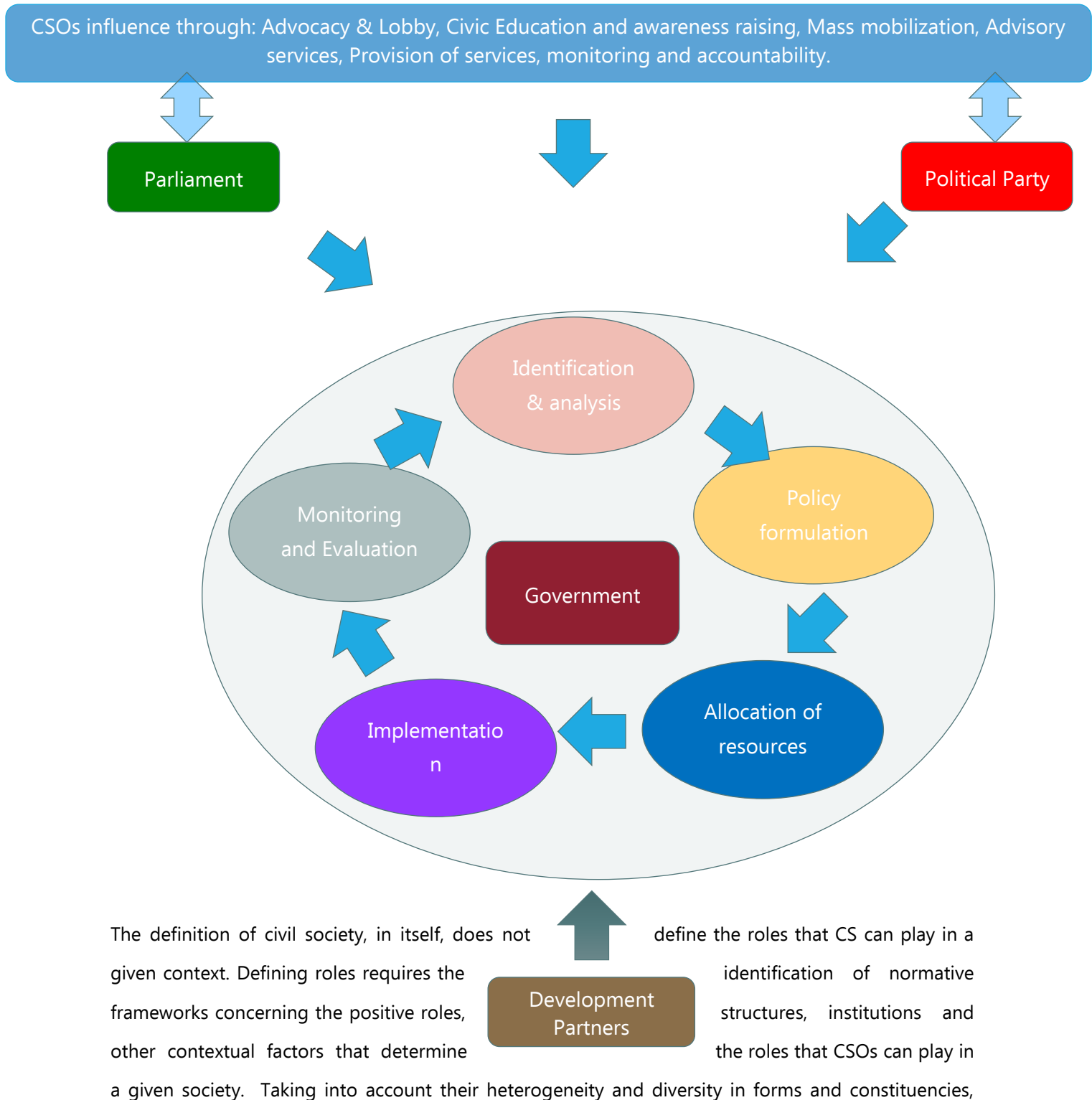
However, these Neo-Tocquevillian assumptions have not been universally accepted among all academics. Contemporary scholars like S. Huntington argued that, although CSOs can play a positive and decisive role in withdrawing authoritarian regimes, interest groups can also overwhelm and weaken political institutions, leading to political instability and, in turn, weakening democracy. Some other scholars have even questioned the implicit assumption in Tocquevillian thinking that the existence of CS is inherently 'good' for society and 'positive' for democracy strengthening. Different studies have proved that in the same way that civil society exists there is also an 'uncivil' society. Indeed, CSOs do not exist and act in a vacuum, rather they are shaped by ethnic and political cleavages, not free of clientelistic practices and with not necessarily democratic values and structures (Fowler, 2002; Boussard, 2002; Mercer, 2002; Molenaers & Renard, 2006). The whole debate also overlooked that the Latin American and Eastern European movements' leaders and intellectuals were influenced by the Gramscian notion that civil society is a space for the (re)-production and contestation of hegemonic and counter-hegemonic power. Consequently, civil society in these contexts meant autonomous and self-organised interest groups distanced from state and promoters of 'islands of civic engagement' (Kaldor, 2003).

Despite the challenges, scholars' debate on the virtues, links and contributions of CS to democracy combined with political facts and the fall of the Berlin wall provided enough room and reasons for the development community to include democratization in their development agendas. It was believed that democracy could be built through financial and technical support to civil society, with the subsequent increase in substantial amounts of financial resources to it. This approach was consolidated at the beginning of current century by the adoption of a new aid paradigm, linking democratic governance with development and, in turn, an implicit recognition of CSOs as 'developmental partners'. Indeed, the Aid Effectiveness Agenda assigns dual role to CSOs: a developmental role to advocate for pro-poor, social justice, governmental agendas as well as a democratic role to enhance democratic governance. By involving CS in policy making processes, it is expected that CSOs contribute to defining policies and laws that respond to citizens' needs, and at design level, that they monitor the implementation of these policies and hold government accountable for its performance and transparency. Consequently, donor support to civil society, particularly for playing a 'watchdog' role, has increased sharply over last 15 years.

2.3 The roles of CSOs in policy making process

Public policy making process usually refers to a decision making process which involves social interactions among several actors: the state, civil society, political parties, etc. The mode of interaction is conditioned, on one hand, by the nature and content of the policy in question; and, on the other hand, by socio-economic, political and environmental conditions in a given political system. CSOs actively work with both citizens and the state and ultimately affect policy formation and decision-making. They influence public policy formation through policy dialogue and playing different roles (advocacy, accountability, awareness, advisors). The general entry points for Government-CSO policy dialogue is using public policy cycle. CSO engagement practices are intended to: (i) either impact on the formulation of public policies (i.e. the policy cycle) through influencing new policy or policy amendments; (ii) monitor implementation for compliance and accountability or (iii) support the implementation of public policies through the provision of services.

Figure 2: Simplified Policy Making Process



CSOs can play a wide range and variety of roles in order to promote development and democracy. These roles are translated into different activities that can directly engage and meet the immediate needs of the members or those CSOs involved in lobbying and influencing national debates for promoting general welfare and achieve public goods¹.

CSOs impact on policy making processes might depend on **endogenous and exogenous factors**. Endogenous factors refer to factors created by CSOs itself and its relations with state institutions as well as with other national stakeholders such as political parties and media. Exogenous factors very much depend on external actors that influence national politics such as development community, geopolitics, among others. The 'rules of the game' and the power relations among the actors involved determine incentives and constraints to participate as well as the degree of influence CSOs have on the policy and decision making process.

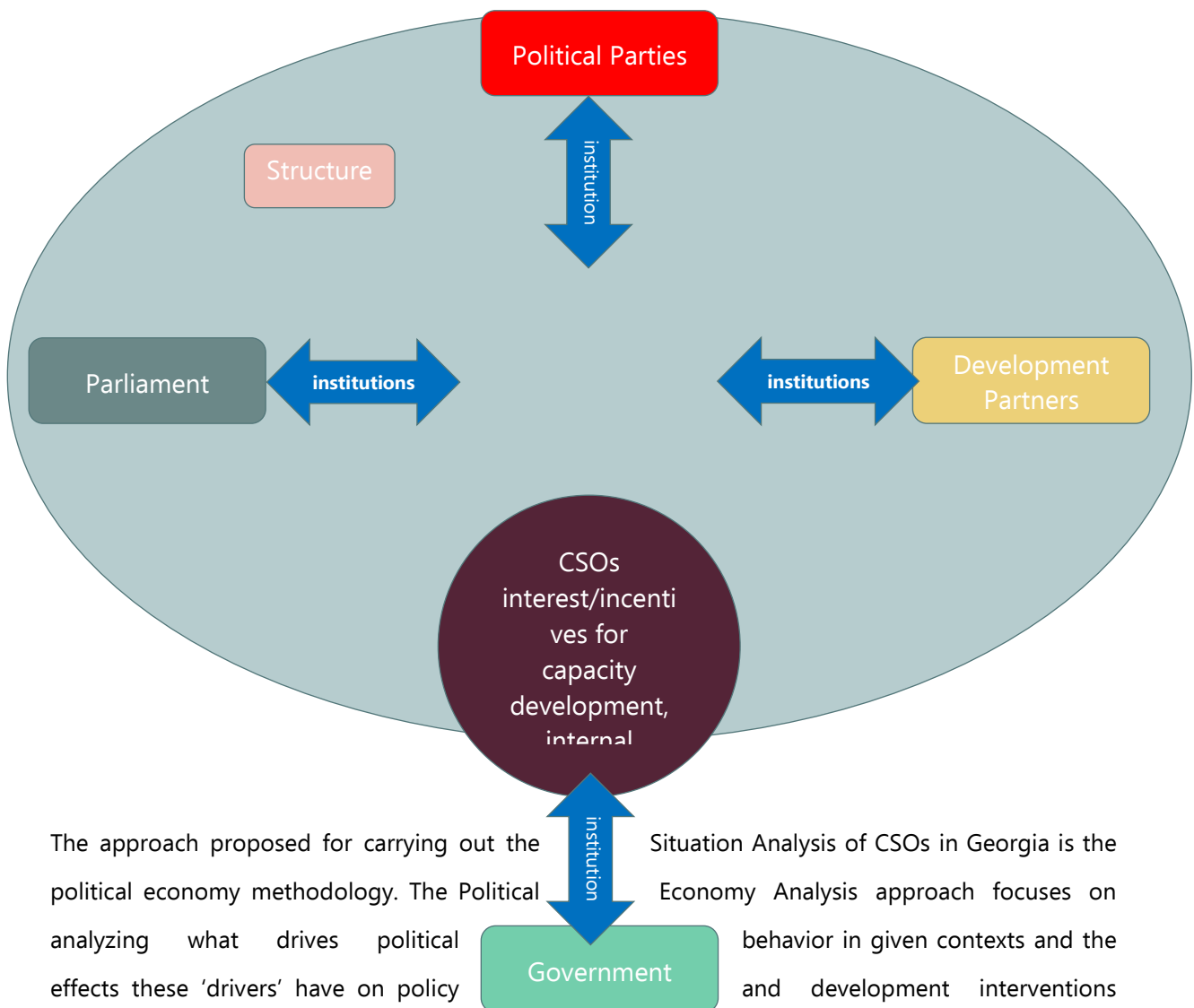
2.4 Methodological approach

It is clear, then, that civil society participation does not happen in a vacuum. Levels of engagement and effectiveness very much depend on a wide range of endogenous and exogenous multi-dimensional complex issues including government-civil society relations, uneven power relations among different actors or lack of CSO legitimacy and representation (Sharma, 2008). Context determines factors that enable or not an environment for CSOs to exercise their roles and influence decision and policy making processes. Understanding context requires mapping and analyzing the formal and informal institutions, structures, power relations² that have a bearing on CSOs and the other actors, mainly government, political parties, parliament and development partners.

¹ See annex III for CSOs' roles

² **Structures** (Long term contextual factors); **Institutions**: a set of written and unwritten rules that regulate relationships between groups by providing incentives and disincentives; **Power relations**: 'the rules of the game' in the decision-making processes or public policy formulation; **Actors**: Civil society organizations at the core of the analysis

Figure 2: A CSO-centered approach



The approach proposed for carrying out the political economy methodology. The Political Economy Analysis approach focuses on analyzing what drives political behavior in given contexts and the effects these 'drivers' have on policy and development interventions (OECD, 2003). By putting CSOs at the core of the analysis, this approach allows us to identify and analyze formal and informal institutions, power relations and incentives, as well as the ways in which the interactions of political and economic processes in Georgia have been important for the evolution of civil society, its particular structures, formal and informal rules and power relations. The government, Parliament, as well as development partners become stakeholders.

The study has been based on different PEA methodologies developed and used by international organizations, academics and other practitioners. The 'UNDP institutional context analysis' was used to identify ways of understanding the political and institutional context in developing countries, and assesses the enabling environment. The methodology has been complemented with some insights from 'drivers of change' and 'problem-driven' approaches, which have helped to identify obstacles to 'progressive' change as well as elements that bring change.

As requested by the terms of reference, the study was mainly qualitative, yet some quantitative information (i.e. existing statistical data and data analysis) has been used to contrast information and assumptions as well as reinforce findings. The methodologies for data collection were:

- a) **Review of relevant documentation:** A comprehensive documentary evidence base was compiled in order to provide a comprehensive view of the structural factors that influence CSOs. For this, secondary data was used such as civil society mapping reports, academic reports, existing policy and regulatory frameworks, EPF programmatic documents, evaluations and other relevant reports. The review also served to identify actors, experts and institutions to be interviewed for this study.
- b) **Semi-structured interviews:** Semi-structured interviews were the main method used to collect primary data. The CSOs for this study were targeted through different processes. The main CSOs were identified through EPF beneficiaries of grants. However, in order to ensure diversity and inclusivity, other stakeholders were also included in the study. For this, a second identification of stakeholders was done through a literature review, including academic documents, policy papers as well as government policies and strategies, development partners' sector evaluations and other relevant documents. This allowed us to target government agencies that actively involve CSOs, CSOs working in sectors and/or not necessarily EPF grantees, political parties in parliament, key informants and other relevant stakeholders for the present study. During the field mission, a total of 60 semi-structured interviews were carried out with political parties, government, Parliament as well as a large number of CSOs. More specifically, the study included a wide range of actors that can be grouped in CSOs, state institutions, Political Parties, International development agencies and key informants.

According to the terms of reference, the study was to include recommendations that enhance CS participation at national and at regional level. Therefore, it was key that the situation analysis included active CSOs at national and regional governments. Given time and budget constraints, the regions included in this study were Tbilisi, Adjara, Kakheti and Guria.

However, the study encountered some limitations. Some key stakeholders, such as the Prime Minister's Office and a member of Georgian Dream Party could not be interviewed due to conflicting agendas. The fact that some of the respondents did not speak English also presented some challenges, which were readdressed by interpreter as well as taking more time for the interviews.

Finally, a validation workshop with key stakeholders in order to gain a picture as close as possible to the reality could not take place due to short notice.

3. Establishment of Civil Society Organizations in Georgia: Origin and nature

Within political economy analysis studies, structures refer to the long-term factors such as story, geopolitics, state building process, economic, political and social systems that shape civil society landscape. So, in order to understand the current structure of Georgian civil society, it is important to take into account this structure. When analyzing the main structural features of CSOs in Georgia we observe several structural factors which have heavily influenced the current CS landscape. Some of them, like polarization and political elite capture have been overcome, others, such as origin and nature of CSOs, geopolitics and religion still remain key elements to understand CSOs' roles and relations vis-à-vis state institutions.

