

Center for Strategic Research and Development of Georgia (CSR DG)



Annual Report 2023

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2023 Annual report

28 year for you and with you!

Founded in 1995, CSRDG has been working nationwide for 28 years, serving public interests, promoting economic empowerment, and establishing sustainable institutions. Since its establishment, CSRDG has conducted numerous research projects, promoted various legislative initiatives, contributed to the creation of a network of community organizations across Georgia's regions, supported the development of social enterprises and social services, pioneered public awareness raising about corporate social responsibility, and advocated for consumer rights protection.

Foreword

Our unwavering commitment to our values, after 28 years of successful work in the civil sector, has established us as a strong research and expert institution, a trusted partner, and a leader in the of key priority spheres of activities.

We are pleased to present an overview of the activities conducted in 2023 by the Center for Strategic Research and Development of Georgia. This document, which highlights the organization's initiatives, is published annually to keep the public informed. It is our responsibility to communicate to all stakeholders the positive contributions made by the organization towards the economic, cultural, and social development of the country, the achievement of sustainable development goals, and the promotion of democratic principles.

The present report is an integrated document that incorporates our annual program report and communication on engagement with United Nations Global Compact.

In 2007, CSRDG has joined UN Global Compact Initiative. And since 2010, CSRDG has been an organizational supporter of the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI).



COMMUNITY MEMBER

2023

Global Reporting Initiative is an international network organization, which aims at elaboration and continuous improvement of universal standards of sustainable development reporting.



This is our **Communication on Progress** in implementing the principles of the **United Nations Global Compact** and supporting broader UN goals.

We welcome feedback on its contents.

UN Global Compact is the largest global initiative on corporate citizenship. It is based on organizations' voluntary initiatives to implement universal sustainability principles and take steps to support UN goals.

Within this report, we reaffirm our continued support for the ten universal principles of the Global Compact in the areas of Human Rights, Labor, Environment, and Anti-Corruption.

We express our commitment to implementing these principles within our activities and areas of influence. Additionally, we pledge to publicly express our support for the Global Compact to our stakeholders and the general public.

We also reaffirm our readiness to:

Cooperate with the UN Global Compact and participate in its activities and events as much as possible; Engage in partner projects aimed at supporting corporate responsibility and sustainable development; Review the annual Communications on Progress of other companies joining the Global Compact initiative, if requested.

In this Communication of Engagement, we outline the actions our organization has taken to support the UN Global Compact and its Principles, as recommended for an organization like ours. We commit to sharing this information with our stakeholders through our primary communication channels and welcome feedback on its contents.

In 2023, CSRDG worked in three main directions under the core program: developing the civil society sector, promoting open governance, promoting economic and social change. These directions include programs such as: Community Development, CSO Development, Good Governance, Promoting European Integration, Social Entrepreneurship, Corporate Social Responsibility, Consumer Rights Protection, and Social Service Development Programs. In frames of these programs, in 2023, CSRDG implemented 12 ongoing projects, detailed information regarding which is given in the present report.

And finally, I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to CSRDG's personnel, our partners and supporters, and all stakeholders. Their efforts have been instrumental in enabling CSRDG to carry out the activities detailed in this report and achieve its objectives. Special thanks go to each and every employee of the organization who tirelessly met numerous challenges. Their dedication, along with the new skills, knowledge, and experience they have gained, has allowed the organization to successfully navigate and complete this challenging year.

Eka Urushadze,

Executive Director, CSRDG

Geography

The range of our activities extends to the entire country; although, within certain programs, we focus specifically in following 43 municipalities: Dedoplistskaro, Lagodekhi, Akhmeta, Signaghi, Kvareli, Telavi; Sagarejo; Gurjaani; Ozurgeti, Chokhatauri, Lanchkhuti, Chkhorotsku, Abasha, Martvili, Zugdidi, Senaki, Khobi; Mestia, Oni, Ambrolauri, Lentekhi. Tsageri, Kutaisi, Bagdati, Vani, Zestaponi, Terjola, Samtredia, Sachkhere, Tkibuli, Tskaltubo, Chiatura, Xaragauli, Xoni, Gori, Bolnisi, Gardabani, Dmanisi, Tetrtskaro; Marneuli, Rustavi, Tsalka, Akhaltsikhe.

Our office is located in Tbilisi.

Mission, Vision and Strategic Objectives

Mission

Our mission is to promote good governance, stable and inclusive economic development, and the formation of an active civil society for the welfare of Georgian society.

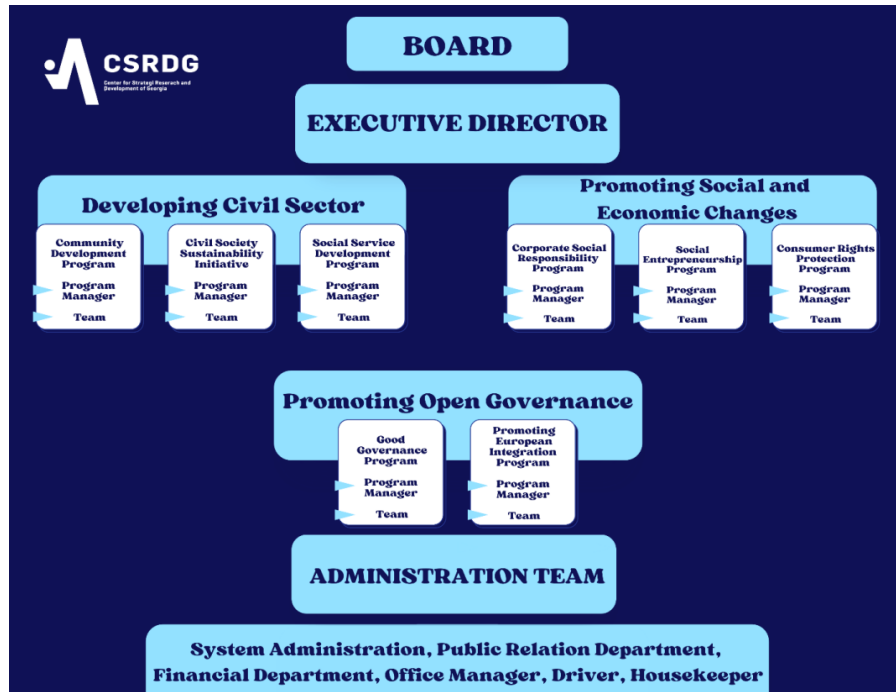
We contribute to the sustainable development of the country by promoting democratic values, and strengthening cross-sector partnerships.

Vision:

We respect the equality and human dignity; we believe that high civil responsibility, professional competence, mutual cooperation and solidarity are the prerequisites for the development of the country.

Strategic Objective : Promoting an active civil society, socially responsible business and good governance for poverty alleviation and sustainable development of the country.

Organizational Structure



Our team

| | |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Eka Urushadze | 16. Lia Todua |
| 2. Eka Datuashvili | 17. Nino Kituashvili |
| 3. Nino Vasadze | 18. Tamar Gobejishvili |
| 4. Vakhtang Kobaladze | 19. Lela Khoperia |
| 5. Maka Asambadze | 20. Nona Aladashvili |
| 6. Tamar Khachidze | 21. Levan Rostomashvili |
| 7. Manana Mchedlishvili | 22. Ketevan Kalandadze |
| 8. Kristine Kandelaki | 23. Beka Guntaishvili |
| 9. Dodo Gokadze | 24. Nia Chelidze |
| 10. Giga Chitishvili | 25. David Chikvaidze |
| 11. Ekaterine (Ana) Iluridze | 26. Mikheil Gogichaishvili |
| 12. Natia Metreveli | 27. Lily Ushveridze |
| 13. Zurab Tatanashvili | 28. Nona Rukhadze |
| 14. Salome Topuridze | 29. Ana Philauri |
| 15. Ana Nadirashvili | 30. Mariam Mchedlishvili |
| | 31. Mariam Japaridze |

Financial Statement for the Year Ended December 31, 2023

Funding from donors by years:

- 2019 – GEL 3,980,197
- 2020 – GEL 3,495,122
- 2021 – GEL 3,903,783
- 2022 – GEL 4,307,501
- 2023 - GEL 4,918,680

Annual income - 2023

| Source | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
|-------------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Funding from donors | 3,980,197 | 3,495,122 | 3,903,783 | 4,307,501 | 4,588,116 |
| From individual contributions | 60,407 | 47,090 | 27,222 | 126,241 | 190,962 |
| Income from services provided | 72,718 | 62,276 | 41,786 | 3,390 | 139,602 |
| Total | 4,113,322 | 3,604,488 | 3,972,791 | 4,177,870 | 4,918,680 |

Brief information about activities

- Worked with 38 communities in 19 municipalities;
- Elaborated 7 video lessons on European Integration (www.asocireba.ge);
- Ongoing 12 projects (grant contracts); 6 service contracts;
- 22 publications assessing the fulfillment of obligations outlined in the AA were elaborated within awarded grant projects;
- 28 pro bono projects have been implemented during the reporting period involving 16 business companies and 58 professionals. Overall, 669 pro bono hours have been spent. Consequently, 30 non-profit organizations (9 CSOs, 10 CBO's and 11 social enterprises) received pro bono support and solved 41 problems;
- Consumers rights protection program provided 124 consultations to citizens on various legal and non-legal issues, which helped them protect their rights and interests as consumers.
- 12 out of the 24 recommendations on waste management system improvement delivered to the three target municipalities have already been implemented;
- 12 out of 18 submitted recommendations to support proper institutionalization of basic administrative procedures at local municipalities have already been implemented; and 16 significant types of regulations/normative acts were approved;
- A nationwide communication campaign aimed at promoting philanthropy, promoting models like Community Foundations and Crowdfunding was held;
- Minimum standards for social services and 3 new social service programs were analyzed in relation to the rights based social service standards;

- 21 rights based social service criteria to evaluate municipal programs were developed based on the rights based social service standards;
- 6 new municipal social service programs were developed and 4 of them integrated in the 2024 budget;
- Representatives of municipalities from Kvemo Kartli and Samtskhe-Javakheti were trained in monitoring, evaluation and procurement of social services.
- Training and follow up consulting provided to the CSOs from Kvemo Kartli and Samtskhe-Javakheti regions.
- The "Georgian Responsible Business Competition Meliora " was successfully announced for the fifth consecutive year.
- An international group has conducted “National Framework for CSR in Georgia: Recommendations to the Georgian Government”
- Several television and radio programs were produced to highlight and showcase the program's activities, while numerous articles about CSR and the program were published in online publications.
- A series of consultation meetings, including the Pro Bono Marathon and annual networking meeting were conducted as part of the pro bono mediation framework.
- Over 200 young people were introduced to the concept of social entrepreneurship;
- Six Learning and Employment Support Centers (LESC) were established, enabling employment for 301 locals and providing essential services like training, retraining, and skill development to over 1,628 job seekers.
- Six Work Integration Social Enterprises (WISE) were funded, aiding the integration of less competitive individuals into the workforce. As a result, 32 individuals have been employed;
- CSRDG conducted 126 different trainings, workshops, and seminars for social enterprises (SEs), community-based organizations (CBOs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), businesses, and media representatives. These events attracted a total of 2,030 participants, including 1,560 women and 470 men.
- CSRDG financed 131 projects of individuals (35) and organizations (96) for the total amount of GEL 2 886 479 .

