

# **Evaluation of two projects of the Czech Republic development cooperation with Georgia in the thematic areas „Governance and Civil Society Services“ and „General Environmental Protection“**

## **Summary**

### **Purpose of the evaluation**

This document aims to independently evaluate two related multi-annual projects supported by the Czech Development Cooperation (CDC) in Georgia in the sector of public governance and civic society / general protection of environment, whose focus was to preserve the environmental as well as cultural values of the specific region of Tusheti. Final conclusions and recommendations will be highly relevant for future identification and implementation of projects within the multi-sectoral objective “Sustainable development of mountainous regions” formulated in the Bilateral programme of cooperation between Czech Republic and Georgia for period 2018 – 2023.

### **Description of evaluated intervention and context of the evaluation**

Objects of the evaluation are two projects, whose implementation was co-funded by the CDC:

- First project, “Preparation of Management Plan for Tusheti Protected Landscape”, was aimed at elaboration of the Management Plan of the Tusheti Protected Landscape and, furthermore, formulation of guidelines for elaboration of Management Plans for this category of protected areas in general. Specific activities, such as data collection, community outreach, analysis of gathered data, training and further capacity building, were implemented in the scope of this project. Its key Georgian partner was the municipality of Akhmeta, founder of the administrative unit – Tusheti Protected Landscape Administration (TPLA).
- Second evaluated project was a follow-up initiative, its aim was to implement selected measures of the finalized Management Plan in practice. The project “Implementation of Selected Measures from the Management Plan for the Tusheti Protected Landscape” was thus focused on measures in the fields of tourist infrastructure, monitoring of species and inventory of significant natural phenomena. In the scope of this project the following activities were implemented: proposition of the system of trail marking and delimitation of the basic network of tourist trails, including its marking in the territory, mapping of traditional toponyms, presentation and promotion of the protected landscape, etc.

A significant number of other initiatives supported by CDC as well as other donors were implemented in the region, which are not the subject of this evaluation. However, it is necessary to consider these as context.

### **Evaluation team**

Evaluation was carried out by HaskoningDHV Czech Republic Ltd in close cooperation with significant local actor, Tusheti Development Fund (TDF). Representatives of TDF are members of Tusheti community, however, they also cooperate with a number of international and national donors on developmental projects implemented for the benefit of Tusheti region aiming at facilitation of socio-

economic and environmental development of Tusheti and increasing the quality of life of Tush communities.

Evaluation team consists of: Lukas Malac, chief evaluator and team leader, Juraj Svajda, expert in the field of management of protected areas and Giorgi Abulidze, local expert.

### **Most significant findings and conclusions**

**Relevance** of the support is assessed as high. Implemented initiatives are fully in line with relevant strategies of Georgia, CDC as well as with the needs of its target groups and fulfil the relevant Sustainable Development Goals. Target groups clearly formulate the need to develop infrastructure and offer for tourism. This, however, also bears a risk of losing the authenticity of landscape and villages of Tusheti due to precipitous development of incoming tourists. Authenticity is, however, the key added value and is the main reason why visitors arrive to Tusheti. Establishment and strengthening of TPLA is, to a large extent, a relevant response to this very dilemma – solving it by, on the one hand, supporting initiatives in development of tourist infrastructure and visitors attraction to the region, while, on the other hand, at the same time strengthening the protection and preservation of natural and culturally – historical heritage of the region. Establishment and strengthening of TPLA is therefore highly relevant with regard to the needs of target groups.

**Efficiency** of the support is assessed also as rather high. On the level of costs of implemented activities no resources that would be used inefficiently were identified. Moreover, achieving and taking advantage of synergies and cooperation with other donors and stakeholders had a positive impact on the efficiency of evaluated projects.

On the other hand, higher efficiency of evaluated initiatives could not be reached due to a very low cooperation on operative tasks as well as on-going coordination between representatives of TPLA and Tusheti Protected Areas (TPA, local office of the Agency for Protected Areas of Georgia). These deficits seemingly led to doubling of activities, inefficient operations and unsatisfactory utilization of project outputs.

The elaboration of the Management Plan is, without doubt, an example of good practice. The document plays a role of the key reference document of TPLA that effectively guides the operation of the institution as well as its long-term development. However, it must be also noted that the elaborated Management Plan represents a very ambitious document in the context of Tusheti Protected Landscape and it is evident that a significant number of its measures could not be implemented and fulfilled in the six years horizon of its validity. In effect, a significant portion of attention was devoted to initialization of measures / activities, whose full implementation in the TPLA will be possible first in a longer period of time.

**Effectiveness** of support is also assessed as rather high. Main goals and general purposes of the evaluated initiatives have been mostly reached: a more or less stable administrative structure of TPL is in place and a quality document, Management Plan, has been approved and is being implemented. Also the quantitative goals of evaluated projects were mostly fulfilled: a sharp increase in the number of tourists is observed, which generates significant incomes for locals, whose life standard has, in effect, also risen. However, causality between these trends and implementation of evaluated projects is rather low.

