PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY IN TODAY’S GEORGIA

Giorgi Vashakidze

Introduction

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, a decentralisation policy prevailed in Georgia. Since 2004, however, the government has reversed the trend of decentralisation by reducing the autonomy of local authorities in delivering services and by embarking on the creation of a centralised service delivery model based on the ‘one-stop-shop’ principle. Today, the government of Georgia uses this model to deliver more than 300 public services at regional and community levels. Justice Houses serve as public service hubs at regional level while Community Centres deliver public services to citizens in communities. This chapter focuses on community centres to analyse governance and public service delivery at the local level in Georgia today.

Arguably, in many former Soviet, now independent states, public administration and particularly public service delivery has experienced major crises. The collapse of the Soviet Union saw not only the relationship between governments and citizens deteriorate, but also that between state agencies. This observation is not surprising as most former soviet societies lived under corrupt and non-accountable authoritarian regimes; inclined to subjugate individual interests and needs to those of the government (Mishler and Rose 1997). The legacy of the Communist public administration continues to influence the performance of most post-Soviet governments, and thus their ability to improve the economic and social well-being of citizens. Among those states that nonetheless launched reforms more or less successfully are the three Baltic States (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) along with Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan and Georgia.

The three Baltic states quickly began the transformation of their public administration and public service delivery system in the early 1990s. Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan and Georgia followed in the past decade. Traditionally the decentralisation of authority and resources from the central government to local governments is considered to be an essential element for effective public service delivery. In recent years, this notion has been challenged by the evolution of a new type of public service delivery models in some former constituents of the Soviet Union. One such model is the one-stop-shop in Georgia and other countries, where integration and centralisation of resources and responsibilities became the main ingredient for the central authorities to effectively deliver public services nationwide.

Kazakhstan started reforming public services based on the one-stop-shop (OSS) principle in the mid-2000 and developed a system that delivers a large number of public services to citizens
via a state-owned corporation, Government for Citizens. Azerbaijan started reforming its public service delivery by implementing OSS principles in 2012 under the concept of ASAN xidmət (‘Easy Service’). The central government of Georgia initiated its public administration reform in 2004 with the aim of triggering economic growth and tackling massive corruption in the public sector. The core of this reform was to centralise the delivery of public services using the OSS principles. Initially, many of the competences for delivering public services were the responsibility of local authorities. The central government did not purposely intend to disempower local authorities. However, they also realised that it was not realistic to quickly reform local capacity to deliver public services effectively and efficiently. It would have taken more time, financial and human resources than were available at that time. Therefore, the central government decided to counterbalance local authorities’ inability to serve citizens in a timely, effective and customer friendly manner by creating a network of Justice Houses and Community Centres that deliver public services at regional and at the village/community levels.

**Historic background of public service delivery in Georgia**

The transition of Soviet Georgia to an independent state was accompanied by violence. The inexperienced political movement that developed during Perestroika led to mass demonstrations—one of which was violently repressed by the Soviet military in April 1989. Public reaction against Soviet power led to the election of a new leadership in Tbilisi and the declaration of independence in April 1991 (Nodia 1998). During this chaotic period, Georgia experienced devastating economic decline as assets and authority were transferred from Soviet to Georgian structures under the control of a newly elected government. The country also experienced considerable political and civil strife as a result of the secessionist tendencies of several ethnic groups. In addition to these conflicts, the weakening of central authority and a dysfunctional state apparatus led to broader disintegrative processes throughout Georgia. The almost complete collapse of trade and industrial linkages with the former Soviet Union and the resulting economic dislocation, led to extreme fragmentation of Georgian society. Amidst the crisis, the central government ruled by decree until a constitution was finally adapted in 1995.

Alongside with the constitution the government started elaborating the legal basis for public service delivery nationwide. The important framework was developed in 1997 when the Parliament adopted the Organic Law on Local Self-Government and Government. The law defined four levels of governance. The first level consisted of village, agglomeration of villages, village/town, and city. The second level comprised rayons or districts and republican or special status cities. The third one was defined as region. There were nine regions, plus the capital city, Tbilisi, and two autonomous republics: Abkhazia and Adjara. The last and forth level was the state.