Civil Society in Georgia, understood in the most liberal and modern way, is directly linked to the aftermaths of the liberalization of the Soviet Union system in the late 1980s. Its evolution and consolidation has occurred in **three waves**:

First wave would correspond to the origin of modern civil society organizations as a result of the post-Soviet Union political approach aimed at building an independent state based on western standards and democratic principles. This included the establishment of independent political groups that rapidly constituted in the form of civil society organizations or political parties. In this first wave, the line between political parties and civil society organizations was much diluted. Civil society organizations established in this period were characterized by their strong nationalism and anti-Communist values, liberal principles, with little developed internal structures and run by volunteers. As part of this civil activity, private armed groups emerged³ which would constitute an example of 'uncivil society'. These groups started as patriotic groups, but in time they derived into criminal gangs that used extortion as a method of fundraising.

³ E.g. Mkhedrioni

The independence of Georgia brought an increased interest of international organizations and development cooperation agencies in promoting democracy through CSOs that made available substantial amounts of economic and technical resources for CS strengthening and development. Little regulation and registration systems were put in place in order to favor the registration of those embryonic and volunteer-type of organizations as well as other existing community-based organizations so they could have access to funding. However, this completely changed the environment in which those informal and voluntary-based groups operated. Support for CSO development in the form of economic incentives combined with easy registration brought a mushrooming of the NGO-type of CSOs and with it the 'NGO-zation of civil society' (Nodia, 2005). These new organizations quickly adopted pro-western values, setting as a priority to look after human rights and democratic governance, diversified their roles including 'watchdog' activities such as advocacy and lobby, and since then, as per donors' requirements, set a clear demarcation between political parties and NGOs. Some of them were set up to just implement projects and disappeared. Other dozens managed to develop a core permanent staff and sustainable modern management systems that allowed for specialization and capacity development.

During the Rose Revolution, CSOs proved to have developed into a key actor in promoting regime change as they significantly contributed through reacting to inappropriate actions of the government, mobilizing citizens, as well as making the case that election results were fraudulent. It is during this period that CSOs established strong relations with mass media as well as convenient alliances with political parties after years of distancing.

A second wave started when the new government came into power, led by Mikheil Saakashvili (National Movement Party), which attracted many talented and skilled staff from CSOs. This heavily weakened CSO capacities but also challenged its *raison d'être*. On one hand, the brain drain from CSOs to public administration supposed the 'decapitation' of CSOs with an incredible loss of capacities and leadership, bringing CSOs and government 'too close for comfort'. CSOs faced the challenge of redefining its relationship with the new government and with citizens in a context where the public perceived no difference between CSOs and government. On the other, development agencies shifted their priorities towards supporting the new government with a subsequent important decrease in funding for CSOs, and the new executive enjoyed wide public support to pay attention to CSOs left outside of the Revolution. CS roles were further worsened with an increase in government control over state institutions as well as a progressive closing down of spaces for political influence and participation. CSOs were no longer as strong, united and committed to sharing values as before the revolution and entered a period of stagnation.

Some have argued that since then and until the 2012 elections, CSOs went through a period of renovation, re-building and self-screening. Proof of this is the important role that CSOs, once again, allied with political parties in the opposition, have played in pursuing government change through raising their voices, mobilizing citizens and ensuring peaceful democratic elections by providing independent electoral observation. This has been translated into a revalorization of CSOs as drivers of political change, initiating a **third wave of CS development**.

Nowadays, Georgia's civil society is mainly composed by organizations in form of non-profit organizations (NGOs), based in Tbilisi with strong ties with development agencies (Mitchell, L., 2015) and some with links at regional level. Other types of CSOs are business and professional associations, faith-based organizations, labor unions and, more and more, think tanks and research centers. At regional level, there exist a relatively high number of ad hoc groups and informal organizations at local level that, by law, are entitled to carry out their own activities without being registered. In fact, in Adjara, they are as many as formal and registered CSOs (EC, 2014). When looking at the roles of CSOs, it can be observed that while CSOs based in the capital play a strong role in advocating and lobbying for Human Rights (HHRR) and governance issues, local CSOs tend to be more focused on the provision of services, mainly educational, social and healthcare services, as well as community development. In all cases, it is widely acknowledged that Georgian CSOs are aid-dependent.

4. Civil Society Organizations landscape in Georgia

4.1 Overview of Civil Society Organizations in Georgia

It has been widely recognized by academics and experts that Georgian Civil society is one of the well-resourced sectors in economic and human terms that have favored development of leadership skills and been a platform for political leaders, politicians and high level bureaucrats. This has allowed for the development and expansion of wide variety and geographical dispersion of CSOs with relatively stable structures and continuity of their activities. Following the analysis of the information gathered for this research through an actor-centered approach, it could be observed four groups of CSOs that actively participate in policy making process.

Civil Society Organizations Structure

A first group of CSOs is constituted by limited number of urban-based and well-established CSOs which have as their main aim to promote **human rights and democratic governance** through

playing a watchdog role. They are a mix of old CSOs, created by former political leaders, or existing CSOs revitalized due to the incorporation of former civil servants and politicians in their CSO boards or in key management positions. These 'watchdog' organizations were perceived by a vast majority of interviewed people as 'top organizations' in terms of most capacitated, autonomous and effective influencing government (third wave of CSOs). They raise their voice against any threat to civil and political rights such as freedom of speech, women's and minorities rights and put efforts in holding the government accountable for the mismanagement of public funds, attempts to take control over public independent institutions, like the judiciary or media, and for lack of transparency in policy and decision making processes.

A second group consists of a more varied and large group of CSOs (NGOs, community-based organizations (CBOs), movements, trade unions, youth and cultural associations working, among others). Unlike the CSOs in previous groups, these CSOs work on specific sectors or subjects such as education, health, environment, people living with disabilities, housing, civic education, which allows them to target specific beneficiaries. Most of them work at regional and local level combining roles of service provision and advocacy. A difference of human rights and governance CSOs, they have basic organizational structures, with a reduced number of staff and very limited financial resources.

A third group would be composed by **faith-based organizations**. Although working in similar issues as CSOs in the second group, they have the additional characteristic of being directly linked to different churches present in the country, charity based and limited or no interest in being involved in policy and political processes. Most churches have their own faith-based organizations, with the exception of Yezidis. The most numerous are Muslims with about 40 faith-based organizations, followed by Orthodox organizations, Catholic and Baptist. While Muslim organizations are mainly CBOs, Orthodox, Baptist and Catholic faith-based organizations are more a NGO type involved in the delivery of health and educational (religious or not) services through charity organizations and universities. Their source of financing is mainly from charity activities, provision of services (e.g. Caritas, World Vision) as well as from the church to which they pertain. In 2014, Government also started implementing a programme aimed at "Compensating Material and Moral Damages Inflicted upon Religious Organizations during the Soviet Period" to 4 religious minorities, Muslims, Jewish, Armenian Apostolic and Catholics for the damage caused by the Soviet Union. To receive these funds, religious groups need to be registered as a 'public entity', rather than as a CSO.

A fourth group is formed by well-resourced and institutional strong CSOs that have international roots, like Open Society Georgia Foundation and Europe Foundation (formerly Eurasia Partnership

Foundation). These organizations have core activities to support the development of civil society in Georgia. In the aid development sector, these CSOs are commonly known as '**infrastructure CSOs**' for the role they play in strengthening citizens – State relations through supporting the engagement of CSOs at all levels in policy and decision making process with government. Therefore, 'infrastructure CSOs' are not playing this role in an isolated manner, either applying procedural or logistical procedures, but they combine their activities of CSOs' development with other roles equally important that articulate and amplify the voice of HHRR, governance and social CSOs such as facilitating creation of networks, working groups or supporting key research activities.

Looking at the type of CSOs supported by these organizations, it was observed that they have been reaching a wide range of HHRR, governance but also social CSOs based in urban and regional areas and of different nature: CBOs, NGOs, think-tanks, research centers. 'Infrastructure CSOs' are facilitating to CSOs in the second group access to financial resources through small-scheme grants and/or partnering with them in project proposals, as well as promoting CSOs' coalition building through networking and coordination. They are also supporting core activities of mainstream CSOs with actions that should address main Georgian CSOs challenges such as sustainability and capacity and through providing financial and non-financial incentives. Organizations such as EPF have been promoting social entrepreneurship activities through grants, institutional capacity development and creativity through requesting governance progress and innovation in their grants applications. The role of these CSOs have been positively considered by small CSOs as well as by public national and regional institutions, fact that places them in a strategic position to enhance CSOs' development and influence in policy making processes.

Beyond formal CSOs, it is important to note that there are an **incalculable number of informal** CSOs (EU, 2014), including community-based organizations, women's groups, faith-based organizations, neighborhood associations as well as other traditional community-based organizations in urban and rural areas. They are the unknown ones of the CS scene. Indeed, only regional CSOs, CSOs in social sectors and political parties were able to provide characteristics of CSOs placed at that level. For the rest, both local and national public authorities as well as for human rights and governance CSOs, they would be a kind of 'black box'.

Civil Society Organizations Collective Action

CSOs are able to organize short term convenient coalitions such as signing joint public statements and/or organizing demonstrations on numerous but extremely specific issues such as those related to the designation of judiciary staff or laws passed. This cooperation takes place in an *ad hoc* form of

coalitions that become obsolete when immediate results are achieved (e.g. government holds back the process). However, a number of interesting and more solid processes are currently underway that should strengthen the cooperation among CSOs, promote social leadership and reinforce dialogue amongst actors as well as vis-à-vis the government in the long term. CIDA is considered a regional non-registered network composed of 55 CSOs based in the regions. Its main aim is to involve regional CSOs in national policy making processes through, on one hand, providing information to its members on policy processes and, on the other, by supporting them in structuring their opinions and inputs to influence the policy processes. The organization has proved to have an added value for their members in terms of access to funding, government and media, information, as well as to 'build partnership to share information on organizational good ethics' or, in other words, mutual accountability. EPF has also been working in the establishment of HHRR networks such as the Coalition for an Independent Judiciary and the Human Rights House Tbilisi as well as of governance platforms like the CSO Platform Partnership for Budget Transparency. Experience of building up informal (non-registered) CSO platforms is also ongoing. GDI has been able to facilitate the creation of a 13-member CSO coalition against phobia, OSGF established coalition civil society against illegal surveillance: This affects you! Most of their members include capital-based CSOs.

Formal coalitions and networking actions seem to be further developed and formalized among CSOs in social sectors. Indeed, within this group various types of cooperative groups have been formed and formalized, such as Coalition for Independent living or Georgian Coalition for Youth and Children Welfare. These platforms carry out needs assessment of current systems within their sectors, advocate for improvements and raise awareness among citizens. Most social CSOs talk to government through these coalitions and find it useful as they feel they have more power of influence and bargain by going 'together'. On the other hand, the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia considers effective and efficient working through coalitions in order to carry out reforms, as they speak through a consensual and single voice, as well as ensuring quality of service provision, since coalitions ensure distribution and understanding of information. In fact, they approach policy influence from a less political perspective in sectors where information can be very technical, it is more difficult to get financial resources and receive less attention from development community. Hence, they need to come together in order to leverage efforts for policy influence, access to information, knowledge sharing as well as resources.

4.2 Enabling factors for CSO participation in policy making process

Capacities and means to raise their voice

Voice refers to formal and informal mechanisms through which people express their preferences, opinions and views. Voice is necessary to structure interests and express concerns and needs in order to influence the policy making process. This requires technical input that can only be provided if CSOs have developed capacities through practice.

For a long time and during periods of adverse political context in Georgia, CSOs were the only counterbalance to government power against dysfunctional Parliaments controlled by the executive and a highly fragmented political class represented by weak political parties. In the last 20 years, CSOs have been put most of efforts in developing lobbying and advocacy capacities. They place strong emphasis on content production (draft laws, research documents, etc.), 'watchdog role', lobbying public institutions and cooperation with media. By means of mobilizing the citizens, CSOs have persuaded citizens to support changes proposed by parties in the opposition. Using these approaches, CSOs have actively contributed to political and policy changes. For example, in 2012 elections, CSOs supported peaceful and fair political transition in government. With time and well invested funding, these CSOs have also been able to develop internal solid and fairly transparent structures, capture good professionals and develop technical expertise that do not exist in the public nor private sectors in Georgian. In addition, CSOs have been successful in influencing policies by lobbying through informal spaces, applying diverse strategies, including involving influential individuals. Both their long term existence and/or previous experience in public sector, also explain their numerous opportunities to access state institutions and line ministries, even in adverse political contexts. According to most interviewed people, this is possible because most of CSOs' staff have friends, ex-colleagues or have been part of the public sector, and therefore establishing contacts to lobby and advocate public institutions is 'a matter of using personal contacts and network.' All in all, this has supported the idea that CSOs in Georgia have developed strong skills to contribute to political change, leading to a wide recognition of CSOs as actors per se by the government as well as by the international community. On one hand, government staff and political parties generally acknowledged the importance of engaging CSOs in policy process and provided rather a positive and 'politically correct' feedback. On the other, CSOs enjoy easy access to development aid agencies to gather financial as well as political support to raise their voices effectively.

Coordination bodies, networks and platforms are important to enhance CSOs voice since they bring strengthened "agency" to influence the public domain. So, it is equally important to note that a number of interesting processes led and/or supported by 'infrastructure organizations' are also making efforts to build a bridge between HHRR and governance CSOs and social CSOs. Europe Foundation is bringing together social focus CSOs and governance and HHRR CSOs to work around specific issues such as food safety and budget monitoring (CSO Platform for Budget transparency). Similarly, successful attempts have been made by OSGF, EPF, GNPEP and other organizations that

have fostered CSO cooperation. The recently created platform group more than 100 CSOs from various fields in the light of the Eastern Partnership (EaP) implementation and the European integration process, supported politically and economically by the European Union. The platform has organizations from all levels as well as sectors and has achieved a few results. This process seems to be so unique, since it tries to bridge the cooperation gap that exists among different types of CSOs (watchdog CSOs, CBSOs, associations, NGOs, etc.).

Growing legitimacy and representativeness

However, technical capacities and means to influence are not the only conditions to achieve effective voice and obtain government answerability to people's needs. CSOs also need to have legitimacy that comes from the support of those whom they claim to represent. For it, there is the need that CSOs not only play the roles of voice (advocacy, lobby watchdog, etc.), but also that of citizens' engagement, civic education and of social capital. By engaging with citizens, CSOs create a constituency-based support that legitimates their voice vis-à-vis state institutions. Georgian CSOs have been largely criticized for their weak legitimacy and representativeness (USAID, 2014; TI, 2010). Levels of trust in NGOs remain relatively low (28% in 2014) and in practice, engagement with citizens is only done by CSOs with a social focus and/or HHRR and governance CSOs in the framework of a concrete project. However, recent trends seem to point to some changes. In fact, levels of trust have jumped from 18% in 2011 to 28% in 2014 (USAID, 2014).

A recent 'mushrooming' of CSOs has taken place within the group of HHRR and governance CSOs, leading to highly overlapping 'watchdog' functions. Within this context, it seems few governance and Human Rights CSOs have been looking for developing activities and roles beyond 'watchdog' and lobbying. In doing so, few CSOs have started to narrow the scope of their areas of work and lobby and advocate more specific issues (e.g. women's rights) and increased interest to engage citizens in their activities by delivering civic education trainings for students and teachers on HHRR and governance issues, involving minority groups and women's community based organizations (CBOs) and other informal organizations at very local level in larger policy making processes (e.g. Strategy for Minority Groups, Self-Governance Code or fiscal reform for CSOs' sustainability) or provision of legal aid.