Part of planned outcomes were reached only partly. A system of biodiversity monitoring was put in place and high quality guidelines as well as baseline studies were elaborated, however, monitoring is almost not at all implemented by the TPLA due to capacity reasons. Similarly in the field of communication and PR a logo of Tusheti region was elaborated and a communication strategy formulated, however, actual activities of TPLA in the field of communication and PR are very limited; evaluation team has, moreover, not registered any case of a visitor who would get information on Tusheti from TPLA web or other communication channels of the agency, or was even motivated to visit the region in effect of TPLA communication and PR. Also the goal of generation of additional incomes from tourism was rather not reached, pilot application of voluntary entrance fees generated only 1650 GEL during two months of operation.

However, it must be noted that these were rather only supplementary or pilot initiatives or initiatives that are not yet fully implemented due to insufficient capacities of TPLA, however, their strengthening can be expected in the future (provided that capacity of TPLA will be sustained and strengthened). Also it should be reminded, that insufficient fulfilment of these outcomes was in many cases caused rather by inflexible and personally instable cooperation with the Agency for Protected Areas that could not be influenced by the project teams.

Regarding **impacts**, a very positive trend of socio-economic development as well as quality of life of local inhabitants is observed. It should be noted, that it is very difficult to actually isolate the contribution of CDC to these trends – socio-economic development is rather caused by external factors, most importantly, rapid development of tourism in the region. However, support provided by the CDC has significantly contributed to management of this increase and to improvement of the experience of visitors, moreover, initiatives of CDC were originally represented a significant impulse that contributed to initializing of these trends (those initiatives are, however, not the subject of this evaluation – especially electrification of guesthouses and other objects should be noted in this context). In direct effect of the existence of administrative structure (TPLA) a number of new regulations have been issued and enforced in the region. These have positive impact on the protection and preservation of natural and culturally-historical heritage of the region. The impact of evaluated initiatives on increasing the participation of local communities on decision-making has not been manifested so far.

On this basis the impact of CDC support on the development of Tusheti is assessed as rather high and evaluated initiatives are considered to be examples of good practice – CDC was successful in establishing a basis for future development of the region.

**Sustainability of outcomes** must, on the other hand, be assessed as rather low. TPLA has so far not sufficient capacity to operate effectively on its own and fulfil independently the measures of Management Plan. These measures are usually fulfilled only if external financial resources are available. On the other hand, a high level of ownership and motivation of TPLA representatives with regard to the Management Plan has been observed.

## Recommendations

On the basis of formulated conclusions, the following recommendations are suggested:

Recommendations of process and system nature:

Recommendation	Key addressee	Gravity <sup>1</sup>
In the case of projects aimed at capacity building of institutions require at least in its earlier stages of implementation a long-term presence of implementer in the target region.	CzDA	1
Require such formulation of results and their indicators that would fulfil the SMART characteristics.	CzDA	2
In case there are more donors and other stakeholders engaged in the target area, seek for establishment of shared local structures instead of implementation of own solution.	Implementers / CzDA	2
Carry on in systematic coordination on the level of the Embassy (or local representative of the CzDA) with other donors and stakeholders that are active in target region.	Embassy	1

Recommendations related to continuation / phase-out of CDC in Tusheti

Recommendation	Key addressee	Gravity
Carry on in initiatives supporting the capacities of TPLA, focusing on missing expertise and knowledge (biodiversity, preservation of cultural heritage, communication and PR).	CzDA / Implementers	1
Support the process of formalization of Tusheti community representation and participation on the most suitable platform (Tusheti Council, LAG - Local Action Groups, etc.)	CzDA / Embassy	2
Consider support to a pilot project aimed at establishment of an association or any other form of formal cooperation of entrepreneurs in tourism in Omalo, which could take over the responsibility for activities in marketing and provision of information to tourists.	CzDA	2
Further develop tourist infrastructure – especially with regard to marked trails leading to Chevsureti; construct, in cooperation with other partners, accompanying infrastructure (camps, shelters, etc.)	CzDA	2
Carry on in negotiations with relevant institutions of Georgia with regard to finding an acceptable model of compulsory entrance fees in Tusheti.	Embassy	3

Recommendation related to implementation of the CDC programme and replicability of approaches applied in Tusheti.

<sup>1</sup> Gravity of recommendations: 1 – most important, 2 – important, 3 – less important

Recommendation	Key addressee	Gravity
In case of favorable legislative and institutional preconditions in Georgia replicate the model of support based on Management Plan and Action Plan.	CzDA	1
From the start support systematic development and application of principles of community management and participation when it comes to elaboration and implementation of Management Plan; in case the approach is combined with establishment of a LAG pay close attention to institutional and process interlinking of all structures so that double-track is avoided.	CzDA / Embassy	1
Carefully prioritize measures of Management Plan / Strategy and develop relevant activities in a long-term perspective.	Implementers / CzDA	2
Initiate as soon as possible work on relevant regulations in the administrative structures (consistently involving local communities to their formulation), since these are tools that have the potential to weaken the negative impacts of raising the attractiveness of a region to visitors.	Local institutions, implementers	2
Accompany system activities with resources for investments of lower scope so that early implementation of several specific measures of Management Plan / Strategy can be reached and also the ownership of target groups as well as CDC visibility is raised.	CzDA	1
Consider limiting the implementation of support to mountainous areas in the Programme of cooperation to only one region. With regard to geographic proximity and functional interlinks, choosing region Mtscheta/Mtianeti for continuation of CDC support seems as more logical choice.	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, CzDA, Embassy	3