



PROJECT FACTSHEET

2017

Improving municipal management and citizen participation in Armenia



Journalist Srbuhy Grigoryan was able to take part in her town's mayoral elections thanks to a crowd-funding campaign organised by the project. © UNDP

Switzerland has been supporting the Armenian government in its plans for territorial and administrative reform, particularly its plans to merge municipalities, which often raises concerns for local people. To this end, central approaches include one-stop shops, an electronic management system and strengthening women's participation in politics.

Armenia's territorial and administrative structure is very fragmented. Half of the country's 885 municipalities had fewer than 1000 inhabitants in 2016.

The problem is that the smaller the municipality, the more difficult it is to provide basic public services and maintain infrastructure because of limited financial resources. This includes supplying water and electricity, and maintaining schools and roads.

That is why the Armenian government intends to merge certain municipalities. The overall number

should be reduced to 250, even though the process is raising concerns. In particular in the smallest municipalities, inhabitants fear being neglected if they become part of a larger structure.

Switzerland is working to allay such fears by helping affected municipalities to set up modern systems of governance that citizens can trust.

Modernising Armenia's municipalities

In order to make the municipalities more efficient and strengthen relations between citizens and the public administration, a combination of the following elements is envisaged:

- › One-stop shops: these are intended to simplify bureaucratic procedures both for the municipalities and the public. People can pay taxes, receive permits or simply come for advice all at the same place.
- › A custom-made electronic system of governance: the Municipal Management Information System (MMIS) should help citizens participate in decision-making, gain easier access to public information, and provide community services faster. The system has already received several awards such as the regional award for «the best electronic solution for municipalities» in 2016.
- › Modern methods for results-based budgeting: this will enable municipalities to plan their financial and non-financial resources in line with their 5-year development plans by providing detailed costs for the intended activities.

Encouraging civic participation

«Towards change» was Srбуhy Grigoryan's slogan during her 2016 election campaign to become the mayor of Sisian, a town of 16'000 in the south of the country.

Grigoryan is a journalist and teaches philosophy and culture at the university. She heads the town's Women's Resource Centre where a large number of women are employed to produce handcrafts made from wool, wood and fabrics.

Grigoryan is the only woman member of Sisian's municipal council since 2012. On average, only 10% of staff working for the local authorities are women. This is due to the deep-rooted stereotypes in the Armenian mentality that prevent women from taking up decision-making positions: «There is a famous saying – maybe not only in Armenia – that politics are immoral, whereas in our society, women should always be moral and decent», laments Grigoryan.

But these stereotypes are not the only obstacle. To run for town mayor, each candidate has to pay a registration tax of 500'000 Armenian drams (around CHF 1000) – in a country where the average monthly salary amounts to 55'000 drams (around CHF 115). Srбуhy Grigoryan was able to draw on support from the UNDP to create a crowdfunding account and a professional video presenting her election platform.

The UNDP implements the part of the programme that aims to increase women's participation in politics. Grigoryan was able to raise even more money than she actually needed. And even though she was not elected in the end, she is the first woman to have run for mayor in Sisian.

PROJECT AT A GLANCE

Title

Improvement of the Local Self Governance System

Department

Cooperation with Eastern Europe

Divison

Eurasia

Duration

2014 - 2019

Budget

8'025'000 CHF

Implementing agency

Central State Authority
Multiple Local Partners



IMPRINT

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