CSOs working on social issues have been the most active CSOs engaging with citizens. In fact, beneficiary engagement is the core of their activities and justifies the reason for having an interest in outreach communities and villages beyond urban borders. They combine the 'community work' with advocacy and lobby activities targeting public institutions. Although they explicitly express that HHRR and governance issues are not their area of work, they are unconsciously mainstreamed in their

mission and vision. This is so since citizens' rights awareness, advocating for disadvantaged people or housing rights are issues directly linked to HHRR as well as democratic governance. But, these organizations approached them in a more bottom-up and technical way, where the concerns of their beneficiaries are translated into voice at policy level. It is for this ability to play double role of building citizens awareness, on one hand, and advocate for government's reforms in a social sector (e.g. education, housing). That makes CSOs in social sector a 'critical mass' at national and regional level to support the evolvement of a more legitimate and representative civil society organizations.

Aid architecture full of opportunities combined with increased CSOs' interest for self-sufficiency

A primary enabling factor for CSOs to engage in any substantive way is of course the ability of CSOs to either generate their own funds or to access external funds. Compared to other countries in the region, it is surprising the capacity that CSOs have developed to search for financial resources in the country and beyond its borders, to answer grant making programs effectively as well as successfully advocating for favorable fiscal reforms.

Some Human Rights and governance CSOs and, overall, 'infrastructure CSOs' in Georgia enjoy of core funding. With core funding, these CSOs are able to quickly analyze the changing reality and work on the most relevant and prioritized issues immediately and take immediate action in line with their mandates, without having to wait for approval or modification of grants. The timing is extremely important since human rights violations must be dealt with as close as possible to the time of occurrence in order to be effective. Therefore, rapid response is so critical to their work. Core funding is also critical for 'infrastructure organizations' as their main role is to provide continuous support to strengthen local CSOs as capacity development. With core funding, Infrastructure CSOs like EPF are easily able to support local CSOs through mentoring approaches within the flexibility that core funding provides. Further, capacity development and, in general, support to CSOs' development can be approached as a long-term process, rather than through short term and interrupted actions implemented with 'projectized' aid. This is what makes 'infrastructure CSOs' support different from other local and international capacity builders, which rely on local/international market operations (e.g. donors' contracts with private companies for technical assistance) and project and programme grants to local and international CSOs.

Although CSOs focusing on social issues receive aid funding mainly through projects, they have been able to look for alternative funding and ways of fundraising. This includes approaching development aid agencies with small or no large or specific programs for CSOs in country such as the Japanese

International Cooperation Agency (JICA), German Cooperation (BMZ, GIZ), diplomatic missions (Czech Republic, Lithuania, Poland among others) as well as International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs) based or not in the country. These financial resources are often coupled with grants from local CSOs such as EPF. They have also been able to win public contracts for the provision of services (e.g. Centre for Civic Integration), get the attention of foundations abroad with no links in Georgia and/or foreign donations through volunteering or tourist visits as well. Contributions take the form of small amounts of money or in kind donations in case of local contributions (rentals, material, etc.) but CSOs have been able to create complementarity in a way that minimum levels of organizational sustainability are ensured.

Additionally, debate on self-sustainability is ongoing and CSOs are putting efforts to ensure their survival. Options include lobbying the executive in order to get tax deduction for income generating activities. Concretely, they are requesting to receive the same advantages as micro-companies, which are exempt from taxation of profit up to 30,000 GEL. Other CSOs prefer to lobby for so-called 1% mechanism, which consists to allocate 1% of citizens' taxes to CSOs chosen from a list of CSOs. However, this idea is not widely shared among CSOs. While tax exemption would benefit all CSOs in an equal way, CSOs feel that 1% mechanism would not benefit all CSOs. There is the fear that people would tend to allocate their contributions to the two or three HHRR and governance CSOs that have strong presence in the public media and are well resourced, while CSOs with less visibility such as think-tanks, research CSOs and/or CSOs working in social sectors playing an equally important role would not be able to benefit from public funding. In any case, self-sufficiency will contribute to retain a meaningful degree of autonomy vis-à-vis of government, political parties and aid development agendas as well as support higher operational autonomy.

Civil society organizations as independent actors for democratic development

Following normative democratic views, CSOs differ from political parties because, unlike political parties, they do not search 'to be in power', but to promote political pluralism and fair political competition. The need among the CSOs to distance themselves from political parties derived from donor influence that required CSOs political neutrality and objective advocacy efforts, as well as from the necessity to distance themselves from CSOs' notion under the communist regime (e.g. trade unions). Such dynamics have resulted, as one observer very well points out, in a 'love and hate' relationship where political parties have become an additional entry point for engagement on political processes.

Nowadays, three dynamics in Political Parties and CSO relations can be identified. Either there are no relations between political parties and CSOs or, there are relations based on personal connection and lobby or, there are CSOs that openly support political parties in government or in the opposition. In general, more CSOs with social focus, including those at regional level, deny having relations with political parties, they have not even considered it. Although most of them have been approached by political parties, they think 'too much political support might lead to loss of independence' vis-à-vis the rest of CSOs as well as public authorities. The HHRR and governance CSOs have been recognized as CSOs that have intensive contact with political parties but they have been able to remain independent and not to be co-opted by parties in the opposition. Indeed, these organizations have acknowledged having lobbied political parties, approached them to influence Parliament decisions as well as to provide capacity development services. In this case, relations tend to be based on personal contacts and with certain reluctance from the CSOs' side. Search for political parties' support would be the least desired strategy to influence government.

Nevertheless, the possibility to cooperate with political parties, in the form of formal alignment or sporadic cooperation, while being able to avoid instrumentalization can be considered as a twofold enabling factor for CSOs' participation. On one hand, these ambiguous relations with political parties have become and are considered by CSOs and political parties as an important contribution to the work of civil society organizations as they provide political channel for advocacy on key reform issues or even to regime change. In this sense, the study observes that the peak of civil society-political party interaction and cooperation was reached when there was a need to remove the party in power, either in the form of citizen mobilization, like in the Rose Revolution, or when elections are approaching. On the other, there is room to maintain and apply a 'neutrality' policy and prevent co-option.

4.3 Disabling factors for CSO participation in policy making process

Limited representativeness

One of the main challenges of CSOs would be the lack of constituency-based support and, in turn, accountability. The liberal conception of CS includes structuring people's needs to be raised and represented through the voice of CSOs. However, this is not the case for perceived well positioned and highly influential CSOs in Georgia. When asked about CSOs' weaknesses, the vast majority of interviewed stakeholders pointed out the lack of constituency support and 'disconnection' of these CSOs from citizens. Lack of representativeness is especially critical for governance and human rights CSOs. An example of this would be a demonstration against domestic violence and in favor of gender

equality that was labelled as the 'high hills and lipstick' demonstration, as CSOs were not recognized by the general public as representatives of women suffering domestic violence and discrimination for the little understanding that they showed of domestic violence within the different social and cultural settings of the country as well as the absence of frontline women's organizations from regional and rural areas. Weak public support is confirmed by low public trust that CSOs enjoy (USAID, 2014). Although, almost 20% of CSOs sees 'society/population in general' as target group and beneficiaries (EC, 2014), their targets in practice are state level institutions, mainly the Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Finance and Parliament. Only membership organizations can claim to be representative of their members.

Some governance and HHRR organizations of recent creation have been implementing projects aimed at engaging with citizens. Most of these activities tend to be aid project-driven, rather than part of the mandate and responsibility of CSOs towards those whom they claim to represent. Further, these CSOs see these activities as secondary, rather than a way of doing things differently to the rest of CSOs in the same sector, improving their credibility and knowledge by linking citizens' experiences, interest and service delivery practices with their 'watchdog' activities, or basically as an opportunity to enhance their visibility vis-à-vis citizens and society at large.

Low levels of cooperation and limited collective action

Notwithstanding various coordination and networking efforts, through this study, it was observed that coming together in formal networks and coordination structures beyond ad-hoc coalitions and campaigns has mainly been driven by donors and they failed once the funding was over. Currently, most formal coordination and cooperation among CSOs in Georgia mainly takes place within the framework of aid projects. When, outside of aid projects, it comes to agreeing on actions that imply a higher and broader commitment and, in turn, a more formal and long term coalition becomes more difficult. Moreover, it seems that networking and cooperation efforts have not been sufficient to overcome 'individualistic' patterns that have characterized mainstream Georgian CSOs.

Within CSOs, women's and gender organizations are those experiencing more difficulties to even form *ad hoc* coalitions followed by CSOs working on governance and HHRR issues. In the case of women's organizations, observers pointed out various reasons for this, from different approaches to women's rights and empowerment (gender equality vs feminist) to lack of gender solidarity. In case of governance and HHRR CSOs' weak collective actions seem to be deeper and go beyond sector cleavage. For example, in case of a joint statement that intended to get CSOs together on the issue of political persecution. However, this was not possible as they disagreed on what political persecution

was and whether it could be considered a HHRR issue. Reasons for this seem to depend on the individual benefits that governance and HHRR CSOs can obtain from bilateral bargain, influence and access to resources compared to those achieved through collective action. CSOs tend to reject being formally registered because they feel that formalization implies 'obligations' and 'competition among themselves will increase'. Additionally, as one of the network's leaders indicated, CSOs feel cooperation is 'time consuming'; they always expect a 'reward' in the 'short term', rather than seeing it as a strategic investment. An example of this positioning is the shared opinion about GNPEP. Their activities are found not to be 'relevant' and debates to be 'cumbersome'. Even an interviewee pointed out a possible problem of expectations translated into a mismatch between the objectives and activities of the platform and the knowledge, needs and interests of the members. While the platform would intend to be a mechanism to increase CSOs' capacities in EaP issues, coordinate efforts of CSOs to monitor the implementation of EaP and, in turn, hold government accountable for it, most of their members would mainly see the platform as way to have access to EU funding. Within this context, bilateral and personal approaches to influence government seem to be more gainful strategies for this group of CSOs, which enjoy sufficient capacity to attract donor funding and play a more 'political' role such as that of 'watchdog', rather than 'spending time' getting together with other CSOs that have fewer links with the public administration. As consequence, following observers' views, CSOs working on HHRR and Governance have become a sort of 'elite' with a privilege access to several source of financial funding and state institutions through individualistic approaches that makes them compete among themselves for the same national and international public space as well as resources.

However, the great interconnectedness is the one existing across sectors, between CSOs devoted to governance and HHRR agendas and playing more 'political' roles (watchdog, lobby), and CSOs, with social agendas (housing, disabilities, etc.) with more 'technical' approaches (provision of services) to policy making processes. Most of CSOs of the organizations have no contacts with other organizations beyond their own groups and geographic area of intervention, even though they have regional branches. Indeed, interviews in the regions showed that this fragmentation also happens at local level, where branches of HHRR CSOs weakly engaged with local CSOs, with more social and community focus. Different reasons were identified, which could explain this interconnectedness. According to some observers, HHRR and governance CSOs have tended to speak in their own interest to hold government accountable, and despite efforts to make their work more visible and transparent, linking their broad HHRR and governance objectives to social sectors and, in turn, to other CSOs' 'agendas and citizens' concerns has remained limited. Others have pointed out that social and economic issues are not 'appealing' topics for CSOs on the top, or for the media nor for donors. Despite being people's concern, they are not seen as issues related to the HHRR and/or democratic government and

therefore not attached to their political agenda or 'attractive' to media or to development partners. In fact, donors are stepping away from sectors such as education or health; focus on agriculture, social protection or environment is limited. As a result, approaching government through social and economic concerns do not provide visibility (e.g. appear in the media), either that does not bring an immediate 'reward' (e.g. aid funding).

Weak sustainability

Even though current efforts to become more sustainable CSOs, this study stated the high levels of aid dependency are still persistent. According to experts, only 10% of CSOs have diversified their economic resources, the rest depends on the 95% of their budget from development agencies, international organizations and International NGOs (INGOs) (USAID, 2014). Government has set few granting mechanisms in the last years, but they are dysfunctional or most of organizations are reluctant to accept funds from the government as they fear these might compromise their independency. Profitable activities of CSOs are taxable and having market services demands extra managerial work to keep separate accounts and manage different type of contracts (tenders and grants). Regional CSOs rely mainly on small development grants for short term projects. This makes difficult to develop own plans and strategies for the medium and long term. They can only afford limited number of paid staff and sometimes unpaid staff, and activities often tend to stop when the projects end.

Economic perspectives are completely different for those CSOs receiving direct grants and core funding such as governance and HHRR CSOs as well as 'infrastructures CSOs'. This allows for planning in medium term and ensure implementation and, in the end, continuity in monitoring, advocacy and other related activities (e.g. electoral monitoring, reform of electoral system). However, this does not ensure funding will be available for implementing long term objectives, which puts at risk the continuity of their work in near future and, in turn, long term achievements (e.g. implementation of new electoral system).

Lack of a theoretical and context-adapted notion of Civil Society

The lack of a well-developed self-notion of Civil Society is particularly problematic. The current widespread conception of CS in Georgia is highly influenced by the geopolitics of the country as well as development partners' approaches to CS, where CSOs are conceived as 'watchdog' organizations to promote democracy and development, instead of being seen as actors of change and builders of community sense, citizenship and connect state and society through playing diverse roles and

delivering a wide range of activities to provide public goods. As a consequence, CSOs have little room to define their own vision and long term objectives and roles to promote HHRR and democracy in an original way to find new 'niches' of work, applying their HHRR and governance knowledge to economic and social sectors and engage Georgian citizens' concerns to promote real change.

5. State Institutions - Civil Society Organizations

Relations

After years of total disconnection between state and CS, the change in government after the 2012 parliamentary elections was seen by CSOs as a great opportunity to reopen spaces for CSO participation and dialogue. CSOs aligned with the political parties now in power in order to push for a change of party in government and, as has been common in Georgian politics, a lot of CSOs' staff moved into the new executive. This created high expectations among CSOs for reengaging with the public authorities because it led them, as well as the international community, to assume that the current government was more open to CS dialogue and participation than the previous one.

It cannot be denied that the current political context is more favorable to CSO participation in the public space. CSOs are able to speak freely, political persecution is almost inexistent and there is a mutual and public acknowledgement of roles between state institutions and CSOs. All CSOs interviewed affirmed to have relations with government through participating in public consultations, requesting bilateral meetings as well as on informal bases. In the same way, governmental authorities have always stressed their good relations with CSOs and their added value in the policy making process. However, after 3 years of the new executive, this assumption might have proved to be wrong. Tensions shown through public confrontation between the executive and CSOs have emerged and weak CSOs' capacity to influence policy making processes can be easily appreciated. And, at legislative level, an imbalance CSOs' participation in legislative process can be denoted. Taking a closer look at State – CSO relations, it can be observed that the convergence of different variables has provided enabling factors for CSO participation and enhanced engagement in policy and decision making processes, but also new disabling factors that challenge CSOs' landscape.

5.1 Enabling factors for CSO participation in policy making process

Favorable Legal Framework

The development of civil society organizations and their participation in the public arena through playing their various roles depends on a series of legal measures to guarantee basic rights and freedoms, facilitate its contribution to society and its interaction with the government and other state institutions. These regulatory frameworks define the nature of the relations between the State and civil society and require a functioning democratic, legal and judicial system to ensure not only laws, but also their enforcement.

In the case of Georgia, there is a wide consensus among experts and interviewees that the current legislative environment is fairly liberal and does not hamper the development and participation of CSOs in the public arena. Constitution of Georgia guarantees the right to free association as well as the individual right to create a union or join one. The Civil Code of Georgia constitutes the bases for setting up civil organizations, their registration and activities and it defines civil organizations as non-commercial legal entities. The Civil Code also recognizes unregistered unions, which are not legal entities and decide their structure by mutual agreement. Practice shows that registering a non-commercial legal entity is quite easy in Georgia. There are no major legal or bureaucratic obstacles. The large number of registered non-commercial legal entities in Georgia is an indirect proof of this. The activities of a civil association can be suspended or banned only by a court decision, in cases determined by the organic law.