Publications

- Grantors prepared 22 reports assessing the fulfilment of obligations outlined in the Association Agreement. These reports can be seen on our web-site asocireba.ge
- “National Framework for CSR in Georgia: Recommendations to the Georgian Government”

Explanatory animations illustrating the topics outlined in the Association Agreement

- Energy Union and Georgia <http://asocireba.ge/learn/?card=156>
- Public participation in public administration <https://www.asocireba.ge/learn/?card=159>
- Decentralization <https://www.asocireba.ge/learn/?card=163>
- What does a non-governmental organization need? <https://www.asocireba.ge/learn/?card=165>
- Prevention of corruption in public service <https://www.asocireba.ge/learn/?card=167>
- Public Service reform <https://www.asocireba.ge/learn/?card=169>
- Why cannot the “law of agents” be adopted? <https://www.asocireba.ge/learn/?card=171>

Events

- Community Leaders Forum 2023
- The "Auction of Ideas"
- Pro Bono Marathon 2023
- Meliora 2023
- CSR Stakeholder Forum
- Country regulations and food safety challenges for regional public organizations
- 4th B2B exhibition

- Large-scale international impact-oriented investment conference "Impact in the Neighborhood"

Implemented and ongoing projects

1. Civic Engagement, Social Responsibility and Good Governance, continuation”- 2020-2023 – Brot für die Welt;
2. Civil Society Initiative -Sustainable, Open and Accountable Civil Society Organizations for the Development of Georgia- The European Union; Konrad Adenauer Stiftung
3. Empowering Women for Change – The United Nations Development Programme;
4. Promotion of Rights Based Social Services for People with Disabilities and Elderly -The European Union;
5. Advancing Social Entrepreneurship for Sustainable and Inclusive Society--The European Union;
6. Skill Building and Innovative Job Opportunities for Regional Development of Georgia - The European Union;
7. COLLABORATE FOR IMPACT - Cooperation for change-Development of Social Entrepreneurship and Social Investment for Economic and Social Empowerment in Easter Partnership Countries- EVPA, -The European Union;
8. Sustainable Models of Mobile Elderly Care in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Georgia- Hilfswerk International; Austrian Development Agency;
9. Starter Grant to support the live crowd funding event based on the TFN donor circle model- The Funding Network;
10. Capacitated Agricultural Practices and Consumer Awareness (CAPCA) --The European Union /Georgian Farmers Association (GFA)
11. Development and implementation of environmental and social policy at the municipal level in cooperation with the civil sector- Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in Georgia
12. THE EUROPEAN FUND FOR SOUTHEAST/EFSE/

Relevance of our Programs with Sustainable Development Goals

| Goal | CSR DG's Programs | Page |
|-------------------------------------|---|-------------|
| Goal 1 – No Poverty | Community Development; Social Entrepreneurship; Skill Building; | 11; 35; 40; |
| Goal 2 – Zero Hunger | | |
| Goal 3 – Good Health and Well-being | Rights Based Social Service | 22; |

| | | |
|--|---|-----------------|
| Goal 4 – Quality Education | Community Development, CBO Development; CSR-Program; Social Entrepreneurship; Skill Building; | 11; 27; 35; 40; |
| Goal 5 – Gender Equality | Community Development; Skill Building; European Integration; | 11; 40; 52; |
| Goal 6 – Clean Water and Sanitation | | |
| Goal 7 – Affordable and Clean Energy | | |
| Goal 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth | Community Development – Women Eempowerment for Change; CSR- Program; Social Entrepreneurship; Skill Building; | 11; 27; 35; 40; |
| Goal 9 – Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure | | |
| Goal 10 – Reduced Inequalities | | |
| Goal 11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities | Community Development; Good Governance | 11; 50; |
| Goal 12 – Responsible Consumption and Production | Community Development; CSR Development; Good Governance | 11; 27; 50; |
| Goal 13 – Climate Action | | |
| Goal 14 – Life Below Water | | |
| Goal 15 – Life on Land | | |
| Goal 16 – Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions | Good Governance | 50; |
| Goal 17 – Partnerships for Goals | | |

Programs

There are three main strategic directions that serve to achieve the mission of the organization:

1. Development of Civil Sector;
2. Promotion of Economic and Social Changes.
3. Promotion of Good Governance;

Programs that are part of our daily activities are grouped under these directions.

Development of Civil Sector represents one of the oldest strategic directions of CSRDG. It aims at supporting civil society to safeguard interests of, and to improve provision of relevant services for its target groups at local and national levels. Community Development Program, Civil Society Organizations' (CSO) Development Program, and Social Service Development Program operate under this strategic direction.

Community Development Program (Village and community levels) aims at improving institutional, advocacy and fundraising skills of the community, to enable community members to actively and significantly contribute to the local development.

CSO Development Program aims at institutional capacity building of local and national CSOs, thus enabling them to provide better services to their constituencies.

Social Service Development Program aims at developing of the rights-based social service in civil and public sectors in Georgia, to promote and respect social, cultural and economic rights of vulnerable individuals.

Community Development Program

CSRDG has been working on community development since 1998. The primary goal of this program is to empower civil society in various regions and provide support to community leaders, civil organizations, and initiative groups. The aim is to enable these groups to better represent their communities' interests and address the prevailing needs effectively.

To accomplish this, the program operates in the following key areas:

1. Enhancing the operational environment for community organizations and initiative groups.
2. Providing financial support for community initiatives and projects.
3. Strengthening existing networks of community organizations throughout the country.
4. Promoting philanthropy and introducing new mechanisms to mobilize local resources.

While the program's activities cover the entire country, it focuses intensively on regions such as Kakheti, Samegrelo, Guria, and Shida Kartli.

Improving the operating environment of community organizations/initiative groups/promoting connections and experience sharing among them (Networking)

In pursuit of this objective, the program encompasses various activities conducted by the Community Development Resource Center (CDRC.GE). This includes the maintenance of a database of community groups and organizations, regularly updating the map, provision of essential information and news to community organizations, and active participation in coalitions of organizations dedicated to national-level community development, exemplified by the Community Development Coalition (CoDeCo). The program also involves organizing collaborative meetings among community organizations, notably the annual forum for community leaders.

2023 networking annual event Community Leaders Forum, took place in Kakheti, Hotel Tsinandali on November 16-17. Approximately 170 participants, including community leaders and civil activists from across Georgia, as well as representatives from government agencies, business companies, and international organizations, actively engaged in the forum.

The attendees of this year's Community Leaders' Forum had the unique opportunity to gain insights into the experiences of various community organizations. They learned about outstanding community projects and initiatives supported within the program. The event also featured a video presentation highlighting the impact of the Community Leaders and Community Development Program.

In addition to the discussions, the forum hosted the traditional "Best Community Initiatives"

competition for the 2021-2022 period. Out of the six community initiatives participating to the competition:

- "Our space for a better future" – Martkofi Youth Center was honored as the jury's choice.
- "Preservation of the cultural heritage monuments of Truso Valley" by the organization "Lomeki" became the audience's favorite.

To recognize their outstanding contributions, each winner was awarded a special prize along with a £500 grant courtesy of the University of Birmingham.

The success of the "Best Community Initiatives" competition was made possible through the collaboration of various business entities. Notable contributors in preparing the community group's presentations and establishing special awards included: TBC Bank; Bank of Georgia; Credo Bank; Tegeta Holding; APM Terminals Poti an MBC

On the second day of the forum, multi-sector panel discussions were held on the following topics:

- Positive practices and current challenges of cooperation with a self-government
- Rural Tourism
- Women's economic empowerment – Opportunities and Challenges
- Historical memory and cultural heritage of the community
- School meals and community well-being: Why should we advocate for school meals programs?

At the conclusion of the forum, a session titled "Open Space – Four Seasons" was dedicated to fostering stronger connections among community organizations and facilitating group discussions.

Supporters of the 2022 Forum, in addition to the European Union and the Konrad Adenauer Foundation (KAS), included the United Nations Development Agency, the Norwegian Embassy, Bread for the World, and the University of Birmingham.

Financial Support for Community Initiatives and Projects

As part of the Community Development Program, a nationwide grant competition is regularly announced to support small community projects and initiatives. While the specific topics of these grant competitions may vary, their ultimate goal remains consistent:

a) Addressing local challenges and responding to community needs through the collective efforts of local groups and community engagement. b) Enhancing the capacities of community groups and leaders themselves by implementing projects, receiving intensive mentoring from the program team, and gaining skills, self-confidence, and recognition and trust within the community.

In 2022, within the framework of the EU-funded STAR program, **two grant competitions** were announced in September and November to support community initiatives. The number of

applications received for both competitions was 167, which indicates the great interest and need for this type of grant competition in the country.

The competition aims to support community projects and initiatives that will make substantial contributions to strengthening public and community organizations, activist groups, and their capacity development. This encompasses gaining public trust, effectively utilizing available local resources, and addressing existing issues in specific geographical or social communities through efficient mobilization of local resources, including beneficiaries, supporters, volunteers, sponsors, and material/financial resources. The applications submitted at the second grant competition were discussed in 2023 and as the result 10 winners were granted for implementation of community initiatives.

Altogether the grant amount equaled to **491 132 GEL** and in total during the 2022-2023 the following 18 projects have been supported:

Funded projects are:

| # | Organization/Initiative Group | Project title |
|-----|---|--|
| 1. | Mtsvane Polusi (Environmental Movement) | Promoting monitoring of dry stone cutting in Tbilisi |
| 2. | Community Social-Economic Development Association – Imereti | Young leaders for community development |
| 3. | Association of Youth Centers | Youth for rural development |
| 4. | Civil Society and Media Development Institute | Informal education youth multimedia learning center in Akhaldaba |
| 5. | Iormughanlo Community Center (Ethnic Minority Group) | The Importance and Promotion of Positive Activism |
| 6. | Initiative group “Women Force for Maghraani” | Development of community-based tourism in Maghraani |
| 7. | Elderly Women Council (Ethnic Minority Group) | Strong women- Strong Society |
| 8. | Journalism Resource Center | “Kokhta Mediatheka” |
| 9. | Community organization "Nukriani" | ”Andronikaant Ubani" - support for the development of the neighborhood initiative in the village Nukriani |
| 10. | Initiative group -Digital space - more opportunities | Community Foundation - Unity for Positive Change |
| 11. | Surami Development Initiative Group | Surami Community Development Center |
| 12. | Initiative group"Rodemde?"(How Long?) | Stray dogs management strategy for a safe environment" |
| 13. | Association "Bethlemi” | We care, we change the lives of the elderly |
| 14. | Public house "Oda | Youth Center of Shamgona |
| 15. | Women's initiative group “Deka” of Lesichine community | Join us |
| 16. | Group of Independent Education Consultants | Creating a community educational center for the villages located near the occupation line of Shida Kartli: Avlevi, Knolevi and Tseronisi |

| | | |
|-----|----------------------------------|--|
| 17. | Association “The way to peace” | Tetritskaro Rock climbers |
| 18. | Initiative Group “For Community” | Tsovatusheti community cultural space in Zemo Alvani |

Out of funded 18 projects, 10 are still ongoing and 8 projects were finalized.

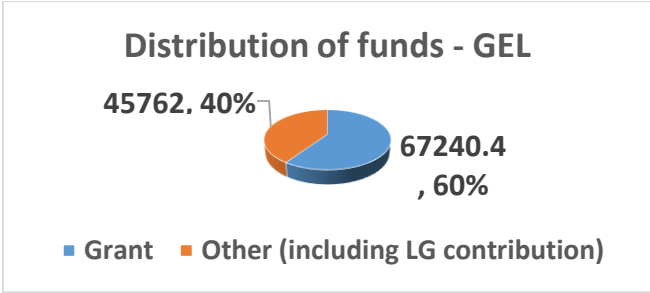
The village of Maghraani in Akhmeta municipality boasts abundant natural and cultural resources that are ideally suited for tourism development. However, before the project's initiation, these assets were merely viewed as untapped potential. The project's planned activities aim to create and promote Maghraani as a vibrant new tourist destination.

The project encompasses a thorough investigation of Maghraani village's tourism resources, the provision of training and master classes in tourism services, the organization of festivals, showcasing local products, and collaborating with tour operators to offer practical lessons.

The project's primary objective is to foster economic and social progress in the villages of the Maghraani community, including Maghraani, Fichkhovani, and Argokhi, through tourism development. Local residents have already begun expressing interest and taking their initial steps in the realm of tourism, which is a pivotal indicator of the project's effective implementation.

It can be confidently stated that the "Discover Maghraani" project is already telling its story. Media outlets have shown keen interest in the project, with multiple reports planned for the future. Notably, the first backpackers have started to explore the area, signifying that the project is poised to achieve even more remarkable results in its final stages than originally anticipated by the team members.

- Within the UNDP funded project „Empowering Women for change, the two round closed competition for Network member CBOs were announced with the aim to enhance Community Group’s advocacy work by the end of 2022. The condition of the announcement was ensuring co funding from the Local Governments. Totally 7 projects were selected out of submitted 15 project ideas, Foundation Constanta contributed 3000 GEL to Grants Fund, and made it possible to support 7 micro projects.