However, the law lacked clearly defined structure to regulate for instance, issues related to ownership of property or to administrative responsibilities. The expenditure responsibilities as well as the public service delivery structure of local governments and local self-governments were not clearly defined by law, and many provisions of the legislation overlapped. Local self-governments at village level did not have significant and meaningful public service functions; most of these functions were undertaken by the rayons/districts (Ministry of Justice 1997). Basic public services such as the issuing of passports or IDs, registration of citizens or registration of civil acts fell under the responsibilities of regional bureaus of the Ministry of Interior and technical bureaus of local government. This heavily fragmented system created a lot of confusion and overlap in delivering public services. As a consequence, the system became dysfunctional and corrupt. None of the organisations possessed complete data on citizens. The organisational
human resource management systems were weak and ineffective, the system could not generate financial resources, and the services were delivered through extremely dilapidated infrastructure. Technical basics such as software and hardware infrastructure that could have helped in securely providing services did not exist. The workflows were completely paper based (Gagnidze 2009).

The functions of land management and registration were controlled by the State Land Management Department. Identical responsibilities were given to technical bureaus under the local self-government. A lack of cooperation between the department and the technical bureaus as well as the overlap in terms of their administrative responsibilities proved solid ground for corruption to prosper. Mismanagement and massive bureaucracy at both central as well as local levels further damaged the reputation of the administration in the eyes of citizens. Public service delivery became to be associated with ineffective bureaucracy, aggressive and non-accountable bureaucrats, bribes, a depressing soviet infrastructure and nerve-shattering processes.

In 2004, the government of Georgia initiated a massive administrative reform that eventually changed the nature and form of public service delivery. The reform aimed at improving bureaucracy through the introduction of legislative changes to simplify procedures and to deregulate the traditionally heavily regulated administrative sphere of governance. The ultimate purpose was to eradicate corruption from the system and to support rapid economic growth in the country. By implementing the policy of OSS public service delivery, the government managed to dismantle the heavily bureaucratic and ineffective public service delivery structure and replaced it with semi-independent, usually centrally operated, small sized agencies that are instructed to tightly work together to deliver public services in a timely, effective and customer friendly manner.

### Public service delivery in Georgia now

There are two main channels for the delivery of public services in Georgia. The first, most intensive channel is managed by the centrally operated, state-owned, semi-independent agencies. These agencies are usually under the subordination of various ministries and use the One-Stop-Shop principle of public service delivery. Citizens receive these public services from central government through Justice Houses and Community Centres (CC).

The Justice House is also known as the Public Service Hall (PSH); it is a semi-independent agency and a legal entity of the Ministry of Justice of Georgia (MoJ). It has rights to represent itself vis-à-vis third parties, has its own budget, identification code, accounts in commercial banks and in the state treasury as well as other characteristics necessary for a legal entity of public law.

PSH arrangements were established in 2012 and the main purpose is to provide services offered by public as well as by private agencies through the One-Stop-Shop model of service delivery. The MoJ instructs the agency to support government service delivery, to design and to offer public services through innovation and diversity. PSH is expected to provide consultation to other state or non-state actors in order to improve services delivery with the purpose of effectively offering services to citizens as well as organisations (Ministry of Justice 2015). In essence, it serves as a front office for a number of back office agencies that design and produce public services.

As a result, the public service delivery structure as designed by the central authorities in Georgia can be split into two, front office and back office agencies. The former are customer-oriented and service-minded and responsible for offering services to citizens in a timely and customer-friendly manner while the letter is expected to design and produce public services offered by the front office. Hence, close cooperation between front and back office state
agencies is vital to ensure the smooth operation of OSS public service delivery chain in Georgia. Today, PSH delivers more than 300 public services to citizens at regional level.

On the village level public services are delivered by the CCs. CCs operate under the Public Service Development Agency of Georgia (PSDA) which is yet another legal entity of public law established in 2012 under the subordination of the Ministry of Justice.

PSDA is the former Civil Registry Agency of Georgia, with a more extended mandate and responsibilities. In addition to civil registration tasks inherited by the agency, it is expected to innovate and generate new approaches for public service modernisation and development. The issues related to immigration, document legalisation and apostil services fall under the mandate of the agency. The Ministry of Justice empowered the agency to create mechanisms for the implementation of strategically important projects and to initiate reforms in the public sector. The development of Community Centres could be considered as a strategically important project as it reaches previously untapped part of society while delivering public service at village level.

In parallel to these centrally operated services, the second, more fragmented channel of service delivery is under municipal management. Since 2014, the law on local self-government recognises two forms of municipality. The first form is a settlement such as a self-governing city which has clearly defined administrative borders. The second form is an agglomeration of settlements with administrative borders and an administrative centre. In addition, the municipality must have an elected representative and executive branches of government. Today, there are 71 municipalities in Georgia: 12 self-governing cities and 59 agglomerations of settlements (Svanishvili et al. 2014).