Others laws that affect CSOs' activities are Tax Code, Customs law and the law on grants. CSOs can get an exemption over their income through the charitable status as defined in the Tax Code. The status of a charitable organization is obtained by an organization that has been established to carry out charitable activities and has registered according to the rule prescribed by legislations, has at least one year of experience carrying out charitable activities. This status is guaranteed by the tax body and revoked by the Ministry of Finance. CSOs also enjoy of Value-added Tax (VAT) when donor provides to CSO the VAT exemption letter approved by the Ministry of Finance. Additionally, The amount paid by an enterprise/entrepreneur individual to charitable organization shall be deducted from gross income, but not more than 10 percent of the amount remaining after the deductions, envisaged under this Code (without the deduction envisaged under this Article), from gross income.

The law on grants is especially important since it establishes the basis for government to grant CSOs. Nowadays, this has been translated, although limitedly, into grant schemes created by line ministries such as the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs.

Weak government capacities for policy formulation and implementation

It is widely acknowledged that government lacks a great capacity for strategic planning, policy formulation and implementation. It is relatively new that line ministries adopt strategies linked to annual action plans. For it, line ministries as well as state agencies⁴ often rely on CSOs' advice, capacity development to formulate policies and action plans and, less frequently, to provide social services. For example, governance and HHRR CSOs like EPRC, Open Society Georgia Foundation, Europe Foundation, Civil Society Institute and others for advisory services and research for policy formulation and law drafting, social CSOs like ANIKA or CCI are more involved in the provision of services (e.g. day-care, legal aid), capacity development of civil servants (e.g. CCI trains teachers, or women's organizations' civil servants) as well as implement quality assurance systems.

The Georgian state building process has also brought a high turn of the staff between public sector and CSOs' sector. Different changes of executive have proved that public administration tends to engage part of the best human resources that had been available within CSOs. Proof of this is the number of current officials and politicians in government that come from CSOs and the other way around, the various former politicians and civil servants that now work for CSOs or have even created new CSOs. This has been translated in having former colleagues in government that seems to facilitate access of CSOs to public arena. In the same way, CSOs has also become a way for former officials to keep engaged in politics, bringing into CSOs' privileged knowledge on how state machinery works.

Formal and informal mechanisms to influence policy making process

An important tendency to involve CSOs in policy making process can be observed through high number of consultation processes as well as more formal and lasting mechanisms for CSOs' participation. **At formulation level**, the vast majority of CSOs interviewed acknowledged having been involved in policy and law formulation processes⁵. CSOs are invited by line ministries to participate in formal and public consultations or even to support the government in carrying out consultations, as is the case for the formulation of the Self-Governance Law, the Regional Development Strategy and the Strategy for Civil Integration. The formulation of these policies involved well-organised and complex participatory processes at national and regional level, including consultations at village level and parallel working groups with CSOs. There, CSOs played a key role in bringing the process to a local

⁴ State procurement agency engages with CSOs for conflict resolution through the Council for dispute resolution

⁵ According to EC mapping, more than 12% of CSOs admitted to having 'Participation in law consideration\ initiate changes\lobby' among their three principal activities.

level, facilitating the participation of local CSOs and CBOs as well as providing data collection and technical input.

There also exist participatory mechanisms beyond formal ones. High turnover of personnel between public sector and CSOs seem to have reinforced informal mechanisms for influencing policy and decision making. The vast majority of CSOs interviewed acknowledged to have regular bilateral meetings with government staff or higher level officials reached through personal contacts such as former colleagues that are now working for the executive. When preparing a policy or the draft of a proposal law, the executive often approaches CSOs bilaterally on informal bases for specific issues or possible reforms, even sometimes asking for help to draft policy documents or law proposals. These activities do not follow a public request, but they are sometimes done on personal bases and afforded by CSOs. Seemly, CSOs approach government instances through individuals they have personal or professional ties with in order to influence ongoing policy making processes. Informal mechanisms become key when reforms are taken without no consultation or CSOs have not had the opportunity to sit in the existing consultative bodies.

Participation in policy and law formulation is very high, if institutionalized and non-institutionalized mechanisms are combined. It is difficult to point out any inequalities in participating in formal and informal processes as all of the CSOs interviewed have acknowledged having been approached formally and informally by government to provide 'single' and/or 'collective' contributions as well as having used formal and informal mechanisms to advocate and lobby reforms. There is also consensus in pointing out the use of personal contacts and face-to-face meetings is much more effective in influencing decision making processes

At policy implementation level, participation is secured through institutionalized participatory meetings such as the Inter-Ministry Criminal Justice Reform Council, a kind of interagency coordination body for CSOs, other line ministries, development partners and other stakeholders. Under this there are about 10-11 thematic working groups. CSOs are also part of these groups. Currently, there are 17 CSOs, mainly Governance and HHRR ones. No specific selection process was carried out. The aim of this mechanism is the implementation of the Criminal Justice reform strategy and action plan. Each commitment in the Action Plan (AP) has a head agency and supporting agencies to implement it. CSOs participated in the drafting process of the strategy and currently in the law drafting process. The novelty is that CSOs are also involved in the monitoring of the action plan with responsibilities attached. According to the AP, every 6 months each stakeholder has to provide program reports indicating how commitments have been achieved. The CSOs can freely indicate their

disagreements based on their own assessments and evaluation. Based on CSO feedback, but also from development partners and other government agencies, the Secretariat issues a final report where, sometimes CSOs inputs are taken into account. Where they are not taken into account, the government has to indicate the reasons. Further institutionalization of these formal participatory mechanisms comes when they are also used for policy and law design. The involvement of the inter-ministerial council facilitated consensus-based decisions and inspired the creation of others, and currently there are about 7, including one on anti-corruption.

It is worth stressing that there also exist other types of participatory mechanisms beyond the influence of aid programs. This would be the case for the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia. They have number committees for the main social issues (housing, disabilities) the implementation of policies and action plans, which are used to coordinate the provision of services as well as ensure quality. Their interlocutors within CS are CSOs working in social sectors and their main role is to provide services. Nevertheless, through these committees, CSOs are also able to bring input in policy and law drafting processes as well as deliver citizens awareness activities. In the case of the health sector, there is a maternal and child committee where NGOs, private health service providers and government are represented. In this case, most NGOs are carrying out activities about health awareness. A future committee in Non-Communicable Disease will be soon formed and will take into account the CSOs. Hence, CSOs in social sectors seem to have more opportunities to diversify their roles allowing for engagement with citizens and government at the same time.

Party Coalition in Government

The current government is formed by a six party coalition led by the Georgian Dream Party. Parties in power represent a wide political spectrum, from rightist and leftist parties to pro-western and pro-nationalistic parties. While the Saakashvili government was able to impose vertical approaches, and maintain party discipline, the various Prime Ministers, since October 2012 parliamentary elections (Bidzina Ivanishvili and Irakli Gharibashvili) have been able to impose certain vision but not maintain the party discipline that characterized UNM. Party political differences are translated into difficulties in agreeing on certain policies, laws and even the appointment of judiciary staff. Internal tensions and disagreements imply entry points for CSOs' influence in the decision making process. And even though the leading party has been very critical of CSOs, some line ministries and state agencies still show themselves quite open to talking and engaging with CSOs. In fact, instability and discrepancies have clearly been exploited by CSOs who approach the different parties in government or look for

support within the parties in the coalition to push reforms as well as influence policy making decisions. In this case, lobby and advocacy activities take place through informal mechanisms.

Strengthened and Functional Parliament

Involvement with the legislative is very important in order to influence law making processes as well as to hold government accountable in the enforcement of laws and policies. In 2013, more than 245 Civil Society Organizations and the Parliament of Georgia signed the Memorandum of Cooperation. In this memorandum the Parliament of Georgia and the Civil Society Organizations established new standards of cooperation. It consists of 10 articles and covers a range of issues and it is an open document. Any CSOs can join it freely, if they agree on the content. This seems to have opened up a space for formal and transparent cooperation between the two main 'check& balances' institutions in the country.

The majority of CSOs interviewed for the present study affirmed to have relations with Parliament as institution and members of the Parliament. There is a general impression that Parliament is more open to dialogue with CSOs than the executive and therefore much easier to engage with. For CSOs, Committees and hearings are considered the best entry point to engage with government, even better than a face-to-face approach. Most CSOs regularly attend Parliament committees and even some of the 'top CSOs' have been able to establish Parliamentary Secretariats within the Parliament. The rules 'of the game' are now clear for all stakeholders. The decision-making process takes place in three different stages. The first stage is a first hearing where substantial changes can be made upon request of members of the Parliamentary Committees, CSOs and other citizens. A second hearing can still admit certain changes, but at the third hearing, changes are very limited. In this way, CSOs are aware at which level of legislative process they can influence by providing inputs and recommendations, and of which changes they can expect. The main role played by CSOs in Parliament is that of calling issues into question and providing recommendations (voice). Some of them, are also providing capacity development services in the framework of a development project.

Parliament and CSOs' cooperation seems to be strengthened by the political conjuncture. The current Parliament composition is more plural than the one under the Saakashvili government. On one hand, there is no party that enjoys of majority, but majority is made up of a coalition of a wide range of different parties. On the other, the opposition in parliament is larger than in the former legislature with stronger role to play. Plurality has been translated into more and varied Members of Parliament to be approached as well as into increased political parties interest for CSOs work.

5.2 Disabling factors for CSO participation in policy making process

- State building process

The communist system established totalitarian regimes which denied people private initiative and divergent opinions to the regime. Organizations known as 'civil' existed fully controlled by the government, and not meeting the basic requirement of a liberal definition of CSOs. The legacy of a totalitarian past continues to influence transition to democracy and this manifests itself in the way that the executive deals with the rest of the state institutions as well as with civil society. This is materialized in the tendency of any party in power to exercise control over other state institutions such as the Judiciary as well as the Parliament through clientelistic and patronage relations. These were the reasons that led to the 'Rose Revolution' as well as to the end of Saakashvili government. In both cases, legislatures started with a willingness to cooperate with CSOs but evolved into confrontational relations.

The 2012 Elections brought a coalition of rightist, leftist, nationalistic and pro-western parties to take up power. Although the various attempts of the party leading the coalition, the Georgian Dream, to control other state institutions, this has not been possible due to internal discrepancies and political instability. Even more difficult is to control the Parliament, where the coalition only has a simple majority. Adding to it is influence that the former Prime Minister (PM) Ivanishvili is still exercising over the government. Some have even pointed out that 'he has become a kind of PM in the shadow'. His opinions about CSOs are strongly taken into account by the executive as well as by some of its officials. Within this context, where democratic institutions are not consolidated yet, the country is permanently faced with the risk of a reverse situation that brings the state back to authoritarian systems.

Legal framework provides limited incentives for becoming self-sufficient and independent organizations

Although few CSOs put their efforts into fundraising beyond development agencies through private sector or membership fees, alternative funding only represents around 5% of their total income in the best of cases. Through this study, few CSOs based at regional level receive donations from individuals in cash or in kind and, from time to time, but this is more the exception than the rule. If CSOs carry out fundraising campaigns, the amount collected is just to cover specific events or activities. Only 1.5% include these types of activities in their agenda (EC, 2014).

One way to fundraise is through attracting private sector. In fact, current fiscal framework provides incentives in form of income tax deduction if they contribute to charitable organizations, but philanthropy and corporate social responsibility within private sector remain underdeveloped in Georgia. Another is to carry out awareness campaigns to gather citizens' support and/or deliver services. However, current fiscal laws do not provide incentives for individual donations, CSOs' business activities, either for social entrepreneurial activities. Individual contributions to CSOs are, in fact, taxable. Although, CSOs are allowed to deliver business activities, these, whether they are profitable or non-profitable, are considered as if they were generated by the private sector and, therefore, CSOs have to pay taxes for it. Further, grants cannot be used to promote (social or not) entrepreneurial activities as entrepreneurship is considered like a profit activity. Therefore, fundraising activities become costly for CSOs as well as for citizens.

As consequence, it is easier for CSOs to rely on foreign aid to keep 'business ongoing', although this might mean to align to development partners' agendas and compromise economic sustainability in the medium and long term, independence to decide their own objectives, capacities to develop, roles to play as well as build constituency support.

Civil Society Organizations and Government relations: 'too close for comfort'

Even though the existence of different formal participation spaces and informal channels for policy influence might lead us to believe that the environment is enabling for CSO participation, there is a generalized perception among the main interviewed stakeholders that the impact of CSOs on policy and decision making processes has not been 'tangible' or 'noticeable'. This impression is confirmed by an EC Civil Society Mapping (2014), where more than 52% considered the CSOs' influence remained 'weak' or 'very weak', and one fifth of them thought CSOs had 'no influence whatsoever' (EC, 2014).

The participatory process **at formulation stage** mainly consisted in a 'one-shot' consultations that have not evolved into more formal participatory mechanisms for the implementation and evaluation of policies. Therefore, CSO involvement stops at formulation level, unless there is the creation of a committee or/and Inter-ministry Council to ensure the follow-up of policy implementation. The existence of formal Inter-ministry Councils or Committees for policy **implementation** has not been translated either into greater CSOs' impact, at the point that governance and HHRR CSOs are losing the 'appetite' for formal policy dialogue, either the committees in the social sector, which are quite technical where monitoring activities by CSOs are limited to the provision of information, rather than to performance assessment. The CSOs fear Government carries out a lot of consultations as well as engagement of CSOs in policy research and processes to design new laws, but, once a draft is made,

government holds on the process to approve it. The practice points out that government tends to leave an issue to 'cool down' and try to pass reforms later on with limited information or using different mechanisms, while proving to have engaged CSOs in consultations to legitimate its decision. Endorsed policies and laws, however, have nothing to do with what CSOs proposed. Within this context, CSOs conclude government only carries out the consultation process just to 'check the box' vis-à-vis development partners, CSOs and citizens at large. At this level, informal channels such as face-to-face and personal contacts to influence lower levels through civil servants and officials seems not to be much more effective than formal channels.

This leads to think that the existence of mechanisms enable environment for State-CS interaction and Government-CSO dialogue does not implicitly mean CSOs are fully involved in the policy and decision making processes, instead there must be non-enabling factors that prevent meaningful CSO participation as well as impact. According to one of the interviewed people, the 'honeymoon between CSOs and Government is over'. This phrase summarizes the good understanding and interaction that CSOs and Government had at the beginning of the current legislature. According to other observers, healthy relations have finished once the government has absorbed all the technical and human CSO capacity in order to start ruling the country in a credible way (e.g. policies in place) on one hand, and CSOs have started holding government accountable for its decisions and actions on the other.

In front of government's reforms that supposedly threatens democratic governance and HHRR and cannot be influenced through the existing channels, CSOs acknowledged to react in cooperation with media. Having part of the media sector under control, government overreacts attacking them for being 'subversive' or 'part of the opposition'. In return, CSOs make public statements against government, again through media. This has evolved into Government-CSO 'dialectics' and confrontational situation based on Government-CSOs' *Action-Reaction* dynamic. Many CSOs and political parties have been considered this strategy successful as they have the impression to have stopped important reforms that would put governance and HHRR under threat. However, single action-reaction might only readdress immediate issues or threats. Practice points out that, in these situations, government tends to leave the issue at stake to 'cool down' and try to carry the same reforms later on through other means and sometimes with providing limited information to the public. This, in practice, discourages CSOs to investigate the root causes, to lobby and monitor implementation of all the necessary steps that contribute to readdress the obstacles that allow to government for discretionary processes and decisions. Structural democratic and developmental changes require long term investment, capacity, consistency and leveraging actions, which are

currently missing in Georgian CSOs. Hence, *Action-Reaction strategies* only tend to achieve short term and, even sometimes, 'patchy' solutions.