The list of implemented projects:

| # | Community | Women Community Group | Project Title | Brief Description |
|---|---------------|--|---|---|
| 1 | Chkhorotsku | Initiative Group "Tanastsori" | "Bibidi Babidi Bu - Magic Mini Stadium for promotion healthy lifestyle" | Promotion of Healthy lifestyle in youth of Chkhorotsku through arrangement of Mini Stadium |
| 2 | Khornabuji | Women and Youth Centre "Khornabuji" | „Vision of Future - Cinema“ | Setting up of cognitive, entertaining and cultural space for residents of Khornabuji and its neighboring communities (different ethnic and age groups) for Multi ethnical integration and social welfare. |
| 3 | Vartdisuabani | Community Union "Vardisubani" | Rehabilitation Center "Akhali Kera" | Promotion of psycho-social development of youth and women in Vardisubani community through establishment of educational space and relevant IT resources, improved access to novelties, information and educational materials. |
| 4 | Apeni | Community Union "Kedeli" | Promotion of skill building in Youngsters | Building employment skills and knowledge of Youth in Apeni community through introduction of different and needs tailored professional courses (like Web and Graphics design, office programs, Crowd Funding Instruments and etc.) |
| 5 | Pshaveli | Community Development center "Aisi" | Strong Youth for Better Future | Developing Soft and Professional skills and promoting civic activism of youth in Pshaveli and Neighboring Communities |
| 6 | Saniore | Initiative Group "Tsisartkela" | Together for Agriculture Development | Raising awareness and Building knowledge of population in 7 communities of Telavi Municipality on agricultural issues |
| 7 | Ozurgeti | Mediators Association of Guria | Agro Lab | Improvement of Socio-economic situation of rural population, especially youth and women in Ozurgeti Municipality through better access to information; required skills and knowledge and relevant State programs in the field of Agriculture. |

Strengthening the Network of Community Groups in the Country

This direction includes the strengthening of the 27-member network of community groups and organizations that were established in the target villages and townships of Kakheti, Samegrelo, Guria, and Shida Kartli as part of the center's diversity programs in previous years. The network is reinforced through a combination of **technical assistance (including training sessions, workshops, and consultations) and financial support from the program.**

In 2023, the program collaborated closely with a consortium of regional partner organizations to work intensively with **12 new emerged member organizations and initiative groups** who also joined the network. This consortium, in addition to representatives from the center and its Telavi office, includes representatives from regional organizations such as the Georgian Civil Development Association - Kakheti, Development Hub - Samegrelo, and Mediators Association - Guria.

The 12 community organizations served in Sagareji, Gurjaani and Akhmeta (Iormunghanlo, VachnaZiani and Magraani), in Kvareli and Sighnagi (Akhalsofeli, Zinobiani and Bodbe), Zugdidi (Akhlabastumani; Chitatskari, Narazeni and Shamgona), Ozurgeti and Lanchkhuti (Askana and Supsa) municipalities. These groups together with old network members received a total of six training sessions covering various topics:

- Team Building and Leadership.
- Working with Communities
- Project Planning and Designing
- Civic engagement in Local Decision Making Processes.

In total, more than 110 individuals participated in these training sessions, with over 90% of them being women.

Also, two experience sharing inter municipal visits were organized within Samegrelo and Kakheti regions. The participants, totally 31 people (27 women and 4 men), were representing all new emerged Community Groups from Guria, Samegrelo and Kakheti regions.

The aim of the visits was to share community work experience, success stories and lessons learnt of old and well established Community Group and Organizations with emerging ones. In Samegrelo leaders of new groups visited Women Community Group “Tanastori” in Chkhorotsku Municipality and CBO “Education and Development center - Toliskuri” in Khobi Municipality. They got introduced with results of particular projects, like work of Social Enterprise, Entrepreneur’s Club and other infrastructure initiatives. As for Kakheti, the group visited CBO “Aisi” of Pshaveli Community and in Telavi Municipality and Community Foundation Leli and Adults Education Center of Leliani Community in Lagodekhi Municipality. They on place got introduced with work of Social cafeteria “Tanave” managed by CBO “Aisi” and participated in Crowdfunding Workshop taking place in Leliani Community. Both experience sharing tours were very attractive, informative and inspirational for all participants as they expressed it in their feedback.

Additionally, the program continued its series of online meetings known as "Community Talks" for the members of the network of community organizations. Throughout the year, four two to three-hour meetings were conducted, with a total of 65 community leaders participating. These meetings featured guest speakers from various backgrounds, including: expert from CSI (Civil Society Institute); EU integration component leader of CSRDG and representative of Care Caucasus/Farmers Field and Business School – FFBS.

Simultaneously, with the facilitation and support of program team members, community organizations developed six months action plans. These plans serve as responses to the challenges and needs within their communities and encompass a wide range of activities, including educational, sports, and cultural events, as well as an advocacy component for addressing local issues. The advocacy component involves conducting research on local problems and providing feedback to local municipalities and relevant agencies. The program provided **modest financial support** for the implementation of these action plans, averaging around 3,000-4,000 GEL per group/organization. The grants have been issued to 12 new emerged CBOs for implementation 6 month actions plans based on local community needs and including advocacy some advocacy actions addressed to local decision makers. The process of identification of critical community issues have been already implemented in all 27 target communities (including new members as well) . Different instruments, like poll, questionnaires and focus groups were applied for local needs assessment. As the result the identified problems and needs were presented to respective local government decision makers in the form of submitting of official letters and/or in person presentations (Overall 8 meetings were organized). In total 111 identified problems have been addressed to respective government bodies by the end of this year.

In 2023, an assessment of target community organizations was conducted to evaluate the activities of eight community organizations/groups operating in the Kakheti, Samegrelo, Guria, and Shida Kartli municipalities. The primary objectives were to gauge public awareness of these groups' activities and assess the degree of satisfaction among the population. Additionally, the research aimed to gather opinions from the community about the future and desired activities of the centers.

The research was carried out in two stages:

1. **Qualitative Part:** This involved 24 in-depth interviews.
2. **Quantitative Part:** This involved face-to-face interviews with 328 household representatives, conducted using the principle of wandering.

Based on the results of the survey, it can be concluded that the awareness and popularity of community organizations are high. Specifically, 42.7% of respondents reported that they had heard about the activities of the centers, with awareness being particularly notable among the population aged 15-44. Community groups are primarily recognized for their educational and cultural activities.

The activities of community organizations are highly valued by the population. Most interviewees appreciate their work and believe it has a positive impact on the well-being of their villages, a sentiment especially common among young people. Regarding the evaluation of the effectiveness of community groups, most surveyed residents believe that these groups work actively and assist

villagers in solving their problems. Similar to satisfaction levels, perceptions of efficacy are more pronounced among younger individuals.

Promotion of philanthropy and introduction of new mechanisms for mobilizing local resources

The organization's efforts in promoting philanthropy and introducing new mechanisms for mobilizing local resources began in 2020, and over time, it accumulated valuable experience in this area. The activities focus on popularizing the concept of philanthropy within the community, providing education and information about its various forms and examples, and introducing and promoting models like **Community Foundations and Crowdfunding**.

In addition to the communication campaign, a second grant competition was announced in July, 2024 as part of the STAR program, funded by the European Union, to support crowdfunding campaigns. The competition aimed to provide support to initiatives that mobilize the resources required for solving specific problems or for social initiatives using various crowdfunding tools. As the concept of crowdfunding is relatively new in the society, only eight applications were received, and 5 applications were selected for funding by an independent commission. Out of funded 5 projects, 2 are finalized and 3 are still ongoing.

Prior to the announcement of second round of grant competition two 3-hour long introductory meetings on Crowdfunding concept and its instruments were organized in online format for interested civic groups and activists. The grant competition conditions were also stated at the meetings. The meetings were led by invited experts from Crowdfunding Association of Georgia and Charte Platform, Totally 98 people attended it among them 18 % men and 82 % women.

The “Auction of Ideas” was successfully held at the Exhibition Hall of the National Parliamentary Library on December 12, 2023. The event was supported by The Funding Network, the Friedrich Mulder Foundation, European Union and Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS). Throughout the event, three groups from different parts of Georgia presented their ideas, tried to convey the social and environmental advantages of their proposals, and got the required support.

The event brought together representatives of international donor organizations, civil sector, media, state structures and business sector, about 100 people.

Event attendees had the opportunity to engage with pitching projects through informative presentations, ask questions, and contribute to initiatives by making donations. Organizations effectively showcased their projects, generating positive interest from the audience. Through a successful auction, a total of 22 300 GEL was raised to support these initiatives (more than the targeted amount of 15 000 GEL). At the auction, three teams introduced themselves to the audience:

1. Organization — Caucasus Onco Society HOPE, Project — “Your life is in your hands”

Caucasus Onco Society H.O.P.E. represents an organization of cancer patients, one of the main activities of which is psycho-social rehabilitation and support of cancer patients and their family members. Its activities are mainly carried out within the capital city and due to limited resources, it is less able to cover other regions.

With the project to be presented at the auction, the organization wants to cover three regions of Georgia (Adjara, Imereti and Kakheti). In particular, conducting free training/workshops (with art therapy elements) for cancer patients and their family members. In this way this initiative aims to assist oncology patients in perceiving on one hand "stigmatized cancer" - as a generalized problem and on the other hand - viewing "real cancer" - as merely a challenge, so that they can discover their own and unique resources to deal with it.

The organization, with the support of the "Idea Auction" audience, raised 7,000 GEL to achieve its goals.

2. Initiative Group — “Come up on the Fourth “, Project — „ART is what unites us“

The group "Come up on the Fourth" is a collective of individuals from various art fields, dedicated to promoting art development across different age groups and particularly focusing on vulnerable groups, especially children. The group operates in a space on the fourth floor of a residential building in Tbilisi furnished by the group itself. The space includes a stage with seating for 60 people.

In Tbilisi, there is a lack of free art classes for children and young people, especially those from vulnerable families. It is very difficult for creatively talented children in the region to introduce their work to a broader audience, especially in the capital.

The funds raised from the Auction will be used to furnish the space and purchase materials for art therapy classes for children from vulnerable families. Additionally, Space will also regularly host new creative groups and individuals. The "Fourth Floor" stage will also serve as a venue for three theater troupes from municipal schools. A sum of 7,000 GEL was raised for them through the idea auction.

3. Organization — “The Road to Peace”, Project — „Guardians of the Boundless Border“

The organization's mission is to promote a healthy life in regions and villages through the development of rock climbing.

Just a kilometer from Tskhinvali – Georgia’s occupied territory, in the village of Nikozi (an area adjacent to the conflict zone), successful and talented little athletes – passionate climbers live and they have always dreamed of a gym and normal training conditions for years.

After seven years of persistent effort, the organization was given a non-functional building in the countryside from the local municipality for its activities. With the combined efforts and donations, the organization managed to undertake partial repairs to the building. However, these efforts were not enough for creating a fully functional sports space. The walls still need to be plastered and handrails installed, and the building’s bathrooms remain unfinished. The improvement of these conditions is crucial for the development of these young athletes.

The organization's mission is to promote a healthy lifestyle among young people in rural areas and villages through the cultivation of rock farming. To support this mission, 8,300 GEL was raised for them at the "Ideas Auction."

Under the same direction, the promotion of the concept of community foundations and preparatory work for their initiation continued in the municipalities of Telavi and Lagodekhi. In 2023 CSRDG continued work towards capacity building of both set up CF Initiative Groups, in particular: both groups were implementing so called challenge grant projects, that envisaged further promotion of CFs locally and organization the first live crowdfunding events / Idea Auctions. In both localities, the planned Auctions were organized successfully by the end of 2022 (Lagodekhi) and March 2023 (Telavi). Totally all six pitching projects raised funds (totally 13 685 GEL). Recently, four projects are already finalized and two – still undergoing (Telavi Municipality).

According to CSRDG revised approach the participative assessment of achieved results of Challenge Grant projects should lead the project team to the decision of continuation work with CF Initiative groups and provision of further development grants. The two main criteria were applied for assessment:

1. The effectiveness of Implemented work and the level of team work (coordination; distribution of functions and long term vision for CF)
2. The fulfillment of resource mobilization (targeted amount) locally

So far two respective assessment workshops were held in 2023 with both groups on place. According to assessments, in both localities, the second criteria was fulfilled successfully and targeted amount of resources were mobilized through Idea Auctions, but the first criteria of effective team work was identified as problematic for Lagodekhi Group, especially in the regard of coordinated work and long term vision, unlikely to Telavi Group, where good team work and clear vision for CF development were on place. Thus, the Project Team decided to continue work with Telavi CF Initiative group only and issue next level development grant to it. CSRDG team assisted CFGI in designing the respective proposal on registration and further institutionalization of the foundation.

CSRDG team also facilitated the process of Strategic Planning of the group. As a result, CF group developed the mission and logical framework for future 3 years. By the end of the year the working meeting was organized with CFGI in Telavi with the aim to review elaborated by law of the Foundation and draft the 2024 action plan. The legal registration of the Community Foundation – Together for Telavi, will take place by the beginning of 2024.

Despite this fact, it is noteworthy that the promotional work conducted in Lagodekhi Municipality greatly contributed to creation of first and quite successful precedents of Local giving and crowdfunding, that on its turn will promote further development of local civic sector. Above this, the promotional campaign led on national level stimulated formation of CF in Askana Community of Guria Region.

Development of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)

Within its CSO Development Program, CSRDG supports Georgian civil society sector by building its capacity, raising awareness and increasing public perception about it. We started the Program in 1998.

