

# **PARTICIPATION OF RESIDENTS IN LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT IN ARMAVIR COMMUNITY**

Report



## PARTICIPATION OF RESIDENTS IN LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT IN ARMAVIR COMMUNITY

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

After the community amalgamation in RA in 2021 and formation of new local governments as a result of elections, it became extremely important to study the current situation and existing problems of population's participation in local self-government. 2 main objectives of the research were defined:

1. To find out to what extent local governments in Armavir community make sufficient efforts to make information about participatory mechanisms and opportunities available to the population and to ensure involvement of residents in decision-making processes.
2. To identify problems and causes that have negative impact on the participation of residents in local self-government.

The following methods were chosen for the research: desk research, interviews with local government and CSO representatives, focus group discussions with residents.

In the first stage, the following documents were reviewed: Chapter 9 of the RA Constitution, the Law of the Republic of Armenia on Local Self-Government, Community Five-year Development Program, community Annual Action Plans and budgets for the last three years, decrees of the community council and Mayor of last three years and their performance protocols, reports and protocols of public hearings and discussions and previous research reports. According to the results of the above research, the problems that need to be solved and actively worked on have been highlighted.

1. Protocols outlining problems and recommendations presented by community residents during public hearings, discussions and council meetings convened in the community, need to be clearly formulated.
2. In terms of organization of community council sessions there is a need to undertake steps to solve issues related to participation of residents in extraordinary sessions.
3. As required by the law, council sessions should be broadcast in through the community official website.
4. Representatives of LSG and municipality staff need to invest more efforts in inform community residents on participation opportunities and promote their engagement.
5. LSG-CSO efforts are required to reduce passive behavior and apathy among community youth.
6. Monitoring and research initiatives on promoting local democracy development and public participation in LSG are insufficient.
7. There is a need for more efforts to inform population on "Participate in community development" online instrument to collect as much as possible higher number of recommendations.
8. Use of mechanisms of incentive awards defined by the council would be an important step in developing community participation culture.
9. In terms of sessions of the council should be organized in a way which allows the participation of the residents in the extraordinary sessions and refers to the solution of the primary problems.

As a result of the focus group discussions and interviews conducted in the second phase of the research work, the following important directions were highlighted, which need further improvement and active measures:

1. All stakeholders noted that the level of participation of residents in local self-government in the community is low, the main reasons of which are the low level of awareness among residents about participatory rights and mechanisms. Despite efforts made by the local government in this context, the results are not sufficient and more effective work and cooperation at the level of CSO-local government-residents is needed.
2. It is necessary to pay more attention to the use and implementation of online tools, and in the case of existing ones, to develop mechanisms for their dissemination and ensuring wide public engagement.
3. No surveys and research initiatives are being conducted in order to define various issues and priorities, which can be an effective participatory mechanism for residents, and have an important consultative value for community authorities.
4. No incentives intended to promote residents' participation are applied, which could increase residents' interest in participation.
5. The observed main participative approach is expressed mostly at the level of personal contacts and does not transform into an institutional participation model, and in terms of content, applications and complaints prevail, which do not generally turn into proposals and cooperation.
6. Favorable environment in the community for activities of CSOs and the cooperation-oriented policy of the local government have great potential for the implementation of steps in terms of promoting the participation of residents.

It is recommended to undertake the following to address identified issues and directions:

1. For a wider distribution of information about participatory opportunities and rights among the population of Armavir community, cooperation with CSOs and youth initiative groups active in the field should be developed resulting in mutual use of existing information dissemination platforms, as well as educational materials and opportunities.
2. In case of allocation of support to CSOs within the annual budget, campaigns promoting residents' participation rights and opportunities should be highlighted as priority.
3. Specific incentive prizes should be defined for more actively participating citizens which would have annual nature with more efforts to attract higher public attention to this kind event.
4. Municipal authorities should try to engage people preferring personal communications into institutional procedures through developing cooperation among council members and head of administrative centers.
5. Life broadcast should be restored and Public Relations strategy should be developed with specific indicators ensuring higher number of views and engagement.
6. Before defining community priorities, as well as decision making, consultative surveys should be undertaken that would allow to engage higher number of citizens in participatory decision-making processes.