Political context that allows for a strong voice but limited accountability

Even though the existence of spaces for CSOs' voice, whether they are in form of formal participation mechanisms or public media, it was observed that space for holding government accountable is limited. Formal mechanisms for CSOs' participation in policy and decision making process involve CSOs at formulation and implementation level through monitoring and service delivery activities, however these mechanisms have not resulted in higher involvement of CSOs in assessing government performance. Participatory mechanisms seem to be designed to engage CSOs to contribute to formulation as well as monitoring the implementation, but not in the evaluation. While public spaces as media tend to be used to criticize the government for the type of decisions that are taken, they are not used to hold government accountable for weak or limited policy performance in key issues such as economy, employment, quality of education, among others.

Weak accountability role seems to be related to different factors. For starting, there is a misconception among all stakeholders of CSOs' roles in policy making process. Playing a monitoring role has been mistaken as a sector by stakeholders in general, rather than a role or means to achieve a set of objectives, and consequently CSOs are expected to be just 'watchdogs'. According to EC mapping (2014), state policy would be the second area of activity for CSOs, which, added to the percentage of CSOs working on the overlapping area of 'good governance', becomes the main sector of activity for CSOs. Effective accountability requires to invest efforts in technical policy aspects such as budget, result-oriented monitoring, evidence based research, data collection which takes time, compared to awareness, lobby activities and public debate that make them more visible. However, CSOs' approach is mainly oriented on enhancing democratization, human rights and social rights from a very generalist perspective that cannot go further than lobbying and advocating for policy and law changes. Thus, CSOs devote a lot of efforts on lobbying and advocating to state institutions on a wide range of HHRR, governance and social issues in an old fashion way, focusing more on government processes (e.g. election of electoral commission, budgets allocated) rather than on public policies outputs and outcomes (e.g. quality of education, jobs, service coverage, etc.).

Finally, the *Action-Reaction* relation that currently drives Government-CSOs' relations makes difficult to CSOs to stick to the achievement of long term objectives, but to jump from one scandal or 'hot political topic' to another that arise at a certain point in time. This, in turn, is not favoring either to hold government accountable, rather to use public space to continuously exercise voice.

Inability to apply change and management for change

Progressive institutionalization of CSOs' participation in policy making process combined with current political context implies more complex political landscape that requires CSOs to adapt to new organizational and environmental settings. For example, while 'accountability' cannot exist if there is nobody who raises 'voice', 'voice' will have limited impact unless it is supported by CSOs have developed capacities through practice (e.g. provision of services, evidence-based research, data collection etc.) and engagement with citizens. However, it seems CSOs tend to maintain their way of 'doing business as usual' while context is changing. Notwithstanding the lobby, advocacy, research and other capacities welcomed in policy process, their strategies are quite similar, activities overlapping and roles played are not interlinked e.g. 'monitoring activities are not used to assess overall policy performance' and coordinated. Additionally, they often mirrored themselves to western CSOs' approaches, roles and development models. Self-comparisons to European CSOs in a positive sense came up often during the interviews, overlooking that context matters. Linking roles, context adapted and innovative actions would be especially important under the current content where there is room for voice but limited accountability.

Mainstream CSOs face challenges to understand the internal functioning of government, budget management and setting priorities, for example, how budget is allocated to the line ministries. Being engaged in policy process means cooperation with government where the executive becomes a partner and which requires to understand its system. However, it seems some CSOs, mainly those in social sectors, have difficulties in understanding, for example, government budget allocation processes, that each line ministry has to make their case for an increase in allocations with the Ministry of Finance and which is not always approved. Equally important was to note CSOs lack of capacities to assess the best moment to push for reforms as well as of solid knowledge on how internal government and bureaucratic processes function, mainly among the social CSOs. It was often mentioned that CSOs sometimes push for reforms and policies that might be too ambitious for the level of development of the country and, so, they turn out to be unrealistic. Further, not being consistent in pursuing specific and structural changes in the long term is not providing incentives to CSOs to develop capacities and expertise beyond they are doing now. Therefore, more strategic approach to policy influence would help to lower tensions with the executive and, in turn, put CSOs' reputation at risk.

Government Instability

It seems that a party coalition in government is also a non-enabling factor. Many organizations found it quite difficult to influence the decision making process, although they had direct access to members of the party coalition. Apparently, parties need to negotiate their proposals with the rest of the coalition members before they are taken into account. Hence, it happens often that CSOs' proposals remain outside the internal political dialogue and bargain. Also, especially in pre-election time, government tends to associate CSOs with political parties in the opposition and public statements indicating that CSOs are part of the opposition are common. Current trends point out that attacks from government towards CSOs will continue until the new elections take place.

Polarization of CSOs

In the last years, it has been noted by observers that public statements attacking watchdog CSOs has increased. Being critical to government as watchdog organization combined with the fact that some of them are of recent creation by officials from the former executive have made it easy to government to assume that 'watchdog' CSOs are part of the opposition and, in turn, has led to increased tensions between CSOs and Government. This seems also to affect CSOs' relations and opportunities for cooperation. Until now, it was easy to distinguish which CSOs followed independence policy, the groups which had closer cooperation with the government or parties in the coalition (not yet turn them into GONGOs) and parties in the opposition. But, in the current context, CSOs find it difficult to identify who supports whom in the political party landscape. Indeed, some CSOs expressed low interest in cooperating with 'watchdog' CSOs as this might undermine their relations with the executive. Some interviewees suspect that the line between these CSOs and political parties will become even more blurred as elections draw nearer.

Weak Parliament Capacities

CSO and Parliament relations still face some challenges due to weak capacities within Parliament. All legislative processes include an explanatory note where a description of CSO inputs and remarks needs to be included. It was pointed out by some members of parliament that this space is often empty due to the speed with which decisions are taken sometimes, as well as the lack of capacity of CSOs in very specific and technical issues. Some people pointed out that sometimes the level of engagement with CSOs depends on the Chairman of the Committee's willingness to involve CSOs as well as on the type of CSOs. Committees, like the one on HHRR, lack technical skills to debate issues, and consultations are carried out in order to 'check the box.' Consequently, CSOs did not find it useful to attend the hearings. It was suggested that CSOs in sectors such as urban or environmental are

more valued than 'watchdog' CSOs, since their input is very technical and complement lack of Parliament Committees capacities.

5.3 Enabling factors for CSO participation on regional level

Decentralization process

In 2014 a new Code on Local Self-Governance in Georgia was passed. Since then, important efforts to decentralize political and administrative power have been made. Fiscal decentralization should start in 2016 with the collection of taxes. However, the collection system and capacities seem to challenge the process. The current text of the Code includes the establishment of new forms of public participation in decision-making at local level that is legally binding since a reform implemented in 2015. In practice, participation has to be carried out by the two main public administrations present at local level: Regional administration represented by the Governor, elected by the central administration; and the Municipality, led by the mayor and elected through local elections. The law foresees that the Governor should carry out consultation at village level in order to prepare and update local action plans. The Municipality, on its behalf, has to create a Civic Advisory Board where 1/3 has to be representatives from CSOs. The Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure, responsible for the implementation of the Regional Development Strategy, has just created a template as a guide for municipalities to set up these Civic Advisory Boards. A monitoring committee was formed in order to follow up the implementation of the Regional Development Strategy and where 2 CSOs were involved. However, the committee has not been meeting for a while due to internal 'politics'. The 2016 budget for regions will include resources to support the development of participatory mechanisms. Additionally, a project financed by the United Nations Development Programme is supporting the creation of 40 Councils as well as providing support to regional CSOs to participate.

Existence of Civil Society Organizations at local level closer to citizens

Local CSOs have a more focus on social issues and have developed more contacts with citizens and beneficiaries rather than those based in the capital and work in the area of HHRR and governance. Despite the existence of common trends, it was also observed that development of CSOs differ from one region to another.

They are long term and well-established organizations with skilled staff, but limited access to financial resources. CSOs are facilitating the link between government and people living in the villages and

remote areas in the region as well as raising awareness about sensitive issues such as domestic violence, early marriage and child labor. And this role has been welcomed by the public administration and therefore the need to consult them.

Embryonic civil society organizations participatory processes and mechanisms

The Autonomous Republic of Adjara enjoys a different and special political status from the rest of the Georgian Regions. Its status is defined by Georgia's law on Adjara and the region's constitutions. This is translated in higher decision power political, fiscal, legislative and administrative sense. In 2013, the Autonomous Region of Adjara signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with 20 CSOs. The aim of this mechanism is not clear, but Government understands it as a 'mechanism to share the information with CSOs about policy processes. It is seen as a way to 'formalize long term informal government – CSO relations'. In these meetings, CSOs can express their views to be included in the policy. Furthermore, up to 10 sector commissions that involve CSOs exist, such as Land Commission, Housing Commission, Tourism Commission, or Budget commission where government priorities are discussed. The Government also issues annual reports indicating the progress in implementing local policies, where CSOs are invited.

With the implementation of Local Self-Governance Code levels, all regions should reach similar levels of decentralization. In the meantime, CSOs have already started to approach local governments. CSOs in Guria initiated the creation of a CSO council, known as 'Public Hall' with a MoU which states the role and responsibilities of government and CSOs. The document even includes the conditions to be a member of the 'Public Hall'. Currently, it is formed by the local government (executive and *Sakrebulo*) and 7 CSOs, but only 5 really active. The aim of this mechanism is to discuss priorities for the year as well as the progress in implementing them through the year. Meetings take place on a monthly basis and can be organised by CSOs. CSOs can provide input and propose modifications to local policies and law proposals. They have also been engaged in the budget discussions and are invited to carry out monitoring of municipality policy implementation. In the light of the Self-Governance Code, this processes should be reinforced. Example of Government - CSO fruitful cooperation and collective action was the design of a tourism project. The Young Scientists' Club knew about EU grants for local authorities. They approached *Sakrebulo* who engaged the municipality, as *Sakrebulo* has limited competence in the implementation of policies. The municipality accepted the offer, as it envisaged no additional cost. The NGO took care of everything, preparation of the document, search for other CSOs to be involved as well as other municipalities. The Governor's house was also invited to become an associate partner to ensure synergies and alignment with national policies. The project was

successfully approved by the EC and its implementation will start in 2016. The responsibility for implementation relies on the Municipality, however a management unit will be set up and managed by the Young Scientists' Club as they have the capacity to do so. Other CSOs will carry out awareness activities. Decisions will be taken through a steering committee where project partners and associates will be represented. This has been possible as staff in local governments lack capacity and have limited economic resources to implement civic education activities that, nevertheless, are important for the development of the region. CSOs have the skills to do so, but also the economic resources and/or information to access aid funding that can reinforce the implementation of local policies.

Even in context with limited CSOs' development, like the case of Kakheti, where attempts to establish dialogue between regional and local CSOs haven't been successful, it is important to note that some CSOs are able to engage with government through providing added value, such as the legal services that GYLA Kakheti is providing for the implementation of Self-Government Law, organizing activities in public spaces. Some have tried to make it more formal and open, like GYLA and Citizens Engagement Centre who signed a MoU with the municipality to involve the municipality and *Sakrebulo* to have a debate on public issues such as disabilities and infrastructures.

Regional legislative bodies prompt to cooperate and dialogue with CSOs

At regional level, the general impression is that relations between *Sakrebulo* and CSOs is much stronger than between CSOs and regional government bodies. In **Adjara**, CSOs attend Supreme Council hearings and *Sakrebulo*. A formal consultation mechanism was set up for agricultural issues where the private sector, CSOs and independent experts are part of it. Additionally, the Supreme Court has also formalized relations with a few CSOs through a bilateral MOU, especially in the field of environment. CSOs have been particularly active in proposing changes in the law in favor of gender equality in parliament as well as in providing suggestions during annual budget hearings.

In the case of **Guria**, *Sakrebulo* is in charge of the CSOs' participatory mechanism called 'Public Hall'. The levels of engagement and meaningful participation seem to have improved in Public Halls under the current *Sakrebulo*. In fact, it has become an important actor linking CSOs with the municipality as they have more contact with CSOs. This was the case for the tourism project previously mentioned, where CSOs approached *Sakrebulo* and this facilitated the connection and understanding with the municipality. In this region, CSOs have been able to show their added value for facilitating relations of responsiveness and accountability between government and citizens. Indeed, *Sakrebulo* made explicit the importance of projects such as the online transmission of *Sakrebulo* sessions, giving the chance to people living in isolated areas to participate. Various reasons could explain such active relationship,

among them the Self-Governance Code. CSO engagement was an electoral commitment. Moreover, CSOs are bringing institutions and, in turn, their leaders close to citizens so political support can be widened.

Kakheti would be the region with weaker *Sakrebulo* – CSO relations and cooperation. However, the members interviewed for this study expressed their satisfaction with the contacts that they had with CSOs through the meetings organized by the Centre for Civic Engagement.

5.4 Disabling factors for CSO participation on regional level

Higher political decentralization is not necessary translated into high civil society participation

The relationship between Autonomous Government of Adjara and CSOs is rated as limited. Despite the existence of participatory mechanisms and apparent willingness to engage CSOs, in practice, CSO involvement in Adjara seems to be quite weak, reserved to certain sectors and approaches and limited in political will terms. In fact, the dynamics are quite similar to those in Tbilisi. The MoU is just a declaration of principles, which does not provide any information on the roles of the government and CSOs, or how relations need to happen. The existence of the MOU has not provided tangible improvements in terms of CSO engagement. Its limited impact was attributed to the fact that the process was led by CSOs in the framework of an aid project.

At policy formulation level, although the government invited CSOs for consultations, some CSOs in Adjara feel that it is done just for 'checking the box'. At monitoring level, the situation seems to be even more critical. Not all commissions are functioning properly. While land, environment and tourism seem to be quite active, the Housing Commission has not been meeting for a while. Policy monitoring is limited to invitation to the presentation of the annual policy reports. Finally, government also lacks information about CSOs' role and finds it hard to understand 'what to do with them'. In fact, officials from government were not able to name any of the NGOs in the MoU and even confused them with international aid agencies. For CSOs, the Adjara's government is not really interested in engaging with CSOs, lacks knowledge of CSO roles and added value, and their consultations are about 'checking the box'. Therefore, they decided to 'disengage'.

Weak regional institutions

In general, regional governments lack important capacities to engage in dialogue with CSOs, including a fair understanding of CSOs' role. Such low capacities are translated in high reliance on CSOs to

formulate projects and have access to aid, like the case of Guria, and/or limited knowledge local authorities showed about CSOs in general as well as in the specific context of Kakheti.

Involvement of CSOs in policy making processes in Kakheti is the lowest among the four regions targeted for this study. Despite attempts to create spaces for participation, they have not functioned due to different reasons. Most of the CSOs interviewed in the region are in contact with public administration, however there is a general impression that government is not interested in working with CSOs. Most of the contacts have been on the basis of projects implemented by the CSOs. For the case of HIV-related projects, there was a coordination council led by the Municipality which included the representatives of CSOs working in health issues. The aim was to coordinate actions and avoid overlapping. Once funding stopped and government did not consider it a priority anymore, the coordination council stopped working. Also, if local CSOs need a letter of recommendation or support from local authority, they will be able to get. But, relations between CSOs and local government have not evolved further.