To achieve Program goals, we continuously offer CSOs tailored technical support, which enables them to improve organizational management systems, offer quality services to target audiences, and most importantly, ensure organizations' financial and institutional sustainability.

Program Activities

Project activities in general are spread over CSRDG's different programs. However, all activities and achieved results support strengthening of civil society in Georgia. Overall, during 2023, at the request of international and local organizations, number of seminars, training and workshops were prepared and implemented within the CSRDG Program.

Social Service Development Program

"The beneficiaries are not stranger, vulnerable individuals or groups, they are each of us, who fall in vulnerable situations in one or another stage of life and need support with dignity and respect to our rights" - *Zurab Tatanashvili, head of the program.*

In 2019, with the support of the European Union, the organization initiated a comprehensive three-year project titled "Promotion of Rights-Based Social Services for Persons with Disabilities and the Elderly." Concurrently, the organization launched a new social services development program aimed at fostering rights-based social services in Georgia. The program's objective is to safeguard and support the social, cultural, and economic rights of vulnerable individuals.

Rights-based social care is rooted in the belief that social care should not be perceived as charity but as a fundamental right for all members of a healthy, democratic, inclusive, and supportive society. It treats recipients of social services as "right holders" while regarding the government and service providers as "Duty Bearers".

Rights-based services are planned, implemented and evaluated according to the following six key standards: 1. Facilitation of rights, 2. Participation, 3. Individual outcomes, 4. Feedback, 5. Service accessibility and 6. Service management. All directions are aimed at facilitating the realization of a specific right of the beneficiary and outline the role of the service provider in the realization of this right.

The Program works in Two Main Directions:

1. Developing relevant political, legal and educational environment.
2. Building organizational capacity of social service providers, in order to improve existing services and/or plan, implement and evaluate new services.

Following activities were carried out in 2023 under the two directions:

Main activities of the program

1. Capacity development of public organizations providing social services in order to develop, plan, implement and evaluate their social services
2. Improvement of relevant political, legal and educational resources

Developing relevant political, legal and educational environment

In 2023, new national social service programs were initiated by the central government (homecare, personal assistant and small family homes for adults with disabilities). Several municipalities also expressed increased interest to develop new social service programs with the recognition that exclusively monetary assistance, in most cases are sporadic and rarely result-oriented. CSRDG actively advocated and supported development of the rights based and result oriented social services on central and municipal levels, engaging diverse stakeholders including beneficiaries.

The head of the social service development program is a member of the council to Implement the Georgian Law on the Rights of People with Disabilities. The council operates under the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Health, Labour and Social Affairs of Georgia. The council, with its relevant 6 committees, composed by the Ministry, State Care Agency, CSO and beneficiaries, significantly contribute in developing, implementing and monitoring social service programs, as well as defining regulations and development goals in the field. CSRDG significantly contributes in operation of the council. By working as a member of the Council, we are promoting integration of rights based social service standards in new social service programs and regulatory documents. During the January-March 2023, with the support of the Czech Development Agency, CSRDG expert in social services (the Social Service Development Program Coordinator) analysed and shared recommendations with the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Health, Labor and Social Affairs of Georgia on the national social service programs and social service quality monitoring documents such as: a) "External Monitoring of Homecare" b) Minimal Standards for Small family homes for the Adults with Disabilities; c) Service Quality Standard for Homecare (draft 1 and 2) with relevant annexes. and d) Homecare Program (rural model). The recommendations were shared with other committee members as well. We also provided the members of the two committees with the material, developed under the piloting of rights based approach, including the case management guidelines and forms, part of which are included in the state forms of new state homecare program. During the 2023, by active participation and initiation of workshops, CSRDG became one of the key players in the homecare working group, uniting government and CSO stakeholders. Starting from the 2024, it will lead the advocacy component with the goal to improve national homecare program, within the project supported by the Austrian

Development Agency, and implemented by the consortium of the International, Austrian, Georgian and Bosnian organizations, including CSRDG.

21 rights based social service criteria to evaluate municipal programs were developed based on the rights based social service standards by the program team. The social service programs in 6 municipalities, were analysed and relevant recommendations shared with the local multi-stakeholder groups composed by local, government and civil society actors, as well as beneficiaries.

Besides program evaluations, throughout 2023, the program team worked in 7 municipalities to develop new, rights based social service programs. Series of trainings, workshops and consulting to plan new social service program were held. 6 municipalities in Kvemo Kartli region (Bolnisi, Dmanisi, Gardabani, Tetrtskaro, Marneuli and Tsalka) and one in Kakheti (Sighnaghi) participated in it. After the introductory meetings, the trainings/workshops were organized in all 7 locations to share the key principles of the RB social services and prioritizing the problems as well as the key beneficiary groups. The representatives from the local government, potential service provider CSOs and beneficiaries participated in the meetings where the key challenges of the people in vulnerable situations and possible relevant services were discussed. Designing new social service program continued with multi-stakeholder groups in 6 municipalities, excluding Marneuli, that discontinued working with participatory social service planning. CSRDG experts in social services facilitated the process and supported development of new programs throughout seven months. 4 of the 6 municipalities integrated the new social service programs in 2024 budgets. The programs are unique not only due to their content but their structure, as it contains more information for beneficiaries and other stakeholders to promote transparency and accountability, as well as access to the higher quality social services. The programs also include three-layer indicators and monitoring outline measuring 1. process, 2. Results and 3. Satisfaction of beneficiaries.

In December 2023, three-day training on Social Service Monitoring and Evaluation, Procurement of Social Services was organized for 22 representatives from 8 municipalities in Kvemo Kartli and Samtskhe-Javakheti regions. The participants were mainly the key personnel from social and healthcare departments of municipal city halls. The training covered the topics of importance of monitoring and evaluation of social services, key indicators, planning and implementation of M&E activities, three-layer monitoring (process, result and satisfaction of beneficiaries), outsourcing/procurement of social services etc.

Building organizational capacity of social service providers, in order to improve existing services and/or plan, implement and evaluate new services.

In October 2023, CSRDG provided the training and follow-up consulting to CSOs. 14 participants attended the training with the goal to increase their participation in identifying, evaluating and advocating for the needs as well as relevant social service development for the people in vulnerable situations.

Following topics were discussed at the training:

- Rights based social services and its standards - advantages and importance
- Vulnerability and people in vulnerable situations (PVS)
- Prioritization matrix to select the target groups for services
- Needs assessment of PVS
- Interviewing PVS – main considerations
- Social advocacy and participation
- Monitoring and Evaluation

The training was followed up by the consulting in different social service related issues for 7 local CSOs. Due to high interest, CSRDG shared the material, developed u

Results of the year 2023

- Minimum standards for social services and 3 new social service programs were analyzed in relation to the rights based social service standards. Relevant recommendations were shared with the government and non-government stakeholders
- 21 rights based social service criteria to evaluate municipal programs were developed based on the rights based social service standards
- 6 new municipal social service programs were developed and 4 of them integrated in the 2024 budget.
- Representatives of municipalities from Kvemo Kartli and Samtskhe-Javakheti were trained in monitoring, evaluation and procurement of social services.
- Training and follow up consulting provided to the CSOs from Kvemo Kartli and Samtskhe-Javakheti regions.

Main achievements of the program in previous years:

1. Conducted the first research on rights-based social services in Georgia
2. Developed and issued packages of internal organizational documents for social services targeted at elderly and disabled individuals, including quality management manuals, case management manuals, limitation documents, various tools, and organizational manuals.
3. Developed and Provided trainings social service provider organizations on rights-based social service planning, delivery, and evaluation.
4. Successfully piloted rights-based social services in seven municipalities.
5. Introduced supportive monitoring for organizations delivering social services.

6. Integrated rights-based social services into bachelor's and master's programs in social work, along with the creation of reading materials.
7. Conducted monitoring of social work implementation and an advocacy campaign, resulting in the issuance of three shadow reports.
8. Developed and issued a national standard for rights-based social services.
9. Organized the first national conference on rights-based social services.

Successful case:

The main success of the program is that it has created a unique knowledge and experience of rights-based services in the country that is accessible to all stakeholders.

During the last years, and especially after 2022, as a result of the activities carried out within the framework of the program, the topic of rights based social services was actualized and the discussion was brought to the policy level. Various materials created within the program are used in the planning of social service programs and their standards in the country. Social service delivery organizations have begun to use a variety of materials designed for rights-based services.

As a result of the reading material included in the various subjects, students in the Master's and Bachelor's programs in social work, study issues related to the rights-based approach every year. The material is especially important for social workers, as it enables them to increase social functioning of service users and protect their rights, which is the main goal of this profession. The reports of three years of implementation of the law on social work have created evidence based on which further steps should be planned for full implementation of the law.

Promoting Economic and Social Change - strategic objective of this direction is to increase the social responsibility of civil sector, business and citizens of Georgia. The organization has three programs running under this direction; these are Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Development, Social Entrepreneurship and Consumer Rights Protection Programs.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) - CSR concept and practice contribute to the social and environmental welfare in all sectors. For business companies it is important to understand responsibility they have towards society and to play active role in sustainable development of the country.

Social Entrepreneurship (SE) – is the effective way for economic inclusion of vulnerable and socially unprotected groups in environmental and social problem solving processes. With help of SE it is possible to tackle social problems that aren't in the focus of business companies interest, and for solution of which there are no sufficient resources in government.

Consumer Rights Protection – works efficiently only when appropriate state policy mechanisms are in place. Business is more responsible towards consumers, while citizens as consumers are more actively protecting their own rights.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) program

Since 2004, the Center for Strategic Research and Development of Georgia has been implementing the Corporate Social Responsibility Development Program. Within the local landscape, the Strategic Research and Development Center of Georgia emerged as an early pioneer in directing its efforts toward the implementation of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). In order to popularize the CSR concept and inform various sectors in Georgia, the center conducts research, communication campaigns, trainings, seminars, stakeholder forums, conferences and awards. Its proactive engagement extends to collaboration with state agencies, large, medium, and small enterprises, higher educational institutions, and the media.

Activities carried out within the program:

Georgia's responsible business awards-Meliora

The national-wide competition, which was established by CSRDG in 2018, serves as a platform for acknowledging and honoring business entities operating within Georgia for their exemplary projects and initiatives implemented by them in the field of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

The competition, in which up to 155 companies participated with more than 300 CSR projects, aims to develop and popularize corporate social responsibility in Georgia. Also, to encourage companies to implement CSR principles and approaches in their activities, becoming an example for others.

For participating in Meliora 2023 awards, the 88 entries have been submitted by 66 companies.

The Awarding ceremony was held on May 30, 2023 in the Biltmore Hotel. The event attracted 208 guests - participating companies, jury members, representatives of Diplomatic corps, CSOs, government, international organizations, business associations and media (together with CSRDG staff in total 221 persons). 9 winners across all categories, large companies as well as SMEs have been announced and awarded. Materials are uploaded on Meliora website.

On January 15, 2024 the new cycle of Meliora Awards were opened with the deadline of submitting proposals on February 20, 2024. Communication with Meliora partners and potential sponsors continued. Active communication with companies started to motivate them to participate in the Awards.

In the year 2023, the **supporters of the competition** included: Business Association Georgia, Annual Report and Transparency Award (BARTA); BG for Georgian business, CCI Francaise en Géorgie, Georgian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Deutsche Wirtschaftsvereinigung - (DWV), European Business Association (EBA), Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia , Enterprise Georgia, Waste Management Business Association, Georgian Farmers' Association, Swiss Confederation, LEPL-The Academy of the Ministry of Finance, Georgian small and medium enterprises association (GSMEA), Georgian tourism association, Georgian Trade Unions Confederation, Embassy of Italy Tbilisi, Georgian Microfinance Association, Environmental Information and Education Center, World Wildlife Fund: (WWF), embassy of the Slovak Republic in Tbilisi, Small and Medium Enterprises Development Association (SMEDA), International Chamber of Commerce Georgia (ICC), Infrastructure Construction Companies Association (ICCA), EU-Georgia Business Council (EUGBC), Embassy of the Czech Republic in Tbilisi, Waste Management Association, Service for Accounting, Reporting and Auditing Supervision (SARAS), Banking Association of Georgia. **Media Partners:** Entrepreneurus, Business Media Georgia, Georgia Today, 106.9FM Fortuna. **Sponsors:** The Biltmore Tbilisi, Moore abc, Sarajishvili, Enagram

Major achievements:

In the 2023 competition, 66 companies participated, presenting 88 implemented projects. These figures indicate the ongoing popularity of the competition and the simultaneous growth of corporate responsibility practices within the business community."

"Numerous international and local supporting organizations and business associations joined the 2023 competition. Their collaborative involvement is crucial to the successful execution of the competition.