The organic law on local self-governance proposes two types of competencies for municipalities: exclusive competencies and delegated competencies. The latter is given to the municipality either by the central authorities or by the authorities of the autonomous republic. It should be based on an agreement between the parties, and a delegating authority must ensure that it supplies material and financial resources for it to be implemented.

The exclusive competences of municipalities cover a whole range of services and can be tentatively grouped under administrative, financial, economic, education and culture and social competences.

**Development and functional capacity of the community centres**

In 2011, the Government of Georgia approved a project for the ‘Introduction of E-governance in Local Governments’ that was initiated by the Civil Registry Agency and the European Union Mission in Georgia. The project aimed at improving the management at municipality centres, improving the interaction between municipal centres and trustee offices, providing public services to the local population more effectively, designing easily adaptable software solutions for service delivery and designing a legal framework as well as developing technical infrastructure for the operation and introduction of e-governance.

As of 2012, the Service Development Agency of Georgia succeeded the Civil Registry Agency in supporting and further developing the project through the introduction of CCs. Today, there are 51 Community Centres nationwide and more centres are planned to be inaugurated in 2018.

A typical CC is a multi-functional physical space in a village that is equipped with modern infrastructure and technology. As the functional extension of PSDA, CCs offer civil registration services to citizens and serve as its front office. Besides that, CCs offer front office services to several other state agencies that operate in the back office. Namely, centres offer citizens public services provided by the National Agency of Public Registry (NAPR), the National Archive of Georgia (NAG), the
Social Service Agency (SSA) under the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia (MoLHSA) and Mechanizatory, a limited liability enterprise that acts as a provider for agriculture services under subordination of the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA).

Overall, it provides more than 250 public services to the local population and includes (see the annex II for a non-exhaustive list of public services offered at CCs):

- **Civil registry services**: e-ID, passport, birth registration, secondary education attestation, residence permit, repeated issuance of any civil acts, divorce registration etc.
- **Public registry services**: property right registration, extract on real-estate, registration of a right to build an estate on a land parcel, debtor pledge registration etc.
- **National archive services**: a letter from archive about divorce, death, birth, award, evacuation, information on registration of physical and judicial entities etc.
- **Social services**: a letter confirming that a family is registered in a social assistance database, accepting citizens request for the need of an auxiliary technical assistance etc.
- **Agriculture services**: paving and cleaning of water canals, land mulching, excavation work, vineyard care and protection, mowing, pressing of hay etc.

Most of the services available at the centres fall under the responsibility of the Ministry of Justice, except for social and agriculture services. Citizens can also receive services offered by private companies in the centres. For instance, Magticom offers telecommunication related services while Liberty Bank helps ensure that the population receives financial services.

**Interaction between Community Centres, National Agency of Public Registry and National Archive of Georgia**

In order to deliver public services nationwide, the back office agencies responsible for service design and production enter into an agreement with the PSDA to delegate competences to deliver public services through centres. PSDA has the right to define the number of centres that will offer services to citizens, but has an obligation to provide the back office agency with the exact number and location of those centres. The back office agency has the unrestricted right to monitor public service delivery in centres to ensure that standards and the quality of the provided services meet its expectation. The back office agency also has the right to demand PSDA should introduce sanction against employees who violate or jeopardise public service delivery or to propose awards for those who perform well. It can perform monitoring at centres anytime.

Back office agencies make sure that the centre operators have the up-to-date knowledge necessary to provide services. For that reason, they are obliged to provide training and support or any other necessary assistance for the operators. For instance, the NAPR takes the responsibility to train operators at centres via the Educational Centre of the Ministry of Justice. Moreover, the agency must consult upon the request of operators and must grant them access to its data centre. To raise awareness about service delivery standards and to solve any pertinent issues, NAPR must ensure that inter-agency meetings are organised to strengthen cooperation between the agencies. It must inform PSDA of any new legislative or administrative changes to ensure the uninterrupted delivery of public services. PSDA has the right to demand NAPR to provide any necessary software solution and instructions to operate its services.

PSDA must ensure that its employees do not abuse the rights granted by NAPR and guarantee that the citizens’ personal data protection is respected. In case of violation of personal data protection, the agency takes responsibility to pay penalties to NAPR as well as to any third parties if necessary. The agency does not have rights to demand financial resources or financial
support from NAPR while delivering services. It does not have the right to introduce additional
fees for the services delivered. The agreement grants each party the right to suspend or terminate
the agreement if the parties violate the terms and conditions.