In cases like Adjara, where institutional development is higher, the situation is not much better. In spite of low CSO involvement in local policies and impact, opinions concerning government's approach would differ among the CSOs. While working in sectors such as environment or justice, they have been able to engage with the Municipality and regional government and in turn have a positive feeling about engaging with government; CSOs playing a more 'watchdog' role were more critical and even had a negative attitude towards cooperation with local government. This is also translated in unequal opportunities to influence politic making processes. Indeed, social and environmental CSOs participate in the commissions and have been able to engage with government because they provide services that government does not have budget for (e.g. services to farmers or land aid services) as well as finding external resources for it. But, CSOs playing 'watchdog role' are facing more difficulties. At the beginning of the current local government legislature, a lot of these CSOs were involved in policy process but, according to government, they lost 'interest' because they had 'low impact' as well as realizing that cooperation comes with responsibilities and CSOs seem not to be 'ready'.

It seems that institutional weakness allows central Government politics to influence Adjara regional government attitudes towards to CSOs. Currently, central government has a confrontational attitude towards CSOs. This was reflected by Adjara government who stressed that most CSOs see themselves as watchdogs and they are happy to criticize but do not provide recommendations and solutions. And therefore they 'should not be involved in the policy making process'. This would be also the case for Kakheti, the previous party in the municipality did not want to work with CSOs and this seems not to

have changed under the new party in power, Georgian Dream. According to some CSOs, tensions between central government and HHRR and governance Tbilisi based CSOs results in general low interest of Kakheti authorities towards region-based CSOs.

Weak capacities of civil society organizations at local level

In Georgia, there exist important economic and social disparities across the regions as well as within the regions, between the urban areas and the villages. This also affects civil society organizations' development in the regions and their relationship with regional governments. While CSOs in the Capital, Tbilisi, are well-resourced, have strong capacities and long term staff, with access to development partners as well as to a well-resourced and structured public administration, CSOs in the regions face great difficulties in accessing economic resources, retaining staff, and engaging with a public administration that lacks human and financial capacity. They have difficulties in keeping core activities running due to limited access to development partners' funding. Applying for international donors is associated with significant financial and time-related transaction costs for rural-based CSOs. Funding is based on a project approach mainly coming from INGOs, 'infrastructure CSOs' and bilateral agencies, often, based outside of the country. Although there are a lot of CSOs registered, organizations tend to stop their activities once project funding is over. For most of the interviewed people in the regions, the work in CSOs at this level is a second job or sometimes even voluntary.

This instability in CSO landscape at decentralized level does not contribute to improving government's understanding of CSOs' role, functioning CSOs' participation mechanisms. For example, years ago, a group of CSOs tried to put in place a mechanism for participation through the signature of a MoU, but this MoU is currently obsolete. On one hand, CSOs experienced challenges in understanding public policies and cycles. The MoU also included obligations that CSOs were unable to fulfil. Further, it does not help to prove to have added value for the development of the region and their role in democratic governance. Proof of it is the case of CSOs in Kakheti, where the Telavi municipality faced great challenges finding CSOs working on as well as tracking CSO projects in the sector for the design and implementation of an agricultural project financed by decentralized cooperation⁶. After various meetings with villages and farmers, they realized that CSOs might have implemented a lot of projects, but impact seemed to be extremely low, even inappreciable. Most registered NGOs carried out 'one-

⁶ This is aid funds that come from Telavi sister city in Germany

off' activities, which disappeared once funding was over. Beneficiaries did not have a very positive perception either as they had a very 'patronizing' approach. The authorities were only able to find three organizations working in the agricultural sector and they were not local farmers' organizations, rather business associations. The solution that they have come up with is the creation of a new CSO.

Last, but not the least, few CSOs mentioned that low levels of a sense of citizenship at community level combined with patrimonial and clientelistic practices of traditional and governmental appointed leaders at local level hampers their efforts to engage villagers with local authorities.

6. The architecture of Civil Society Support in Georgia

From the moment of becoming independent, CSOs in Georgia have never lacked mainly Western donor attention. Growth in the number of civil society organizations, their institutional development and strengthening, their activities and agendas have greatly depended on donors' policies and actions (Nodia 2005; Lutsevych, 2013). As previously argued, these characteristics have also highly determined CSOs' relations with state institutions, political parties as well as among CSOs. In other words, international aid architecture has been also playing a great role in providing enabling and disabling factors for CSOs' effectiveness and development.

6.1 Enabling factors for civil society participation

An aid architecture full of opportunities for Civil Society Organizations'' development and consolidation

When analyzing CS funding patterns in Georgia, the first observation to be made is the large number of funding opportunities for CSOs that is made available in the country as well as outside of the country. The **EU institutions and EU Member States** altogether, constitute, today, the biggest donor in terms of total Official Development Aid (ODA)⁷, and the second largest donor supporting CSOs. It is foreseen that support to Georgian CSOs will increase in the coming years. Support to CSOs is targeted in its geographical instrument (bilateral cooperation), European Neighborhood Partnership

⁷ <http://www.compareyourcountry.org/aid-statistics?cr=302&cr1=oced&lg=en&page=1>

Instrument (ENPI) coupled with thematic programs such as European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), Civil Society and Local Authorities in Development. Individual EU members, such as Germany are also active in supporting civil society. One of the most innovative instruments of the EU has been the design of a CSO Road Map. With this document, it is expected to make EU support to CSOs more strategic, effective and visible. The document is also intended to set the basis for improved coordination between EU member states and EU institutions as well as with other international partners in the country. Last but not least, the design of the Road Map also aims at bringing EU institutions close to national CSOs where consultations should evolve into a more structured dialogue between the EU and Georgian CSOs. All the above mentioned instruments should be used to implement the Road Map.

For the period 2014-2017, only the geographical instrument will channel about 6,000,000 EUR to CSOs for the period to support an enabling environment, especially in terms of its impact on the financial sustainability of organizations, CSOs' accountability, CSOs' capacity development in voice and accountability. According to official documents, activities will include 'policy dialogue and legislative initiatives, capacity development through standard training and mentoring/coaching techniques, support to networks and coalition-building, the formulation of strategic policy documents and related action plans'. The aid modalities used will be a combination of direct award grants, a sort of core funding, and a project approach through call for proposals. Additionally, the EU has also progressively mainstreamed CSOs into their sectors. Support for CSOs in formal and informal education and justice have been earmarked from funds allocated to sectors, becoming in this way among the few donors supporting CSOs working in sectors.

Among the most active EU member states supporting CSOs in Georgia is the **Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency** (SIDA). CSOs are mainstreamed in the whole SIDA in-country intervention through sectors such as environment (waste management). Although the amount made available for CSOs is much less than EU and USAID, SIDA is the only development partner providing core funding to local and international CSOs that have a strong profile in voice and accountability and strategic core funding to 'infrastructure CSOs', like Europe Foundation to support development of a pluralistic civil society landscape. SIDA maintains close contacts not only with its beneficiary CSOs but also other CSO organizations that promote pluralistic and democratic development in Georgia. This dialogue, not formalized, takes place regularly with initiative from SIDA or through 'infrastructure' CSOs supported by SIDA such as EPF.

Nevertheless, the biggest single donor channeling support to CSOs is the **United States of America**

and the second donor in total ODA. Their focus is democracy, governance and human rights. Poverty or social related issues are not on the agenda, some issues like employment are intended to be mainstreamed in governance and HHRR programs. USAID approach consists in the concentration of support structured in two types. 'Internal support', awarded through public procurement to an American International CSO East-West Management Institute, has as its main objective to bring citizens closer to CSOs, innovation and alternative public policy advocacy and awareness. 'Direct transfer' consists of a grant-making programme to support local CSOs on a wide range of issues including women's participation, accountability and governance as well as electoral monitoring. USAID keeps a close relationship with CSOs and supports them in raising their voices. They also rely on CSOs to update governance and HHRR information, but there does not seem to be a formal or structured dialogue.

At UN level, UNDP and UNWOMEN are the most active UN agencies supporting CSOs in Georgia. In the light of decentralization process, UNDP will be supporting the implementation of the Self-governance Code through provision of capacity development of national and regional government bodies. The project envisages to empower CSOs in two ways. On one hand, it is intended to strengthen CSOs in order to provide capacity development services to local governments. On the other, a sub-component of the project aims at strengthening institutional tools for enhancing participation of the rural population in local decision making. This includes granting scheme for CSOs. One member of the government is part of the grants' selection committee.

In line with its mandate, UN Women have been focused on strengthening gender equality and women CSOs. Its support includes an Advisory Work Group to share information on issues related to disabled women, political, economic and social empowerment before discussing it with government; grants to 'infrastructure' organizations to provide capacity development to small, specialized and specific groups and CSOs; direct provision of capacity development to CSOs in gender assessment, research and advocacy; a grant making programme for community-based organizations aimed at empowering grass roots organizations at local and village level 'self-groups' to engagement in civil activities.

Through this study, it was interesting to note the presence and relevance of international CSOs in the form of NGOs, foundations, institutes and think-tanks. The role of these CSOs in the country vary. While international NGOs such as Caritas or World Vision are focused on the provision of social services and compete for funding with local CSOs, other international CSOs such as German Foundations as well as local ones like Europe Foundation or Open Society Georgia Foundation, are playing 'infrastructure' organizational role supporting local CSOs with grants as well as capacity

development activities. Although the amount of financial resources is much lower than those provided by development partners, 'infrastructural CSOs' seem to be critical for CSOs with limited capacities to access and manage donors' grants, but having an important impact on citizenship building, social inclusion as well as minority integration. Their recipients are mainly urban CBOs and CSOs based at local level applying more social approaches which, are not ranked highly on the development agenda of big donors. being attractive sectors for big donors and unable to deal with their bureaucracy, apply for grants with more flexible requirements and simplified procedures.

Opened up spaces for government and civil society organizations dialogue

Although some participatory commissions exist in social sectors, they can be mainly noticed in sectors heavily supported by development agencies. In fact, they are the result of development agencies' assumption that CS participation is necessary to achieve democratic and developmental goals. In practice, this has been translated into an approach that systematically requires CSOs' participation in national government as 'soft conditionality' in foreign aid supported sectors. In case of Georgia, this would be true for the justice sector, including corrections, corruption, judiciary and Human rights; the former one dealt by the Prime Minister's Office. After years of functioning, it seems that some of them have reached a certain level of institutionalization. This would be the case for the Inter-ministry Criminal Justice Reform Council, a kind of interagency coordination body for CSOs, other line ministries, development partners and other stakeholders. This inter-ministerial council has inspired the creation of others, and currently there are about seven, including one on anti-corruption.

Civil society organizations in the international community's political agenda

Unlike in many other countries, development partners and other stakeholders, including government, have admitted to CSOs are in the political agenda of development partners, mainly in the EU and US. It is striking the political relationship that CSOs have been able to develop with the international community beyond a project approach. As a matter of fact, most of HHRR and governance CSOs have admitted to appealing for international community political support to enhance their voices against government threats to CSOs, democratic governance and human rights. This implicitly means that the international community has included CSOs and the objective of facilitating an enabling environment for CSOs in their agendas and, in turn, in their political dialogue vis-à-vis state.

The closeness between development partners and CSOs seems to result in a win-win situation. On one hand, economic and political support to CSOs seems to increase the bargaining power of CSOs vis-à-vis government. Indeed, various CSOs have said they have grants from development agencies, like

USAID and the EU Delegation, which provided access to government institutions as 'government has high respect for those international partners'. When asking CSOs about strategies for influencing government in non-enabling environments, approaching development partners was another way to lobby the government, after the media. In fact, CSOs have also used their relations with development partners as a strategy to increase pressure over government. On the other hand, development partners have access to information concerning governance and HHRR problems as well as to other geopolitical related issues, which they use to determine their political positioning and dialogue with government.

6.2 Disabling factors for civil society participation

Concentration of funding limits sustainable and plural civil society organizations

There are a large number of bilateral and multilateral agencies in Georgia supporting CSOs, more conventional ones such as the EU, European Union Member States, US and UN agencies as well as OSCE. All of them have as their main focus to promote democratic governance (fair elections, transparency and government policies oversight) as well as human rights, with special attention to the justice sector, through supporting CSOs to raise citizens' voices and hold government accountable. Within this context of abundant economic resources for CSOs, it is important to take a close look at how this funds are distributed; or in other words, 'who gets what'.

When crosschecking the information gathered in the field, it becomes quite obvious that urban based HHRR and governance CSOs are those who have gained the trust of the main development agencies in country. Most of their resources come from the EU, USAID and SIDA in the form of direct funding, core funding coupled with programs as well as short term projects. However, limited resources from the EU and USAID would be supporting CSOs working on social sectors and only some of UNWOMEN and UNDP grants would be reaching CSOs placed at community level.

The concentration of funding on the HHRR and governance CSOs relies on different political and technical reasons. On one hand these CSOs have as their main aim to promote, although in a very general way, governance and HHRR playing advocacy and 'watchdog' roles, which, according to donors' approaches, are core functions for promoting democratic governance and development. On the other, these CSOs have been able to develop great skills so that they fulfil development partners' expectations as well as handle their bureaucracy. Moreover, it seems that funding allocation conditions access to political support of development community. Only urban based HHRR and

governance CSOs affirmed having close relations with development partners beyond aid and using them in politically adverse contexts.

This situation has resulted in a 'zone of comfort' for both aid agencies and CSOs. While aid agencies can prove impact and aid accountability by working with HHRR and governance, CSOs receive limited incentives to search for alternative financial mechanisms to ensure sustainability, given the amounts of aid available with limited competition with other CSOs. This, combined with an easy access to media, has made HHRR and governance CSOs highly visible and credible for development agencies and the international community at large, being seen as 'donors' darlings'. But this has resulted in limited diversification of CSOs' support that challenges aid agencies' effectiveness in building citizenship and, in turn, democratic regime. Indeed, focusing on few CSOs is preventing donors from reaching CSOs closer to citizens such as those in social sectors or faith-based organizations, which, despite their limited capacities, have been able to build solid relations with government as well as with citizens, making the difference for those at high risk of exclusion (e.g. people with disabilities, villagers) or completely excluded from society (e.g. minorities). Further, limited CSOs' outreach leaves a wide range of actors outside of empowering processes, which goes against supporting the liberal principle of plural civil society.

Disincentives for enhanced civil society organizations' representativeness and accountability

Different studies have questioned the approach of development agencies in promoting democratic governance in post-Soviet Union countries (Nodia, 2005; Lutsevych, 2013). By just applying the western model of promoting democracy and development through supporting CSOs to play voice and accountability roles without taking into account underlying historical and social conditions, donors have underestimated structural challenges such as the inexistence of private initiative, the symbiosis between political class and the oligarchic class, a lack of political pluralism and limited social capital (Lutsevych, 2013), which have determined state building. Instead, responding to liberal notion of civil society, they have focused their efforts on strengthening CSOs to play 'watchdog role' in order to ensure HHRR respect and democratic governance. In doing so, they have encouraged CSOs to set their own objectives and roles in the light of development partners' agendas and concentrate their efforts towards advocating government's reforms (voice), holding public institutions accountable while fulfilling donors' requirements, rather than representing citizens' concerns to legitimately hold state accountable for its commitments and build a genuine civil society landscape. Actually, it was observed that HHRR and governance CSOs mainly target state institutions, while their contact with citizens is limited or not existent. Agendas often change following donors' priorities and, in turn, CSOs end up

working in a wide range of subjects for which are narrowly held accountable by annual audits. This would be the case with criminal justice, for example. After the scandals of torture in prisons in 2010, followed by an increase of aid funding to the sector, criminal justice and justice related issues, a lot of CSOs working in HHRR and governance CSOs added these issues into their agendas, without questioning if they have the right expertise for it. Another and more recent example would be security. Although, the strong focus is on human rights CSOs. In the aftermath of the adoption of a restrictive and privacy threatening surveillance law, these actors included security, and particularly surveillance.