CSR Stakeholders Forum (Promotion of development of CSR policy framework of Government)

In 2022, the Center for Strategic Research and Development of Georgia (CSRDG) established the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Stakeholders Forum. This Forum, founded by representatives spanning various sectors, serves as a distinctive platform for dialogue and collaboration concerning state policies that promote CSR.

The first working session of the CSR stakeholder Forum was held on June 30, 2023. It was attended by 44 participants and was quite successful. Members of the working group working on recommendations on public policy on CSR in Georgia - Audrone Alijosiute, Catherine Heaney, Davit Maisuradze and Giorgi Papava, - made presentations on best EU practices and Georgian context regarding CSR supportive public policies. The discussion was held around possible directions of public policy on CSR in Georgia. The feedback received and opinions expressed during the discussion were considered in the [policy recommendations](#).

The [second consultation meeting](#) of the CSR Stakeholder Forum, designed to discuss the first draft of the policy recommendations was held on October 13. The meeting was hosted by the ProCredit Bank at its premises and attended by representatives of 33 different civil and international organizations, business associations, educational/academic institutions, and the state sector.

During 2023, the working group continued to develop the policy recommendations. Several coordination meetings were held throughout the year:

On April 3, the schedule of the CSR Stakeholder Forum's consultation sessions, as well as the structure and content of the policy recommendations, were discussed.

On May 31, the group convened in Tbilisi, including Georgian members, Audrine Alijosiute (who was in Tbilisi for a CSR Masterclass), and Tomas Sercovic, CEO of BiTC Ireland, as an invited expert, while Catherine Heaney joined via Zoom. They discussed the topics and content of the first working version of the policy recommendations and the agenda for the CSR Stakeholder Forum working session scheduled for June 30.

Additional meetings were held on June 22, June 27, July 20, and September 15.

Simultaneously, the CSR specialist conducted several individual meetings with WG members to address issues related to the development of the first draft of the document.

Finally, the WG members finalized the Georgian and English version of the policy document "National Framework for CSR in Georgia: Recommendations to the Georgian Government" Both documents were uploaded on the [CSR Hub Georgia](#).

On December 13, 2023 [the presentation event](#) of the elaborated policy recommendations policy document was conducted at the Courtyard by Marriott Hotel in Tbilisi. The event garnered attendance of 103 guests included CSRDG team, comprising representatives from various entities,

including companies, business associations, international and civil organizations, government agencies, and diplomatic corps.

Besides the presentation of the document - national framework for CSR in Georgia, the panel discussion was organized on the development of the CSR culture in Georgia and addressing the mechanisms to be taken at state level.

Major Achievements:

The CSR Forum, inspired by the practices of European nations, is Georgia's leading association. It has effectively brought together delegates from civil society, the private sector, and government entities, establishing a foundation for the joint advancement of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) within the country. The formation of the CSR Forum and the accompanying policy document represents a significant milestone in advancing CSR in Georgia and nurturing a favorable environment for its growth.

CSR Web Platform

The Corporate Social Responsibility Information Hub is an online platform created by CSRDG. It serves as a centralized space where comprehensive, up-to-date information on corporate social responsibility, sustainable development, and responsible business practices, both globally and within Georgia, is compiled. This platform stands as the sole information web portal in Georgia dedicated to corporate social responsibility and corporate sustainability. It provides a diverse array of resources to aid in navigating this intricate subject.

The primary objective of the website is to share information and resources, fostering the promotion of knowledge and promoting the concept of CSR within the business sector and various societal groups. Moreover, it seeks to establish principles of sustainable development and responsible business practices in Georgia. Maintenance of the web platform csrgeorgia.com is an ongoing process. CSR web platform was updated on a regular basis. 12 posts reflecting trends and developments in the field of CSR globally and in Georgia have been prepared and posted in the [News section](#). Besides, the new section of the web platform [CSR Stakeholder Forum](#) has been created. the section includes 4 internal pages and hosts information related to the activities of the CSR Stakeholder forum, such as: Founding documents of the Forum; Information about Forum members; Developed recommendations; and information about meeting held.

In addition to its invaluable resources, the website includes The CSR blog which aims to elevate awareness regarding the principles of corporate social responsibility and sustainable development. In the year 2023, the platform featured several [news articles](#) actively shared across various social networks. Furthermore, these blogs, distributed on the CSR blog, were dispatched to its 400 subscribers, expanding the reach of valuable information and perspectives in the realm of corporate social responsibility.

During 2023, the site offered visitors valuable insights into various aspects of corporate responsibility, helping them to expand their understanding in this field.

Promote CSR Media Coverage

On December 20, 2023 the senior CSR expert conducted a lecture “CSR and Role of media ' for the students of the media faculty of Alter bridge University. The lecture was attended by 17 students. On October 5, 2023 the whole-day training (CSR and Role of Media) was conducted for 10 representatives of media organizations, who’s concept notes have been shortlisted for the second round.

CSR team developed the concept and materials for the CSR grant competition for Media and the competition for Media had been announced on May 11, 2023 with the deadline June 15, 2023

In total 13 concept notes have been submitted and 7 have been selected for the second stage and invited to submit the full project proposal. On December 14, 2023 the meeting of the grant committee for media grants was held. After discussions finally 4 winners of the grant competition have been revealed, representing three leading central media and one regional media. The implementation of the projects started in January, 2024.

Pro bono direction

Activities carried out within the program

For corporations, pro bono services represent a manifestation of their social responsibility, specifically, a facet of employee volunteering known as corporate volunteering.

Pro bono services leverage the expertise and intellectual resources of the private sector, making them available to organizations dedicated to community welfare. This approach enables companies to assist segments of society whose interests align with and are expressed by various civil organizations.

The "Georgian Pro Bono Network" functions as an informal association comprising local and international companies operating in Georgia. These companies are driven by the desire to utilize their professional expertise and resources for the betterment of society. The network's primary objective is to integrate corporate expertise into the pursuit of public goals.

Established officially in October 2015, the "Georgian Pro Bono Network" was initiated by the "Center of Strategic Research and Development of Georgia" with the support of MitOst e.V. Foundation, BMW Herbert Quandt Foundation, and Taproot Foundation.

At present, the network boasts [28 member companies](#), the details of which can be accessed at our website.

Pro Bono Marathons

The Pro Bono Marathon 2023 was held on July 6 after the months of preparations and consultations with 27 participants. 14 pro bono consultants from eight different companies participated in

Marathon and prepared graphical presentation videos for 4 CSOs. [Video presentations](#) were held at the end of the event.

ProBono mediations

During the reporting period, CSRDG mediated [28 Pro Bono cases](#). There are: pro bono workshops, masterclasses, as well as individual consultations to respond the needs of the CSOs, CBOs and CEs on the following issues: Accounting & finance, legal, HR, marketing and communications, technologies, interior design.

28 pro bono projects have been implemented during the reporting period involving 16 business companies and 58 professionals. Overall, 669 pro bono hours have been spent. Consequently, 30 non-profit organizations (9 CSOs, 10 CBO's and 11 social enterprises) received pro bono support and solved 41 problems.

The 6 issues of Pro Bono Newsletter ([Newsletter#13](#), [Newsletter#14](#), [Newsletter#15](#), [Newsletter#16](#), [Newsletter#17](#), [Newsletter#18](#)) were prepared and sent to the Georgian Pro Bono Network Members during the reporting period.

Supporting CSR among businesses (CSR Workshops, SME meetings)

The masterclass - Sustainable Business: Driving the Global Agenda was held on May 30, 2023 at the Biltmore Hotel Tbilisi. It was designed for the applicant companies of Meliora 2022 and attracted 45 participants. The speakers of the masterclass were talking about recent sustainability trends globally, as well as in their countries.

10 different awareness rising meetings were held for SME representatives.

On April 24, 2023 meeting with the Director and communication manager of the SME Data Analysis laboratory has been held to inform them about essence of CSR and pro bono as well as our ongoing activities. As a result the company promised to consider possibility of supporting Pro Bono Network and decided to support Meliora 2022 by providing a free service to the winner.

Awareness rising meeting with the small enterprise Naturapharm has been conducted on July 11. CSR senior expert explained to the company representatives' main principles of responsible business behavior, how to define main impacts and material topics and what is the process for developing CSR strategy. The second awareness rising meeting with the small enterprise Naturapharm has been conducted on August 11 upon their request to clarify certain issues on CSR self-assessment and global B movement of the responsible business.

On December 22, 2023 a meeting with representatives of Tinart Academy was held. The possible directions of CSR activities of Tinart Academy have been discussed. Pro Bono activities were defined as most appropriate.

January 31, 2024 – Meeting with representative of Hotsale has been held. The extant and possible future CSR activities have been discussed. As a result of the meeting Hotsale decided to join Georgian Pro Bono network and submit an application to Meliora Awards.

Besides awareness rising meetings on CSR have been held with SME VINTYLATOR (January 18), SME Green Energy (January 23), SME Clipart (January 24), SME Discover Georgia (January 25), SME Onesoft (January 29), SME Poyivim (January 30).

Mater- Class/Networking events

On January 24, 2024 the annual networking meeting of the Georgian Pro Bono Network was held. 19 representatives of different companies attended the meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to summarize the activities carried out by the member companies of the network in 2023, to define future plans. For the second year the internal Network contest was held, which revealed the Pro bono Leader company and Pro Bono Champion Employee (company and employee that were most active in 2023 in providing pro bono services). Director of the Japanese Pro bono mediator company, Service Grant Japan, which is a member of Global PB Network, Ikuma Saga, joined the meeting via zoom to share experience of the Global Pro Bono Summit held in Tokyo in 2023 and global trends in Pro Bono movement.

At this year's event, the following were identified and awarded:

- Pro Bono Leader Company of the year – Credo Bank
- Pro Bono Champion Employee of the Year - employee of MFO MBC - Mari Papuashvili

Such activities encourage the members of the pro bono network to take on more pro bono cases throughout the year.

Pro Bono Network to Support Community Organizations

In October-November, a significant pro bono mediation project unfolded, uniting six business companies and six civil activists.

The initiative focused on preparing nominees for the "Best Community Initiative" contest, an integral component of the "Community Leaders' Forum," unveiled as "Community Leaders' Forum 2023" on November 16.

During the competition, civil activists presented their projects to the jury and the audience. Company representatives, providing pro bono assistance, played a pivotal role in presenting compelling stories, highlighting key aspects, and crafting engaging presentations.

Six companies actively engaged in the pro bono mediation process: Bank of Georgia, TBC Bank, Credo Bank, APM Terminal, MBC and Tegeta Holding.

All contestants received gifts and symbolic prizes from sponsors and partner companies

Overall Achievements of the Program in 2023:

- The "Georgian Responsible Business Competition Meliora " was successfully announced for the fifth consecutive year.
- An international group has conducted “National Framework for CSR in Georgia: Recommendations to the Georgian Government”
- Several television and radio programs were produced to highlight and showcase the program's activities, while numerous articles about CSR and the program were published in online publications.
- A series of consultation meetings, including the Pro Bono Marathon and annual networking meeting were conducted as part of the pro bono mediation framework.

Social Entrepreneurship Development Program

Since 2009, the center has strategically prioritized the Social Entrepreneurship Development Program. Through entrepreneurial support, we aim to address society's crucial challenges by fostering sustainable and entrepreneurial social networks. We collaborate with civil, private, and governmental organizations to contribute to societal development. We firmly believe that entrepreneurship is a means to ensure social welfare, economic inclusion, and to address public and environmental challenges.

Program Objectives:

The program focuses on two key strategic directions:

1. Strengthening Social Enterprises in Georgia and Promoting New Ventures: Enhancing the
2. Operational Environment for Social Enterprises

Activities carried out in 2023 and results achieved:

Our focus was on strengthening existing social enterprises in Georgia and fostering the creation of new ventures. This involved implementing tailored financial and technical support mechanisms for both established and startup social enterprises.

The selection of enterprises for the support program was carried out through a competitive process. Once selected, the program team engaged with the chosen enterprises for a duration of 2-4 years.

In 2023, within the framework of the program, we worked with 28 social enterprises, of which 6 enterprises were financed in 2021, 3 startups (Lurji Alaverdi, Tanave, Orbis Bude), and 3 development enterprises (Potteria, Ethnodesign, Babale). In 2022, 10 social enterprises, 6 startups (Ringovet, Latliishd, Komli, Stem-Space, Archivi, Profesio) and 4 development enterprises (Agama, Kafune, Redo, Champi) were financed. In 2023, 9 start-up enterprises (Nebula, Creative Tours, Fantasmagoria, Limena, Tanadgoma, Tech-Gogo, Ulevi, Amigato, Rashovda) and 5 development enterprises (MHF footwear enterprise, Istorali, Tene, Champi and Babale (the last 2) were added to the enterprises financed in the program. The enterprise was transferred to the stock portfolio in 2023)).

