



Strengthening Civil Society and Promoting Sustainable Development Project

On July 29-31, representatives of the Georgian Young Lawyers' Association held the final informational meetings with the members of the Initiative Team selected within the framework of the project **Strengthening Civil Society and Promoting Sustainable Development**. Afterward, the members of the Initiative Groups will be actively involved in the decision-making process of the local self-government.

The project is financially supported by the East-West Management Institute (EMWI Access) and is aimed at supporting civil society and promoting sustainable development. Developing critical thinking in the youth of the community, developing oratorical skills and refining the art of arguing. In addition, conducting social dialogue in the community and active engagement of ethnic minorities in the process of decision-making of the local government. The project is implemented in the regions of Kakheti, Adjara, Guria, Kvemo Kartli and Samtskhe-Javakheti.^[1]

During the same period, **a study visit was held to the Parliament of Georgia**, during which a meeting was held with the Committee on Regional Policy and Self-Government. The meeting focused on the role and importance of the Committee in the development of the local self-government. Members of the Initiative Group shared information on the needs of their municipalities which remains a challenge for the local population, with the committee representatives. Also, an agreement was reached on future cooperation.

It should be noted that **within the framework of the first phase of the project the workshops were held in each region with the representatives of the local self-government**, where existing problems were identified at the local level, along with a number of issues that needed support from the non-government sector. The discussion focused on the challenges of the practice of citizen engagement in the self-government. The format of the youth engagement model was also discussed at the meetings.

At these meetings, an agreement was reached on the engagement of the Initiative Groups which were created with the participation of the young people selected within the framework of the project. Initiative groups will pay a study visit to the Parliament of Georgia and the local self-governments, while the local self-governments themselves will ensure the participation of Initiative Groups in the implementation of local self-government and will create organizational and material-technical conditions for various receptions, meetings or activities of the municipal bodies, including sittings of the collegial public agencies, participation and involvement of the Initiative Groups in decision-making process, and solving the problems identified by them.

Training on the basics of tax law was also held for small businesses in Guria and Kakheti.

[2] regions. During the training, the participants learned what is an economic activity, types of entrepreneurship, types and rate of the tax, the shelf life for the primary tax document and rules, tax return rules and exemptions, special tax regimes, tax allowances for the high mountainous regions, and other important issues.

In parallel trainings were held with the 103 selected participants in the 5 priority areas of the project, on the "Carl Popper Debate Format", which enabled the trainees to develop critical and analytical thinking skills, public speaking techniques and refined art of debate. 34 participants were selected on the basis of the trainings. **[3]**

On July 13-17, in Tsitsamuri, the selected youth participated in the National Debate Tournament on Human Rights, Environment and Health Care. The winner of the National Debate Tournament was from Kvemo Kartli participants. After the tournament, the participants attended the lecture: the meaning and importance of citizen participation in local self-government, guarantees envisaged in the law on citizen participation, access to information, forms of citizens' participation in local self-governance, importance of attendance and participation of the meetings of the City Council and other additional forms of engagement.

Along with the certificates, the project participants were awarded by textbooks issued at various time by GYLA's Foundation for the Support of Legal Education.

[1] According to the project, those villages of ethnic and religious minorities were selected from each region which is located far from the district centers. Akhmeta and Pankisi Gorge from Kakheti region, Khulo from Ajara, Zoti, Chkhakaura and Nasakirali from Guria, Avranlo and Trialeti from Kvemo Kartli and Akhalkalaki and Ninotsminda from Samtskhe-Javakheti.

[2] In Ozugeti, Telavi and Akhmeta.

საქართველოს ახალგაზრდა იურისტთა ასოციაცია GEORGIAN YOUNG LAWYERS' ASSOCIATION



[3] 3 participants from Ajara, 12 from Guria, 9 from Kvemo Kartli, 6 from Samtskhe-Javakheti and 4 participants from Kakheti.