This has resulted in a situation where HHRR and governance CSOs form a kind of resourced, connected and homogenous 'watchdog CSOs' elite', with general objectives, overlapping activities which mainly target state institutions to be held accountable and development partners to support them in doing so. Given the type of incentives for accountability provided in the form of political scandals, threats to HHRR by the supply side, *the government*, and the funds made available to address them by the demand side of accountability, *donors (and not citizens)*, CSOs spend their time 'jumping' from one topic to another, preventing themselves from focusing on specific issues of citizens' interests.

Furthermore, these CSOs are limitedly held accountable by state institutions, as for them internal governance and legitimacy is not an issue, and by donors for the financial resources spent, which makes it even easier to shift topics and issues. They manage to have short term tangible and visible impact in the form of outputs such as legal reviews, law proposals, holding back certain undemocratic reforms and actions⁸. However, how these outputs respond to people's needs and concerns remain doubtful.

Lack of coordination and civil society organizations formal dialogue

Concerning relations among development agencies, it was observed that there was very little effort in aid coordination and information sharing among aid agencies. However, this was not pointed out as a major hindrance to CSOs' effectiveness, and the same for agencies. Although there is a continuous dialogue between CSOs and development partners, this has not yet turned into a structured dialogue

that provides equal opportunities for CSOs to reach international community. The EU Road Map can be interpreted as an attempt towards efforts of donor coordination as well as structured dialogue with CSOs. Nevertheless, it lacks a more in-depth analysis of Georgian CS landscape and the document is still prioritizing EU focal sectors, rather than CSOs' real needs.

Increased Russian 'soft power'

Over the last few years, a general concern among CSOs has been raised around possible existence of Russian aid funding for CSOs. Very little information is available about Russian aid. However, several interviewed people pointed out that there has been an increase in Russian aid towards CSOs based at community and regional level as well as to media. The way that funds are distributed is completely non transparent. It is suspected that cash is sent to Georgia through international direct transfers as well as in cash and distributed according to CSO alignment with 'Russian values'. This would have contributed to a mushrooming of CSOs at community and regional level promoting worldview propagated from Moscow or those which are against western values. This phenomenon would be causing higher CSOs' fragmentation. As stated by different stakeholders, the amounts of money and recipients of this aid is unknown and this would lead CSOs in general to be reluctant to cooperate with faith-based organizations, Russian minority CSOs and in general with CSOs that question western principles.

7. Other institutions and cross-cutting issues

As previously indicated, there exist endogenous and exogenous factors that enable or disable CSOs participation. A part of state and development partners, among exogenous factors, there are other actors and cross-cutting issues, which, when entering in the CSO landscape, might support or hamper CSOs' participation and influence. For the purpose of this study, the following actors and cross-cutting issues were identified: media, Orthodox Church and geopolitics.

7.1 Other institutions and actors that enable CSO participation in policy making process

Access to the media

As they are able to bring up highly sensitive political issues such as corruption and threats to human rights, democratic governance as well as some other political scandals beyond policy based issues,

they have become very attractive for the mass media in Georgia. Relations with media mostly take place on informal basis, in the sense that, although cooperation between these organizations and private media is evident, there is no formal coalition or alliance. Media approaches CSOs through personal contacts to gather information about what are considered to be 'hot' political issues, which in return provides CSOs with a great platform for national and international projection.

Nowadays, CS benefits from very good relations with the media sector, which have given great coverage to their advocacy campaigns as well as to the issues raised. The diversification of the political atmosphere and related debates after the 2012 elections encouraged local and national television to involve CSO representatives on television and radio talk shows. Today, relations with the media have been rated as 'good' and CSOs are exploiting this as a way to influence government decisions. Governance and HHRR CSOs have admitted to relying on the media when they feel 'not listened to by the government'. For these CSOs, this has been the most effective way to put pressure on the government to stop reforms, hold back inappropriate decisions as well as influence ongoing policies. Voicing through mass media means to reach wide national and international audiences, which is translated into great pressure over government. Media is often used to hold government accountable too.

7.2 Other institutions and actors that hinder CSO participation in policy making process

Unequal access to the media

Yet, domestic media would have not have raised the profile of CSOs in general. It seems that access to media and the capacity to use it as a way to influence is not equally enjoyed by all CSOs, nor is it widely accepted. Indeed, CSOs working in social sectors claimed to receive limited attention from media, while they are working on issues that 'really matter and affect citizens'. In fact, some of them even disapproved the participation of CSO leaders in TV talk shows. According to them, too much engagement with public media leads to a tense and confrontational relationship with government which would not 'be helping the CSOs' image in general'.

Strong influence of Orthodox Church

It is widely acknowledged and accepted by Georgian CSOs, international community and Georgian society at large that the Georgian Orthodox Church is one of the most influential institutions in the

politics of the country. All religions and faiths suffered repression during the Soviet Union. As response, since declaration of independence, Georgia has experienced an increase in religiosity among citizens accompanied by a growth of power and influence of the historically dominant Georgia Orthodox Church, culminating with the signature of a Constitutional Concordat with state institutions. Today, the Orthodox Church enjoys the highest level of confidence among state, political, public institutions and society, becoming a sort of informal 'fourth power' besides the executive, legislative and judiciary. Hence, relations between religion, state and society are crucial, but also painful to the democratic development and consolidation of the country.

Disagreements between CSOs and Orthodox Church are based on different approaches to fundamental rights. While most CSOs in Georgia promote widely accepted universal rights that involve the defense of religious pluralism, women's and sexual rights, the Georgian Orthodox Church interprets these principles as threats to their religious principles and to Georgian traditional values as a whole. Actually, the Orthodox Church believes to be a sort of 'gatekeeper' of Georgian traditions, being able to stop important reforms that might go against democratic development. The Orthodox Church public criticism create hurdles to adopting the antidiscrimination law, which impart recognized LGBT rights. However, the law was still adopted in the midst of heightened public debate.

Religion seems also to be an obstacle for CSO cooperation. Different interviewees stressed that sometimes cooperation is also difficult due to the high influence that the Orthodox Church has on Georgian Society, overall on issues related to sexual and religious minorities. Often, CSOs reject to sign joint statements when they might contain affirmations that are not in line with the Orthodox religion or when these are replaying Patriarchate positioning. Nevertheless, cooperation seems to be feasible in the framework of a specific projects where fewer political activities are delivered.

- Geopolitics

The geopolitics seem to have played a role in defining the current CS landscape. This feature was also noticed by CIVICUS Civil Society Index 2010, which referred to 'two different social forces: Russian Forces and Western forces' (CIVICUS, 2010). According to this study, 'Russian forces' are represented by the breakaway regions, Georgian Orthodox clergy, closely linked to the Georgian Russian Orthodox Church and Georgian citizens who amassed their fortune in Russia with strong ties with that country or so-called 'oligarchs'. On the other side, 'Western forces' are made up of the international community with representation in the country (UN, EU, US...), most CSOs as well as pro-western political parties.

Through this research it was observed that many political and non-political organizations have interpreted support to CSOs in Georgia as western (European and American) type of 'soft power'. Further, it was interestingly noted the need of most interviewees to declare their affection and sympathy for pro-western values, attitudes and principles without being asked. Unsurprisingly, international support for CSOs to promote human rights and democratic governance has generally been associated with a way to influence Georgian society against Russia. Within an international context, this assumption could be only partially true. As previously indicated, over the past decades, development agencies have strongly embraced the idea of promoting development and democratic governance, including human rights, worldwide through supporting civil society organizations. However, the idea of 'soft power' becomes powerful if geopolitics are taken into account. In Georgia, as in many other countries, Human Rights and democratic governance are inherently western values that have been pushed by public diplomacy as well as in the form of 'soft conditionality' through development cooperation operations as a set of principles attached to a specific political regime (democracy) and economic benefits in opposition to the Russian ones. By financing CSOs, the international community is understood, therefore, to be promoting western principles and interests through CSOs. Up to now, CSO support has only been seen as a type of 'western soft power', but, today, this might have changed. Through this research, it was widely acknowledged that new movements and NGOs have been created with economic support from Russia in order to gather Russian support among the populations.

8. Conclusions

Current opportunities for CSO participation are the result of a convergence of endogenous factors and exogenous factors that have created an environment prompt to engage CSOs in policy and decision making processes. This favorable environment is the result of a series of endogenous factors such as the parliamentary elections in 2012 that brought about a peaceful and democratic change in power; mechanism allowed for improved CS participation in public affairs; initiation of the decentralization process and, implicitly, the devolution of powers towards regional governments; amendment of the regulation of public media; as well as of exogenous factors like the continuous financial support from development agencies to CSOs.

Despite a general benign enabling environment, it seems that CSOs still face serious difficulties in influencing public institutions since impact on policy and political policy-making processes remains weak. In fact, it can be observed that favorable factors (e.g. formal participatory mechanisms) have

appeared in a context where long term standing disabling factors (e.g. representativeness) persist and new ones have emerged alongside with enabling factors.

Structures, power relations and formal and informal institutions (including social and cultural norms, clientelism etc.) fundamentally shape factors determine enabling as well as non-enabling environment for CSOs' participation and effectiveness. Indeed, aspects that favor or not CSOs' participation are related to the state and social institutions, stakeholders' capacities and their multiple relations. Consolidating their enabling factors and tackling non enabling ones will highly depend on the creativity, ability, resources, opportunities, and capabilities of the social forces.

These structures, power relations and formal/informal institutions can be classified into three interlinked and mutually reinforcing areas: CSOs' capacities, Value Systems and Cooperation and coordination of the different actors involved:

Table 1: List of Enabling and Non-Enabling Factors

Type	Enabling Factors	Non-Enabling Factors
<i>CSOs' Capacity related factors</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacities and means to raise their voice • An aid architecture full of opportunities combined with increased CSOs' interest for self-sufficiency • Civil society organizations as independent actors for democratic development • Growing legitimacy and representativeness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited representativeness • Weak sustainability • Lack of a theoretical and context-adapted notion of Civil Society • Inability to apply change and management for change • Weak capacities of civil society organizations at local level • Concentration of funding limits sustainable and plural civil society organizations • Disincentives for enhanced civil society organizations' representativeness and accountability
<i>Social, political attitudes, legal framework and regime related factors</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Favorable Legal Framework • Government capacities for policy formulation and implementation • Party Coalition in Government • Strengthened and Functional Parliament • Decentralization process • Regional legislative bodies prompt to cooperate and dialogue with CSOs • Opened up spaces for government and civil society organizations dialogue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State building process • Legal framework provides limited incentives for becoming self-sufficient and independent organizations • Political context that allows for a strong voice but limited accountability • Government Instability • Polarization of CSOs • Weak Capacities in Parliament • Weak regional governments

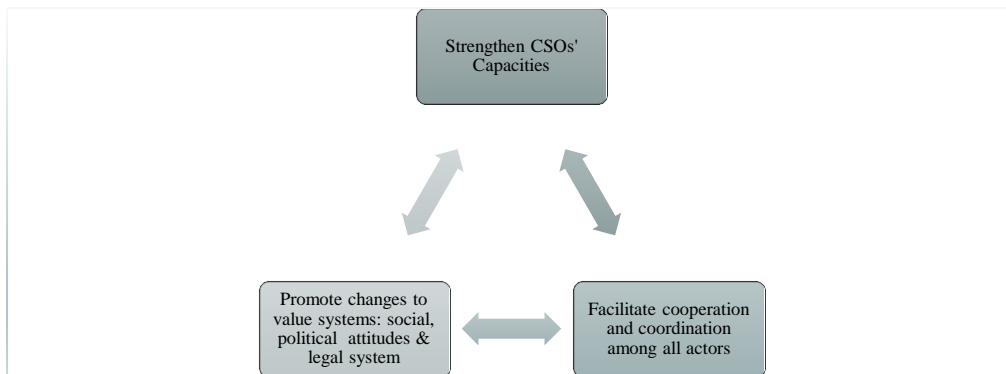
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher political decentralization is not necessarily translated into high civil society participation • Strong influence of Orthodox Church • Geopolitics • Increased of Russian 'soft power'
<p><i>Relationships among stakeholders related factors (cooperation and coordination)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grounds for cooperation, convergence and solidarity among civil society organizations • Formal and informal mechanisms to influence policy making process • Embryonic civil society organizations participatory processes and mechanisms at local level • An aid architecture full of opportunities for Civil Society Organizations' development and consolidation • Access to the media • Civil society organizations in the international community's political agenda 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civil Society Organizations and Government relations: 'too close for comfort' • Low levels of cooperation and limited collective action • Unequal access to the media • Lack of coordination and civil society organizations formal dialogue with development partners

9. Recommendations

The strategy and recommendations have been developed below built on the analysis undertaken throughout this report. Given the limitations and constraints of the study, these recommendations may only be partial and may not cover all the aspects that need to be addressed in order to support CSO impact on policy and decision making processes. Hence, recommendations will only focus on those aspects and areas of work considered key.

Within the current context, it is recommended to take a holistic approach to CSO support in order to enhance their effectiveness in influencing policy and decision making processes and in turn, democratic consolidation. For it, the following approach is suggested:

Figure 3: Holistic Approach to Promoting Enabling Environment



1) Strengthen Capacities of CSOs to:

a) ***Enhance CSOs' legitimacy and accountability:***

Recommendations to enhance enabling factors:

- Continue to support capacity development activities aimed at promoting innovative ways to advocate reforms, hold government accountable and lobby e.g. pilot service delivery assessment through score cards projects, social audits, outcome mapping for policy monitoring etc.
- Continue to promote principles of legitimacy, representativeness, responsiveness and accountability of CSOs.

Recommendations to address non-enabling factors:

- Support projects aimed at building citizenship and promoting civic education, which include feedback mechanisms from beneficiaries as well as activities that promote direct citizen participation in the decision making process.
- Establish conditions related to internal governance for eligibility as well as for the disbursement of grants or release of tranches. In cases where internal governance is considered weak, but a project has great potential for impact, then milestones for improved internal governance can be set in discussion with the organization.
- Internal governance requirements should include the sustainability of the project, feedback from beneficiaries and proof that projects are aligned to organizations' vision and goals.
- Building citizenship and internal governance requires long term investment, therefore core funding is highly recommended. As this is a very risky modality, a step by step approach is recommended that could start with a project approach in order to put in place basic conditions/structures and be followed by pull funding, bearing in mind that the ultimate outcome is to have a self-sufficient and independent CSO. This step by step approach should

combine activities related to the roles of the organization as well as to internal governance including, if necessary, a review of organizations' objectives, and be redefined based on context assessments, rather than on donors' policies analysis, business plans in the long term, adoption and application of codes of conduct etc.

b) Develop political and technical capacities related to policy performance:

- Provide and engage in capacity building activities related to influencing policies, overall of CSOs working in social sectors, to monitor public policy implementation, how issues are readdressed as well as to analyze and assesses policy impact over citizens.
- Support evidence-based research initiatives accompanied by development of related capacities such as data collection, evaluation of government interventions, cost-effectiveness of government investments, etc.
- Enhance knowledge of government policy processes such as how budget is allocated, how priorities are defined by the executive etc.

c) Promote innovation in raising voice and holding state institutions accountable

- Promote use of new technologies

2) Promote changes social, political attitudes & legal, regime value systems

a) Legal Reforms:

Recommendations to enhance enabling factors:

- As actively done by different development partners and infrastructure's CSOs, support legislative reforms that provide incentives for CSOs' sustainability.

b) Social and Political Attitudes:

Recommendations to address non-enabling factors:

- Increase regional government's awareness of CSOs' roles. Raise awareness of the concept and roles of CSOs and potential added values based on local experiences. This could be done in line with the implementation of local advisory councils as foreseen by the Self-Governance Code.
- Promote activities that encourage CSOs to lead by example demonstrating positive/societal contributions.