- Selection of target social enterprises
- In 2023, the grant competition was announced twice:
- within the project "Collaborate for Impact - development of social entrepreneurship and social investments towards economic and social cohesion in the Eastern Partnership".

Selection Process for Target Social Enterprises

194 participants attended the information meetings about the competition. A total of 52 applications were submitted, from which an independent grant committee selected 12 ideas. The selected teams underwent an intensive training program attended by 87 participants (29 unique participants). At the final stage of the competition, 9 complete business applications were prepared, 3 of which received funding.

| # | Social enterprise | Project description | year |
|---|-------------------|---|------|
| | Rashovda | The mission of "Rashovda" is to promote the development of highland settlements by strengthening the vulnerable population of Upper Racha. Rashovda contributes to improving the standard of living of the local population by developing tourism-economic activities and introducing innovative, community-based tourism practices. At the first stage, the enterprise will offer food services (cafe) to tourists, to which overnight services will be added. | 2023 |
| | Ulevi Ceramic | The mission of the social enterprise "Ulevi" is to resocialize and economically empower individuals stigmatized by age. "Ulevi" creates an environment free from age-related stereotypes through its ceramics factory in the village of Martvili. Here, local residents over 60 years old are taught the art of ceramics, providing them with employment opportunities and fostering socialization. | 2023 |
| | Amigato | "Amigato" was created by the animal shelter "Pet is". The mission of the social enterprise is to improve the quality of life of homeless cats through sterilization-castration and raising the awareness of citizens on this issue. The enterprise will produce various products adapted to the needs of cats, and the received amount will be used for sterilization-castration of homeless cats, maintenance and public awareness events. | 2023 |

For active social enterprises

In 2003, the foundation was laid for the cooperation between the Center for Strategic Research and Development of Georgia (CSR DG) and Basisbank. The purpose of this partnership is to strengthen active social enterprises in Georgia that aim to economically and socially integrate people with

disabilities and special needs into society. This is achieved through employment, education, skills development, and empowerment. As part of this cooperation, we provided financial and technical support to the social enterprise M.H.F Shoes & Accessories. In 2023, the total amount of grants issued to social enterprises was 682,602 GEL. Support for startups amounted to at least 351,211 GEL, while development grants totaled 331,391 GEL, including 310,281 GEL for enterprises in the portfolio.

Consultations and Customized Technical Support:

Within the framework of the program, we provide social enterprises with tailored technical assistance to meet their needs.

We offered trainings to interested social entrepreneurs: effective sales, HACCP requirements, effective presentation, introduction to social entrepreneurship, social impact planning and management, marketing, financial management and more.

More than 50 consultations given to social enterprises covered various topics: business plan improvement, accounting and financial management; Communications strategy, branding, product development and design, social media management, HACCP requirements, etc.

More than 400 social entrepreneurs and interested persons participated in the technical support events.

Improving the operating environment of social enterprises

Activities for improving the operating environment of social enterprises are carried out in several directions:

- Promotion of social entrepreneurship among young people

In March 2023, in order to popularize social entrepreneurship among young people, the first stage of the contest in a renewed format was summarized and the best young ambassador was identified, who became Ana Akhlouri from Mtskheta-Mtianeti.

The event was held in Orbeliani Palace, hosted by the President of Georgia, attended by the EU Ambassador and more than 90 guests from all sectors. The event and the competition as a whole got a great response. At the unveiling event, the admission of the second stream was announced and information meetings started in 6 regions, which were attended by about 200 young people.

The competition includes several stages:

Over 200 young people expressed interest in the announced competition and submitted applications. From these, 25 participants were selected to attend the summer school of social entrepreneurship. Out of 21 project applications, the top 6 projects were chosen and each received financial support of 700 euros. Until December 2023, the ambassadors implemented their projects in the regions of Guria, Kakheti, Svaneti, Imereti, Kvemo Kartli, and Samtskhe-Javakheti.

The competition results and final event are scheduled for February 2024, where the winner will be announced.

My goal is that the young people living around me have more opportunities for education, entertainment, recreation and organizing their free time. " - Irakli Ambassador in Imereti.

I want to bring the idea of social entrepreneurship to as many people as possible, so that they can use this knowledge to solve the surrounding social problems. - Tekla, from Kvemo Kartli

Importance and achievements of Social enterprises B2B exhibition

On October 27, 2023, the 4th B2B exhibition of social enterprises was held. The exhibition aimed to deepen business relations between social enterprises and business companies, as well as to foster collaboration across different sectors. The event promoted social entrepreneurship and supported the development of social enterprises in Georgia.

As a result of the event:

- 49 social and green enterprises presented their products and services to the society;
- More than 600 representatives from more than 150 business companies and organizations visited the exhibition.
- More than 200 B2B meetings were held
- 34 partnership agreements were signed, the total value of which is more than 357,000 GEL.
- 9 social enterprises made plans to cooperate with each other.
- Social enterprises sold more than 17,000 GEL of products.

Supporters of the 2023 event were:

- "TBC for Business" - unique sponsor of the exhibition
- "Tegeta Green Planet" - subsidiary company of Tegeta Holding - golden sponsor of the exhibition and representative of green enterprises;
- hotel chain "Inn Hospitality" - golden sponsor of the event;
- Algi Audit - silver sponsor of the event
- Socar - silver sponsor of the event
- European Fund for
- Southeast Europe (EFSE) development program - supporting the direction of technical and expert assistance to social enterprises.

Impact fund Actio

Since 2021, the center's team has actively worked on developing the concept of an impact fund and promoting impact-oriented investing. By 2022, the concept had taken its final form, leading to the official presentation of the "Actio" fund on June 22. 2023 was an exceptionally active year for the Impact Foundation. The campaign additionally attracted 1 impact investor and 2 impact supporters, therefore the fund has mobilized support of \$87,000 from 3 impact investors, 1 impact partner and 2 impact supporters at the end of the year.

In 2023, 4 social enterprises joined the portfolio of Impact Fund. These social enterprises are: Babale, Istorali, Tene and Champi.

The Impact Fund provides social enterprises with both technical assistance and financial support in the amount of 50,000 euros. An important component of the mentioned support is the evaluation of the social impact and results of enterprises.

It should be noted that together with the significantly increased grant funding (40 thousand euros), Actio introduced an innovative financing mechanism adapted to the needs of social enterprises - a 0% loan. All four enterprises in the fund's portfolio benefited from the maximum amount of the offered loan (10,000 euros), and "Babale" returned the full amount of the loan in the first year.

In 2023, EUR 110,049 was granted as a grant, and EUR 40,000 as a loan, to the enterprises in the portfolio.

| # | Social enterprise | Project description | year |
|---|-------------------|--|------|
| 1 | Istorali | <p>The social enterprise "Istorali" was founded in 2000 by the International Art Center. Its mission is to promote the economic sustainability and raise awareness of Georgia's tangible and intangible cultural heritage. The Istorali collection currently includes about 200 items created using metal sculpture (silver, brass, bronze), ceramics, and textile printing techniques. These gift products are inspired by museum collections and aim to popularize Georgian cultural heritage.</p> <p>Through cooperation with Actio, the Istorali's workshop will be renovated and organized. This will enable the employment of 18 pupils and students, who will improve their knowledge and skills in metal sculpture and foundry activities. Additionally, two new collections will be created, and metal sculpting master classes will be developed, contributing to public awareness of the importance and historical-cultural value of traditional Georgian crafts.</p> | 2023 |
| 2 | Babale | Babale was founded in 2015 by the association of parents of children with Down syndrome. The enterprise initially functioned as a project. Since July 2018, it has existed as a social enterprise of "Georgian Down Syndrome Association" LLC "Babale". | 2023 |

| | | | |
|---|--------|--|------|
| | | <p>"Babale" combines 2 spaces - a creative workshop, where young people with Down's syndrome receive education using a special methodology, get a job, create products, and a salon - where works are sold. The social enterprise produces both decorative and practical items of wood, ceramics and textiles: chests, stationery, bags, accessories, various figurines, holiday items and other practical and decorative items. Babale's socks and kitchen accessories (table, apron and hot pot) stand out from the mass-produced products. In terms of service, Babale offers workshops for making decorative items to tourist groups.</p> <p>With support of Actio, Babale plans to set up wood, ceramic and textile workshops, which will allow them to engage more young people with Down syndrome in the education process and promote their employment both locally and in the mainstream labor market. Within the framework of the project, Babale will create art therapy, vocational training and supportive employment programs tailored to the needs of young people with Down syndrome;</p> <p>30 young people with Down syndrome will undergo art therapy and orientation programs; 20 young people with down syndrome will go through the internship program; 5 young people with down syndrome will be employed in Babale, and 10 youth outside Babale;</p> | |
| 3 | Tene | <p>The mission of "Tene" is to combat plastic pollution and raise public awareness about environmental issues. Tene is the first Georgian company to produce eco-friendly USB chargers using single-use secondary plastic. With new investments, Tene aims to improve and expand its existing waste management system. This expansion will increase the number of plastic collection and distribution points and enable plastic collection in various cities across Western and Eastern Georgia, as well as in Tbilisi.</p> | 2023 |
| 4 | Chempi | <p>The mission of "Chempi" is to promote the socio-economic strengthening of villages near the occupation line in the Gori district and to advance skilled production through the creation of innovative, healthy snacks. Chempi focuses on employing women living along the dividing line and supports local farms by purchasing their products. Additionally, Chempi is committed to developing skilled production.</p> <p>Supported by the project from Actio, Chempi plans to expand its economic activities and enhance its social impact. The enterprise intends to purchase new drying equipment to increase productivity and expand sales in both local and international markets. Over the next five years, Chempi aims to retrain up to 50 people, employ over 40 women, provide internships for up to 15 young people, and increase the number of partner farmers to 35. Furthermore, efficient production processes will be developed, and up to 40,000 kilograms of apple waste will be processed.</p> | 2023 |

International Conference on Impact Investing

The year 2023 was notable for the fact that, for the first time, on June 28-29, a large-scale international impact-oriented investment conference "Impact in the Neighborhood" was held in Georgia. The event was hosted in partnership with the European Venture Philanthropy Association (EVPA), the Center for Strategic Research and Development of Georgia (CSRDG), the Actio impact fund and the Civil Society Institute (CSI). To promote and share experience in sustainable development of social entrepreneurship, the guests of the event had the opportunity to attend the thematic sessions and panel discussions within the framework of the event, where the leaders of the impact funds, in an informal environment, shared their experience of investing. Business leaders interested in approaches and creating long-term positive social impact.

Event speakers from the Central and Eastern Europe, Middle East and North Africa regions presented successful examples of building and developing impact investing and social entrepreneurship ecosystems, including in conflict and complex socio-political contexts. Conference participants discussed different experiences of creating long-term approaches with multi-sector partnerships, both with corporations and the financial sector, as well as with municipalities and public agencies; They discussed opportunities for increasing access to finance and tapping new markets for businesses with social goals, as well as empowering vulnerable groups and ways of future cooperation.

The conference was attended by 200 international and local guests from more than 40 countries - representatives of corporate and impact funds, impact accelerators, business and public sector, as well as impact investors, people interested in corporate philanthropy and social investment issues. The official reception of the event was co-hosted by the City Hall of Tbilisi Municipality.

Within the scope of the conference, 13 videos were prepared, featuring local and foreign impact investors discussing the importance of developing this field and the positive social and environmental impacts, which are created by impact investors funds.

In order to popularize actions and impact-oriented investing, the website www.actio.ge was created, articles and videos were prepared.

Project: Skill Building and Innovative Job Opportunities for Regional Development of Georgia

The Overall Objective of the project is “Developing and maintaining local human capital in order to promote social and economic empowerment in Guria, Kakheti and Kvemo Kartli regions.” In order to reach the goal, increasing regional potential in formal and informal education is planned under two specific objectives: to develop new employment opportunities via labour market demand-driven skill building for jobseekers and innovative linkages between jobseekers and potential employers; to equip the young population in selected regions studying in schools and VETs with sufficient skills and knowledge to use relevant employment opportunities.

The project is being implemented by the Center for Strategic Research and Development of Georgia (CSRDG), in partnership with the Young Pedagogues' Union (YPU) and the Georgian Civil Development Association (GCDA).