- Educate and engage the media in reporting CSOs' initiatives working in other sectors than governance and HHRR, through linking HHRR and governance issues with policy performance in key social sectors for the democratic and economic development of the country.
- Facilitate debate within and across CSOs about meaning of CSOs in Georgia and their contribution to democratic consolidation and development. Support development of own 'theories of change'.
- Explore possibilities to cooperate and engage with faith-based organizations in order to promote the universality and plurality of HHRR.
- Set up a monitoring system or matrix to follow-up. Enabling and Non-Enabling for CSOs' development and consolidation.

3) Facilitate cooperation and coordination among all actors to:

a) Promote better cooperation among CSOs through

Recommendations to enhance enabling factors:

- Increase support to initiatives that search for common ground and intend to build bridges between watchdog CSOs and CSOs working in other sectors e.g. social and environmental ones. Linking both sectors, key issues for economic and democratic development such as education and access to basic services could be introduced in the national debate.
- Maintain facilitation or support to ongoing efforts to create sector or thematic CSO networks and platforms that can represent CSOs to government and/or at particular thematic forums or government ministries.
- Keep focus on information sharing and programmatic activities by bringing different types of CSOs from different sectors around issues that can be of common concern e.g. EU accession; corruption; budget monitoring and allocation, policy processes.

Recommendations to address non-enabling factors:

- Projects aim at widening current approaches to democratic governance e.g. linking governance and HHRR issues with citizens' concerns such as employment, education, health and/or infrastructure; result oriented and output based monitoring, to assess government performance in sectors beyond justice. EPF could explore possibility to do so in food safety sector.
- Informal but long term forms of cooperation should be explored and accepted. Indeed, informal relations are more important to influence and drive change than formal relations. Cooperation should be facilitated based on the positive notion of collective action.

- Integrate, where feasible and relevant, enhanced CSOs' cooperation and networking in capacity development initiatives.

b) Support CSOs to build and strengthen relations with local governments

Recommendations to enhance enabling factors:

- Increase support to local CSOs' initiatives that are aimed at civic education and constituency-building through e.g. assessing villages' needs to be translated into documents presented to the local advisory councils, awareness of how municipalities work and the rights of people to participate, influence or demand, services available, basic services and rights, etc. These activities should be accompanied by participatory evaluations of CSOs' activities by their beneficiaries.

c) Support the evolution of a plural Civil Society:

Recommendations to enhance enabling factors:

- Support to CSOs at local level might imply high transaction costs for both donors and recipient CSOs. Structuring this support through 'infrastructure CSOs' in Georgia would not only reduce transaction costs, but also support development and provision of CSOs' capacities adapted to the context and needs of local CSOs.
- Continuous support to coordination of CSOs' programs among international actors.
- Further engagement in processes that are aimed at establishing more structured and systematic dialogue with a wide range of CSOs.
- Increased information sharing between national and international actors and coordinate mapping of current and/or planned interventions and resource allocation to reduce overlapping of CSOs' actions.

Recommendations to address non-enabling factors:

- Advocate for diversification of aid allocation to support CSOs that are involved in other sectors beyond HHRR and governance and which have developed links with citizens. This includes CSOs working in social (education, employment), economic sectors (agriculture) and/or environmental sectors with special attention to those based in urban and rural communities and at local level.
- Advocate for a more coordinated approach among development aid agencies to promote and support CSOs in all their dimensions,
- A lot of patronage and clientelism practices seem to be happening at village level. ***Analysis of these dynamics and power relations*** within the villages, for instance, between the formal

leaders (Deputies) and informal leaders should be encouraged in order interventions are adapted to context and do not harm.

- Coordinated support among development partners to CSO capacity development activities and initiatives – especially in partnership with ‘infrastructure CSOs’ with demonstrated capacities and expertise to serve as key implementing partners.

Table 2: Enabling Factors and Recommendations

Type	Enabling Factors	Recommendations
<i>CSOs Capacity related factors</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacities and means to raise their voice • An aid architecture full of opportunities combined with increased CSOs' interest for self-sufficiency • Civil society organizations as independent actors for democratic development • Growing legitimacy and representativeness 	<p>A) Strengthen Capacities of CSOs to:</p> <p><i>Enhance CSOs' legitimacy and accountability:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Continue to support capacity development activities aimed at promoting innovative ways to advocate reforms, hold government accountable and lobby e.g. pilot service delivery assessment through score cards projects, social audits, outcome mapping for policy monitoring etc. ➤ Continue to promote principles of legitimacy, representativeness, responsiveness and accountability of CSOs.
		<p>B) Promote changes social, political attitudes & legal, regime value systems</p> <p><i>Legal Reforms:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ As actively done by different development partners and infrastructure's CSOs, support legislative reforms which provide incentives for CSOs' sustainability
<i>Social, political attitudes, legal framework and regime related factors</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Favorable Legal Framework • Government capacities for policy formulation and implementation • Party Coalition in Government • Strengthened and Functional Parliament • Decentralization process • Regional legislative bodies prompt to cooperate and dialogue with CSOs • Opened up spaces for government and civil 	

Type	Enabling Factors	Recommendations
	society organizations dialogue	
Relationships among stakeholders related factors (cooperation and coordination)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grounds for cooperation, convergence and solidarity among civil society organizations • Formal and informal mechanisms to influence policy making process • Embrionary civil society organizations participatory processes and mechanisms at local level • An aid architecture full of opportunities for Civil Society Organizations' development and consolidation • Access to the media • Civil society organizations in the international community's political agenda 	<p>C) Facilitate cooperation and coordination among all actors to:</p> <p><i>Promote better cooperation among CSOs through</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Increase support to initiatives that search for common ground and intend to build bridges between watchdog CSOs and CSOs working in other sectors e.g. social and environmental ones. Linking both sectors, key issues for economic and democratic development such as education and access to basic services could be introduced in the national debate. ➤ Maintain facilitation or support to ongoing efforts to create sector or thematic CSO networks and platforms that can represent CSOs to government and/or at particular thematic forums or government ministries. ➤ Keep focus on information sharing and programmatic activities by bringing different types of CSOs from different sectors around issues that can be of common concern e.g. EU accession; corruption; budget monitoring and allocation, policy processes. <p><i>Support CSOs to build and strengthen relations with local governments</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Increase support local CSOs' initiatives which are aimed at civic education and constituency-building through e.g. assessing villages' needs to be translated into documents presented to the local advisory councils, awareness of how

Type	Enabling Factors	Recommendations
		<p>municipalities work and the rights of people to participate, influence or demand, services available, basic services and rights, etc. These activities should be accompanied by participatory evaluations of CSOs' activities by their beneficiaries.</p> <p><i>Support the evolution of a plural Civil Society:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Support to CSOs at local level might imply high transaction costs for both donors and recipient CSOs. Structuring this support through 'infrastructure CSOs' in Georgia would not only reduce transaction costs, but also support development and provision of CSOs' capacities adapted to the context and needs of local CSOs. ➤ Continuous support to coordination of CSOs' programs among international actors. ➤ Further engagement in processes that are aimed at establishing more structured and systematic dialogue with a wide range of CSOs. ➤ Increased information sharing between national and international actors and coordinate mapping of current and/or planned interventions and resource allocation to reduce overlapping of CSOs actions.

Table 3: Non-Enabling Factors and Recommendations

Type	Non-Enabling Factors	Recommendations
<p><i>CSOs Capacity related factors</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited representativeness • Weak sustainability • Lack of a theoretical and context-adapted notion of Civil Society • Inability to apply change and management for change • Weak capacities of civil society organizations at local level • Concentration of funding limits sustainable and plural civil society organizations • Disincentives for enhanced civil society organizations' representativeness and accountability 	<p>1) Strengthen Capacities of CSOs to:</p> <p><i>Enhance CSOs' legitimacy and accountability:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Support projects aimed at building citizenship and promoting civic education, which include feedback mechanisms from beneficiaries as well as activities that promote direct citizen participation in the decision making process. ➤ Establish conditions related to internal governance for eligibility as well as for the disbursement of grants or release of tranches. In cases where internal governance is considered weak, but a project has great potential for impact, then milestones for improved internal governance can be set in discussion with the organization. ➤ Internal governance requirements should include the sustainability of the project, feedback from beneficiaries and proof that projects are aligned to organizations' vision and goals. ➤ Building citizenship and internal governance requires long term investment, therefore core funding is highly recommended. As this is a very risky modality, a step by step approach is recommended that could start with a project approach in order to put in place basic conditions/structures and be followed by pull funding, bearing in mind that the ultimate outcome is to have a self-sufficient and independent CSO. This step by step approach should combine activities related to the roles of the organization as well as to internal governance

Type	Non-Enabling Factors	Recommendations
		<p>including, if necessary, a review of organizations' objectives, and be redefined based on context assessments, rather than on donors' policies analysis, business plans in the long term, adoption and application of codes of conduct etc.</p> <p><i>Develop political and technical capacities related to policy performance:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Provide and engage in capacity building activities related to influencing policies, overall of CSOs working in social sectors, to monitor public policy implementation, how issues are readdressed as well as to analyze and assesses policy impact over citizens. ➤ Support evidence-based research initiatives accompanied by development of related capacities such as data collection, evaluation of government interventions, cost-effectiveness of government investments, etc. ➤ Enhance knowledge of government policy processes such as how budget is allocated, how priorities are defined by the executive etc. <p><i>Promote innovation in raising voice and holding state institutions accountable</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Promote use of new technologies
<p><i>Social, political attitudes, legal framework and regime</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State building process • Legal framework provides limited incentives for becoming self-sufficient and independent organizations • Political context that allows for a strong 	<p>2) Promote changes social, political attitudes & legal, regime value systems</p> <p><i>Social and Political Attitudes:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Increase regional government awareness of CSOs' roles. Raise awareness of the concept and roles of CSOs and potential added values based on local experiences. This could be done in line with the implementation of local

Type	Non-Enabling Factors	Recommendations
related factors	<p>voice but limited accountability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government Instability • Polarization of CSOs • Weak Capacities in Parliament • Weak regional governments • Higher political decentralization is not necessary translated into high civil society participation • Strong influence of Orthodox Church • Geopolitics • Increased of Russian 'soft power' 	<p>advisory councils as foreseen by the Self-Governance Code.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Promote activities that encourage CSOs to lead by example demonstrating positive/societal contributions. ➤ Educate and engage the media in reporting CSOs' initiatives working in other sectors than governance and HHRR, through linking HHRR and governance issues with policy performance in key social sectors for the democratic and economic development of the country. ➤ Facilitate debate within and across CSOs about meaning of CSOs in Georgia and their contribution to democratic consolidation and development. Support development of their own 'theories of change'. ➤ Explore possibilities to cooperate and engage with faith-based organizations in order to promote the universality and plurality of HHRR ➤ Set up a monitoring system or matrix to follow-up Enabling and Non-Enabling Factors for CSOs' development and consolidation
Relationships among stakeholders related factors (cooperation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civil Society Organizations and 	<p>3) Facilitate cooperation and coordination among all actors to:</p> <p>Promote better cooperation among CSOs through</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Projects aim at widening current approaches to democratic governance e.g. linking governance and HHRR issues with citizens' concerns such as employment, education, health and/or infrastructure; result oriented and output based monitoring, to assess government performance in sectors beyond justice.

Type	Non-Enabling Factors	Recommendations
and coordination)	<p>Government relations: 'too close for comfort'</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low levels of cooperation and limited collective action • Unequal access to the media • Lack of coordination and civil society organizations formal dialogue with development partners 	<p>EPF could explore possibility to do so in food safety sector.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Informal but long term forms of cooperation should be explored and accepted. Indeed, informal relations are more important to influence and drive change than formal relations. Cooperation should be facilitated based on the positive notion of collective action. ➤ Integrate, where feasible and relevant, enhanced CSOs' cooperation and networking in capacity development initiatives. <p>Support the evolvement of a plural Civil Society:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Advocate for diversification of aid allocation to support CSOs that are involved in other sectors beyond HHRR and governance and which have developed links with citizens. This includes CSOs working in social (education, employment), economic sectors (agriculture) and/or environmental sectors with special attention to those based in urban and rural communities and at local level. ➤ Advocate for a more coordinated approach among development aid agencies to promote and support CSOs in all its dimensions ➤ Patronage and clientelism practices seem to be present at village level. Analysis of these dynamics and power relations within the villages, for instance, between the formal leaders (Deputies) and informal leaders should be encouraged in order interventions are adapted to context and do not harm. ➤ Coordinated support among development partners to CSO capacity

Type	Non-Enabling Factors	Recommendations
		development activities and initiatives – especially in partnership with 'infrastructure CSOs' with demonstrated capacities and expertise to serve as key implementing partners.

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ANNEXES

Annex 1 Civil Society Roles in Policy Making Process

Based on existing literature, the Advisory Group on CS and Aid Effectiveness proposes three ways of looking at civil society:

- a) **As a necessary component of an accountable and effective governance system;**
- b) **As organizations providing effective delivery of development programs and operations;**
- c) **As mechanisms for the social empowerment of particular groups and realization of human rights.**

Based on these three areas of action, it is possible to identify the following potential roles for civil society:

Role of CSOs to promote democracy and development	Description
<i>Voice</i> (advocacy, lobby, protest, demonstrations, strikes)	Voice refers to formal and informal mechanisms through which people express their preferences, opinions and views. It is the 'materialization' of freedom of expression, essential to build accountability and plays an important role in enabling communities for collective action. CSOs play a key role in organizing citizens and structuring their needs in order to raise their voices to influence the policy making process. To do so, it is requested that CSOs are representative of whom they intend to represent and able to assess their needs and propose adapted solutions. An effective voice also requires good access to public media.
<i>Accountability</i> (monitoring & watchdog role)	Accountability is concerned with the relationship between two agents, one of which makes decisions by which the other is impacted and/or which the other has delegated to them. Accountability is intimately related to voice as they come together at the point where those exercising voice seek accountability. While without voice, there is no accountability, the existence of voice will not automatically generate accountability, since accountability depends on existing power relations, the enabling environment, the nature of the state and civil society relations.
<i>Civic engagement</i> (raising awareness, civic education)	It is usually understood as a process whereby citizens participate in and influence decision policy making processes and closely linked to 'voice' and 'accountability'. Civic engagement goes beyond 'one-shot' participatory consultation, as it is conceived as a long-term process that involves people in the economic, cultural and political processes that affect their lives and involve channels of voice, representativeness and accountability between state and citizens. Raising awareness of rights, governance issues, government responsibilities and citizens' duties, involving CSOs in evaluating service qualities are among the different types of civic engagement.
<i>Service providers</i>	Delivery of a wide range of services including health care, social services, education among others.
<i>Capacity</i>	In some contexts, and sectors, CSOs develop knowledge. Experience and outreach capacities which

<i>development (training, coaching.)</i>	could be invaluable for improving the quality of services, policy design at national and local level. The transfer of these capacities is done in the framework of service delivery or policy dialogue.
<i>Creating and bridging social capital</i>	Organizing communities, building coalitions and networks for greater CSO coordination and impact. CSOs have an important task of creating a sense of community, supporting groups in the communities to get organized and identify their needs and priorities, in linking these groups with other groups in society beyond their communities.
<i>Innovation</i>	CSOs are more likely to take risks in experimenting with new approaches, tools and methodologies to enhance service delivery, promote social accountability as well as capacity development.