Project Duration: 39 months; 2020-2024

Project Budget: 925,255 EUR

Donor Organization: European Union in Georgia

Results achieved within the project by the end of 2023:

- Six **Learning and Employment Support Centers (LESC)** were established, enabling employment for 301 locals and providing essential services like training, retraining, and skill development to over 1,628 job seekers.
- Six **Work Integration Social Enterprises (WISE)** were funded, aiding the integration of less competitive individuals into the workforce. As a result 32 individuals have been employed;
- Two **business projects** received funding to generate new employment opportunities in targeted regions. This has resulted in the recruitment of 14 new employees
- **The Idea and Entrepreneurship Lab (IEL)** was introduced across 28+6 schools, benefiting over 737+87 students by deepening their knowledge in various professions and nurturing entrepreneurial skills.
- An ongoing partnership exists with five **VETs** aimed at enhancing their organizational capabilities.

Learning and Employment Support Centers (LESC) are located in six cities across three Georgian regions: Guria (Ozurgeti and Chokhatauri), Kvemo Kartli (Bolnisi and Tetritskaro), and Kakheti (Telavi and Lagodekhi). The LESC provide a comprehensive suite of services tailored for local job seekers, ranging from career counseling to professional knowledge and skill development. By establishing potential employer liaisons and exploring remote job opportunities, the centers foster innovative and inclusive employment via cross-sector collaboration.

The LESC offer specialized training across four domains: Entrepreneurial Skills Course for business enthusiasts, Skills for Jobs Course for those in job search, MS Office Programme Course, and a course for those interested in freelancing or remote work.

Throughout the past year, the LESC have made notable progress in equipping job seekers with skills aligned to market demands and linking them to potential employers. Their efforts have yielded significant outcomes as reflected by several [success stories](#).

Key outcomes of LESC's by the end of 2023:

- Services delivered to 1628 individuals.
- Over 1200 participants attended the training sessions.
- 301 individuals secured employment.
- 34 comprehensive courses were executed.
- In collaboration with Beka's School, more than 75 individuals were enrolled in English courses.
- Goethe Institute generously offered complimentary slots for German language courses to four of our beneficiaries.

Work Integration Social Enterprise (WISE):

To foster employment opportunities for vulnerable groups within the target regions, a grant competition led to the financing of six Social Enterprises (SE): **Blue Alaverdi, Tanave, Orbis Bude, profesio, Redo, Techgogo**. These enterprises collectively received funding of 14,000 euros.

Social enterprise financed in 2023:

- **Tech-Gogo** – digital social enterprise based in Marneuli, Kvemo Kartli region, Georgia, is on a mission for the economic empowerment of women and girls. Focused on providing high-standard digital education and employment opportunities, the project is a groundbreaking initiative in a region where the majority of the population is Azerbaijani, an ethnic minority in Georgia. Originally known as We2tech, the project underwent rebranding to TechGogo, meaning "girls in technologies" in the Georgian language.

Project Goals: Digital Education: Provide high-standard digital education to women and girls in Marneuli, emphasizing graphic design/UX, social media management, and digital marketing courses. Employment Opportunities: Create employment opportunities by connecting beneficiaries with reputable advertisement companies for practical experience. Market Outreach: Utilize video advertisements and meetings with local business representatives to offer digital services and a digital marketing strategy to the community.

During 2023, CSRDG has been actively monitoring and supporting Social Enterprises (SEs) financed within the project. They have undergone the following progress:

- **NNLE Tetrtskaro Youth Center;- SE "Orbis Bude** - Branding consultation was completed in early March. An active Facebook page was created with the support of Tegeta. In addition, with the help of an expert invited as part of the technical support, three hiking and agrotours were created for the enterprise and six guides were trained on safety standards. SE officially opened in May and received more than 50 guests. In July, the SE hosted one group from a school and another from a CSO. Currently operating in test mode, SE "Orbis Bude" has created

employment opportunities for locals as Armenian bread bakers, cheese makers, and guides for agro tours.

- **NNLE Profesio - Center for personal and professional development** - SE opened in June and hosted over 10 music and cultural activities organized by youngsters. It employed six youngsters, with four as core staff and two as interns, out of which five are representatives of the target groups. As part of technical support, an expert was invited to create a brand book for the SE. This social cafe in Rustavi is dedicated to nurturing professional skills and facilitating the employment of members from large families. Envisioned as a hub for local youth, it offers a space for socializing, engaging in diverse activities, and initiating projects. During the reporting year, the focus was on equipping and setting up the cafe's kitchen.

In 2023, Social Enterprises employed 23 individuals, bringing the total number of employed people in WISE to 32 by the end of the year.

Grant Competition for Business Companies

During this reporting period CSRDG continued to support the business projects funded through the grant competition, which was announced to stimulate and support intersectoral collaboration aimed at fostering new employment opportunities.

SoftLab - implemented by "Softgen", The project aims to train IT specialists who will be competitive in both the Georgian and international markets. In collaboration with the Ozurgeti Municipality, suitable auditoriums were allocated for the testing and educational processes of the soft lab. One workspace of the tech park was equipped with the necessary technical tools, where students attend programming classes who lack the necessary infrastructure at home to participate in the lessons. Sixty-four applicants began the training. After successfully completing the training course, Softgen employed eight of them.

Language Laboratory It is a modern standard foreign language teaching center. The project aims to create a modern educational environment in Rustavi, Kvemo Kartli, that provides local residents with access to quality education. The project's goal is to promote employment, economic empowerment, and career development. Additionally, as part of the company's social responsibility, the language lab initiated a partnership with Caritas Georgia to train orphans and disadvantaged adolescents in English. As a result, 10 adolescents were taught English free of charge. Additionally, within the corporate social responsibility framework of the company, the Language Laboratory offered complimentary retraining for vulnerable groups - the center have trained in English the trained 3 women victims of violence , 7 socially vulnerable teenagers and 10 dependent beneficiaries of Rustavi Homeless Children's Center. Due to the project's implementation, 6 people have been employed.

Idea and Entrepreneurship Lab (IEL)

To fulfill the project's objectives, entrepreneurship and career development clubs have been established in target region schools. These clubs introduce students to entrepreneurial skill-building programs. As part of this initiative, 28+6 schools have launched the IEL, engaging students as young as 12. The lab focuses on enhancing their knowledge and aptitudes, ensuring they make informed decisions about their future professions and fostering successful career paths. At the end of the reporting period, the number of club members amounts to 737 + 87.

During the reporting period, **70** additional **independent school initiatives** were identified and supported, aimed at diversifying sessions, enhancing practical skills, and increasing parental involvement. Professionals from various fields participated in **19 meetings** to share best practices and offer career insights to students. Monitoring of **13 projects** financed through a micro-grant competition for school initiatives has been completed. 10 projects funded in the second stage of the project have been completed.

Sustainability vision for 'Ideas and Entrepreneurship Labs' was finalized, after individual consultations with 18 partner general educational institutions. Most of the schools plan to maintain the club format introduced through the project for the next three years. They also plan to involve strengthened adolescents from the first phase of club activities in facilitation processes with more intensity. This approach will enhance peer education practices and significantly support the establishment of youth self-governance bodies.

From April 23rd to 29th, an educational tour to Belgium was carried out at the initiative of YPU and with the involvement of CSRDG. The goal was to introduce supportive services for the practice of developing entrepreneurial skills, career planning, and vocational guidance at the preschool and general education levels.

In 2023, three regional and one national conference were held to share the project's outcomes and best practices with interested parties. Over 317 people attended in total."

The [guide](#) "How to Implement Entrepreneurial Education and Career Planning and Guidance in Schools" and the [manual](#) "Project Ideas for Developing Entrepreneurial Competence and Promoting Vocational Guidance in General Education" were published. Notably, the Ministry of Education published both editions on the web portal EL.GE, created with the support of the LEPL Education Management Information System, which will facilitate their dissemination and widespread use.

VET

Active collaboration with 5 VETs in the target regions is ongoing to bolster their organizational development. The goal is to foster the creation of programs that align with the needs of the local labor market.

CSRDG provided significant support to vocational education Centers. From January to April, with its assistance, the Marneuli Medical College developed a short-term vocational program called 'Management of the Educational Process in Preschool Institutions.' The program underwent the authorization process.

During the reporting period, CSRDG helped the Marneuli Medical College develop the 'IT Support Specialist' program. The program went through the authorization process.

On April 20th, a needs assessment meeting was held with College 'AIS,' which identified the need for support in creating the college's brand book. With the help of consultants, the document was developed to ensure effective communication with the target audience.

Success Stories

In 2023, the European Union prepared 3 reports about outstanding successful initiatives within the project “Skill Building and Innovative Job Opportunities for the Regional Development of Georgia”.

1. [Tech-Gogo- Social Enterprise](#)
2. [Orbise bude – Social Enterprise](#)
3. [Ia davdishvili – Freelancer](#)

[The short video](#) summarizing the project's achievements was prepared for the closing event held on December 1, 2023.

Consumer Rights Protection Program

The Strategic Research and Development Center of Georgia initiated efforts towards consumer rights protection in 2009. The primary objective of this program is to establish an effective system for protecting consumer rights in Georgia.

Main Activities of the Department:

- 1. Raising Public Awareness*
- 2. Monitoring of State Structures and Consumer Market*
- 3. Advocacy of Legislative Reforms*
- 4. Consumer Consulting and Legal Assistance*

Raising Public Awareness Regarding consumer Rights

The program prepared two online quizzes focused on citizens' appeals to the National Food Agency and food safety. These quizzes were published on the online platform on.ge.

Additionally, the program posted 77 news articles about user rights violations on its website, momxmarebeli.ge, and its Facebook page. These violations were identified by the program and other reliable organizations, including cases involving harmful consumer products.

The program also conducted 13 seminars on various food safety issues in the cities of Telavi, Sighnaghi, Gurjaani, Gori, Kutaisi, Kharagauli, Terjola, Batumi, Zugdidi, Lanchkhuti, and Ozurgeti. A total of 382 people attended these seminars, including representatives from non-governmental and community organizations, initiative groups, media, commercial organizations, local authorities, and educational institutions.

The program conducted a two-day seminar for media representatives focused on the food safety in the country, state control measures, and major challenges. The seminar was attended by 20 representatives from 18 different media outlets.

Additionally, the program organized two seminars on country regulations and food safety challenges for regional public organizations. These seminars were attended by 30 representatives from 24 organizations.

Under the program's initiative, research organizations conducted quantitative and qualitative studies on the knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors of the Georgian population regarding food safety and related ongoing reforms. The research report includes specific recommendations for Georgian state institutions, donors, international bodies, non-governmental organizations, and private sector entities working in the field of food safety. These recommendations aim to enhance public awareness and participation in food safety issues.

The research reports were published on the program's website, momxmarebeli.ge. Additionally, 200 copies were printed in Georgian and 60 copies in English, and distributed to relevant state, private, and public organizations. The research findings were also publicly presented to interested parties, with 51 people attending the presentation.

The program consistently attracts media attention. Its activities are frequently covered, and program staff are often asked to comment on various consumer rights issues. In 2023, there were 80 such instances of media coverage, including on television, radio, online platforms, and print media in Tbilisi and across the regions of Georgia.

Monitoring of State Structures and Consumer Market

With funding from donor organizations, citizen donations and own funds, CSRDG and its project partner regional public organizations tested 334 samples of various food products, some in the laboratory, and some visually - labels and storage conditions. 27 violations of food safety or labeling requirements were identified, information about which was provided to relevant entrepreneurs and/or the National Food Agency, and information was also published on the program's website and Facebook page.

The program continued to monitor the publication of control results conducted by the National Food Agency and identified several deficiencies:

- National Food Agency still does not have a practice of publishing public warnings about dangerous products.
- In the quarterly and annual control results, the National Food Agency has not published hundreds of control results for 2019-2021. Following the CSRDG's appeal, the data for 2019 and 2021 were released; however, the data for 2020 was neither released nor the reasons for the gap explained.

The program also continued to monitor the investigation of dairy product adulteration cases (using vegetable fat) and concluded that, despite some progress, the efforts made by public agencies in this area are insufficient. This conclusion is supported by the program's laboratory studies, which detected vegetable fat in 5 out of 20 samples tested.

In cooperation with regional partner organizations, the program implemented the monitoring campaign "Milk and Milk Products Related Safety Hazards and State Control in Georgia." This campaign included qualitative research that utilized various tools, such as interviews, documentation studies, food laboratory analyses, and visual observations (including labeling and storage conditions) which was mentioned above.

As a result of monitoring, it was revealed that the extent of state control of the safety of milk and milk products is very limited.

The research report includes a wide range of recommendations for Georgian state institutions, donors working in the field of food safety, international, non-governmental and private organizations.

Major Achievements

As a result of notifying the National Food Agency about the violations identified by the CSRDG and its project partner organizations, the National Food Agency conducted inspections of the relevant business operators. This led to the identification of 16 violations, and the entrepreneurs were instructed to correct them and faced the sanctions stipulated by law.

Additionally, following guidance from CSRDG project partner organizations, merchants voluntarily corrected 8 food safety and labeling violations.

Advocacy for Legislative Reforms in Consumer Rights Protection

The research reports mentioned above include a wide range of recommendations aimed at improving the food safety situation in the country, including proposals for legislative changes. These recommendations have been reviewed by the relevant state institutions and, hopefully, will be considered in the implementation of state policy in the field of food safety.

Consumer Counseling and Legal Assistance

The program provided 124 consultations to citizens on various legal and non-legal issues, which helped them protect their rights and interests as consumers.

Promoting Open Governance direction is targeted at supporting cooperation between government and civil sector to introduce open and needs-based governance in Georgia. In order to achieve program objectives, we operate within two programs – Local Government Development Program, and Promoting European Integration Program.

Local Government Development Program – to introduce transparency, accountability and sustainable development principles into the governance process by local authorities.

Promoting the European Integration - to build CSO capacity to better identify, monitor and advocate for social, economic and cultural rights of citizens.

Local Government Development Program

Since 1998, we have been actively working on decentralization issues of governance systems. Years of work and many implemented initiatives made a significant contribution to the local self-government development.

Program activities

Our experts have prepared practical studies and assessment reports on topics such as promoting fiscal transparency, managing program expenditures for self-governing units, considering citizens' interests in municipal property management, introducing innovative democratic governance systems, and enhancing activities under Georgia's Decentralization Strategy Action. These efforts aim to increase citizen participation in decision-making processes. Through these studies and recommendations, we assist central and local institutions in solving problems. Additionally, we actively participate in reform initiatives and projects both locally and internationally.

A key aspect of CSRDG's approach is combining monitoring and consultation with self-governance bodies. By publicizing the main issues identified through our monitoring, we help local governments focus on and address these problems. Providing recommendations and technical assistance, including consultations and active collaboration with local self-governments, lays a solid foundation for their improvement.

In 2023, the Program focused on two main areas: monitoring the transparency and accountability frameworks of municipalities as their responsibilities and resources expand, and monitoring the implementation of EU-Georgia Association Agreement (AA) related reforms at the local level.

Data collection involved obtaining public information from local authorities and monitoring compliance with legal transparency norms. The analysis was based on the system developed by the Budget Monitoring Network, which reflects current legislative transparency procedures and timelines.

The program is still focused on eight criteria elaborated for the previous Program:

- Existence of the Public Advisory Council in the municipality;
- Number of public hearings regarding issues of a high public interest;
- Organization of off-site sessions of the municipality’s representative body;
- Informing the public about the upcoming meetings of the representative body in advance;
- Informing the public about committee meetings of the representative body in advance;
- Accountability of the members and officials of the representative body;
- Usefulness of the information available of the municipality’s web site;
- Informing the public about decisions made prior to approving the Action Plan.

CSRDG experts collected and analyzed information to assess the effectiveness of five target municipalities (Ozurgeti, Chokhatauri, Lanchkhuti, Telavi, Lagodekhi) within the Guria and Kakheti regions. The requested materials primarily included:

- Minutes of Sakrebulo sittings and standing committee meetings held in 2023
- Materials of administrative proceedings
- Information on meetings between Sakrebulo members and citizens/electorate in 2023
- Expenditure details incurred by Sakrebulo members under the “Expenditure of the functioning Sakrebulo member” budget line for the same period

Additionally, information posted on Sakrebulo websites and other publicly available sources was periodically checked and analyzed.

In order to support proper institutionalization of basic administrative procedures at local municipalities, 18 recommendations were submitted to target LG representatives by program experts. To support the efficient ways of implementing submitted recommendations and provide consultations and expert advice 7 separate special consultation meetings were held with the representatives of local authorities of the target regions.

The mentioned recommendations mainly concerned the following topics:

- Increase the transparency and accountability of activities held by authorities;
- Fulfillment of obligations to proactively disclose public information;
- Elaboration of a strategy with accompanying action plan, in order to increase transparency and good faith of authorities;
- Creation and implementation of guarantees of citizen engagement forms;
- Procedures for co-funding of projects with social mission and allocation of specific funds for that matter in LG budgets;
- Municipal waste management.

12 submitted recommendations were accepted / taken in account by target municipalities during the reporting period. Based on these recommendations, Sakrebulo has approved 16 significant types of regulations/normative acts.

CSRDG experts continued to monitor implementation of the approved waste management municipal plans in three target municipalities of Ozurgeti, Telavi and Lagodekhi and conducted and conducted field monitoring to assess the implementation of waste management action plans. With the involvement of community groups, three important waste management issues were monitored in the field: Inventory and remediation of natural landfills Frequency of garbage bin cleaning and the placement of new garbage bunkers in the municipality Initiation of a source separation system for paper and plastic waste in the municipality. 6 months monitoring reports of implementation of waste management municipal plans with special recommendations for each three target municipalities were prepared. On this matter, 12 recommendations out of submitted 24 were accepted, among them 5 were significant types. In order to present monitoring reports on waste management 2 discussions were arranged with relevant stakeholders.

Promoting the European Integration Program

Since the signing of the EU-Georgia Association Agreement (EUAA) in 2014, CSRDG has been promoting the multifaceted engagement of Georgia's regional public organizations in monitoring and advocating for the timely and proper implementation of the agreement.

The purpose of this program is to inform the public about the obligations outlined in the Association Agreement. As it is crucial for civil society to oversee the implementation of the association agreement and call upon the authorities to fulfil it properly, it is imperative to involve more civil society organizations in the country's European integration efforts.

Main activities:

1. Preparation of expert assessments regarding the fulfilment of obligations outlined in the association agreement and visual representation of the progress made based on the obtained results.
2. Conducting training sessions for representatives of public organizations on matters related to the association agreement.
3. Providing open access to concise explanatory videos and addressing questions related to the association agreement.
4. Offering small grants (ranging from €5,000 to €10,000) to support monitoring and advocacy efforts at the local and regional levels for the fulfilment of obligations outlined in the association agreement.

Trainings for representatives of public organizations on association agreement issues

We conduct trainings on various topics within the association's agenda to strengthen public organizations and promote the country's European integration.

During the reporting period, two online trainings were conducted on environmental impact assessment and civil monitoring approaches related to fulfilling the obligations under the association agreement, particularly in energy efficiency. A total of 34 people participated in these trainings.

Open access to affiliate agreement short explanation videos and related questions

The Georgia-EU Association Agreement encompasses over 30 different fields, making it a voluminous and technically intricate document. To ensure that the public can easily access information about the commitments made within the framework of the Association Agreement in a user-friendly manner, we create short, engaging videos covering various aspects of the agreement's agenda. These videos are accompanied by explanatory materials and quiz questions to assess your understanding. You can visit the Asocireba page at <http://asocireba.ge>.

During 2023, 7 explanatory animations illustrating the topics outlined in the Association Agreement were prepared and published on the asocireba.ge website.

- Energy Union and Georgia <http://asocireba.ge/learn/?card=156>
- Public participation in public administration <https://www.asocireba.ge/learn/?card=159>
- Decentralization <https://www.asocireba.ge/learn/?card=163>
- What does a non-governmental organization need? <https://www.asocireba.ge/learn/?card=165>
- Prevention of corruption in public service <https://www.asocireba.ge/learn/?card=167>
- Public Service reform <https://www.asocireba.ge/learn/?card=169>
- Why cannot the “law of agents” be adopted? <https://www.asocireba.ge/learn/?card=171>

Small grants (€5,000–€10,000) for monitoring and advocacy at the local/regional level for the implementation of the obligation under the association agreement

To actively engage public organizations in advancing the country's European integration, we announce grant competitions to support monitoring and advocacy efforts aimed at fulfilling the obligations outlined in the Association Agreement.

During the reporting period, we organized one grant competition and awarded a total of 13 small grants about monitoring and advocating for the fulfillment of obligations under the association agreement. In five instances, the grant commission referred the applications to CSRDG's "Grants Laboratory" for further enhancement, and they were approved for funding only after significant improvements.

Preparation of expert assessments on the fulfillment of the obligations imposed by the association agreement and visualization of the state of fulfillment of the obligations imposed by the results obtained

In 2021-2023, the grantors prepared 22 reports assessing the fulfillment of obligations outlined in the Association Agreement. These reports were subsequently posted on the asocireba.ge website in 2023:

1. Five-year waste management plan of Aspindza municipality

Monitoring report - https://www.asocireba.ge/files/Tolerant_Aspindza_Waste_management.pdf

2. Anti-discrimination policy monitoring in self-governing bodies of Imereti

https://www.asocireba.ge/files/GTUC_BF_Gender_Equality_Imereti_Authorities.pdf

3. Monitoring of waste management in Gori and Kareli municipalities

https://www.asocireba.ge/files/WD_Waste_Management_Gori_Qareli.pdf

4. Research of cheese and Beef business operators in Imereti region

https://www.asocireba.ge/files/BSC_Cheese_Beef_Businessoperators_Research_Imereti.pdf

Cheese and Beef research of consumers in Imereti region

https://www.asocireba.ge/files/BSC_Cheese_Beef_Consumers_Research_Imereti.pdf

5. Assessment of the implementation of the 9th recommendation of the European Union

https://www.asocireba.ge/files/CCG_Femina_9th_Recommendation_assessment.pdf

6. Media coverage monitoring report of the EU 12-point plan implementation process

https://www.asocireba.ge/files/DVA_Media_Monitoring_Report.pdf

Georgia, Ukraine and Moldova - country policies to implement EU recommendations

https://www.asocireba.ge/files/DVA_3_countries_comparative_report.pdf

7. Monitoring of the activities of the Parliament in relation to issues of parliamentary control,

elections and justice https://www.asocireba.ge/files/GYLA_Parliament_monitoring_reportc.pdf

8. Monitoring report on compliance with food labeling/presentation and expiration date requirements in the Samegrelo region

https://www.asocireba.ge/files/SamegrelosXma_Food_Labelling_Monitoring_Report.pdf

9. Analysis of political polarization through social media - using LLM models

https://www.asocireba.ge/files/Mettamine_Polarization_LLM_12_discourses.pdf

10. Analysis of the European system of production of regional statistics

https://www.asocireba.ge/files/AYEG_Regional_Statistics_in_Europe.pdf

Analysis of the Georgian practice of production of regional and municipal statistics

https://www.asocireba.ge/files/AYEG_Georgian_System_of_Regional_Statistics.pdf

11. Georgian legislation related to energy efficiency, international obligations and assessment of their implementation in Abashi, Martvili and Khoni municipalities

https://www.asocireba.ge/files/Green_Region_Energy_Efficiency_Imereti.pdf

12. Waste management monitoring in Dusheti municipality

https://www.asocireba.ge/files/NCVP-WHF-Waste_Management_Dusheti.pdf

Waste management monitoring in Tianeti municipality

https://www.asocireba.ge/files/NCVP-WHF-Waste_Management_Tianeti.pdf

13. Monitoring of waste management plan in Adigeni municipality

https://www.asocireba.ge/files/Tolerant_Adigeni_Waste_management_Monitoring.pdf

14. Research on the needs of aquaculture in Georgia and recommendations for the development of the field https://www.asocireba.ge/files/Green_Sector_Aquaculture.pdf

15. Child protection and support

Monitoring of municipal departments in Telavi, Kvareli, Akhmeta and Gurjaani

https://www.asocireba.ge/files/Kakheti_Child_Protection_Municipal_Services.pdf

16. Assessment of implementation of several recommendations of the European Commission

https://www.asocireba.ge/files/DSRC_Recommendations_1_4_5_10.pdf

17. of the 4th recommendation of the European Union

(strengthening of anti-corruption mechanisms) performance monitoring

https://www.asocireba.ge/files/GeoDP_anticorruption_recommendation.pdf

18. Assessment of implementation of the 12 priorities of the European Commission on Georgia's application for joining the European Union

https://www.asocireba.ge/files/LAT_12_Recommendations_implementation_assessment_geo.pdf

19. Monitoring of waste management in Dusheti municipality

https://www.asocireba.ge/files/YRAU_Waste_Management_Dushetic.pdf

20. Access to environmental justice: analysis of 6 cases

https://www.asocireba.ge/files/GYLA-Imereti_Environmental_Justice.pdf

21. Research of chemical composition of vegetables and fruits sold in Imereti region on food safety indicators

<https://www.asocireba.ge/files/BSC-Kutaisi-vegetable-chemical-testing.pdf>

22. Monitoring of several categories of food labelling

<https://www.asocireba.ge/files/TDIG-Food-Labeling.pdf>

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