PSDA also has an agreement signed with the National Archive of Georgia (NAG) to provide
services through centres. Similar to NAPR, the National Archive takes the responsibility to
provide consultation to operators as well as to ensure that they have unrestricted access to its
database. NAG should periodically train PSDA personnel to meet its service delivery standards.
To deliver services timely and without delays, NAG must provide the necessary equipment to
centres. Particularly, it needs to ensure that the archive stamp necessary for the verification of
archive documents is timely delivered. PSDA does not have rights to either demand financial
resources from NAG or to introduce any additional fees for delivered services.

The National Agency of Public Registry, the National Archive of Georgia as well as the
Public Service Development Agency fall under the direct subordination or the Ministry of
Justice of Georgia. This fact most likely helps agencies to coordinate their efforts while deliver-
ing services via the centres. However, in parallel to these agencies, there are two more actors
who deliver their services to citizens via the centres: the Social Service Agency of Georgia
(SSA) and Mechanizatory Ltd. The first operates under the Ministry of Labour, Health and
Social Affairs of Georgia and the latter is a sub-agency of the Ministry of Agriculture of Georgia.
This has implications for how such organisations interact with the PSDA to deliver their public
services to citizens through the centres.

**Interaction between Community Centres, Social Service Agency and
Mechanizatory Ltd**

An agreement signed by the agencies stipulates the rights and the obligations of each party and
delegates competencies to PSDA to deliver Social Service Agency services through the centres.
The Social Service Agency has the right to perform monitoring anytime and demand that the
centres meet the set service standard. SSA assigns its regional branches to respective Community
Centres to streamline inter-agency interaction. Operators are expected to intensively commu-
nicate with representatives of SSA in respective regional branches to keep proper accountability
of paper work and to ensure that the operators pass on the acquired original documents on a
weekly basis. SSA ensures proper training for the centre personnel and provides all necessary
technical equipment for the delivery of public services.

The agreement also gives detailed instruction to operators what kind of documents they must
request to provide services. For instance, for the operator to launch the procedure for granting
the right to state pension or to a package of state pension, it is necessary to request ID documents
from a citizen. If the request is from a third party, then the operator must request appropriate
documents to prove that the requestors is a legal representative of the beneficiary. The operator
must follow several procedures. A special form provided by SSA needs to be completed, and the
operator must assist the citizen to fill the form if necessary.

As soon as the request is processed, the operator must provide the citizen with proof that the
request is accepted. The proof needs to have a date, the name of the requestor, the number of
pages, the code granted by the system and it needs to be verified by an official stamp. As soon
as the request is in the SSA database, it is processed by the agency. Once the decision is made,
it is obligatory for the operator to use the SSA database to print the document. The written
response to the beneficiary must be verified by the operator with a stamp of the agency on the
document. Each service that falls under the agreement is followed by thorough instructions on
how to operate it. These social services are provided free of charge to citizens via the centres.
Likewise, the agreement signed by PSDA and Mechanizatory Ltd stipulates the responsibilities and the rights between the parties. Mechanizatory grants the right to the agency to offer agriculture services (agro-services) such as tractor services, processing crops by herbicides, soil treatment, soil watering etc. via the centres. The agency has the right to perform unannounced visits in the centres to assess the front office service quality and standard. It takes responsibility to provide trainings to personnel as well as makes sure that printers, cartridges or any other special forms to ensure effective operation of its services are delivered. It ensures that the price list for the agriculture services is up to date. The agency requests the right to access the Mechanizatory database, but it does not have rights to introduce any additional fees for the services provided.

The price of the service is calculated using the agro-service fee, the area of the customer’s ground that is to be serviced and the distance that service providers and equipment (technical means) have to travel to reach the customer. A customer is defined as any physical person or legal entity interested in receiving services. The services can be requested either individually or as a group. In case of a group request, customers have the opportunity to make savings as transportation costs for the technical means will be lower. If there is work to be done in a neighbouring area or the land parcels are next to each other, then the customers can place a special neighbour request and save time and money for the services requested.

Effective interaction between the back office and front office agencies is crucial while delivering public services via the centres. The role that the operators play in the process has a tremendous influence on how the quality of the service is perceived either by internal or external customers. To uphold the quality of services delivered as well as to achieve high satisfaction of customers, the operators must follow certain rules and standards to meet the demands.

**Public service delivery standards in the Community Centres**

Usually, the quality of service depends on two major variables. The first variable is the expected service quality in terms of the specific/tangible outcome of the public service. The second variable is the perceived service quality which responds to how it is delivered i.e. it focuses on the process of service delivery (Grönroos 1984). The quality standard introduced by the Public Service Development Agency for the Community Centres puts high emphasis on the process of the service delivery. It requires operators to meet strict standards of behaviour that are intended to improve the customer experience. This code of conduct contains unusually detailed instructions. For instance, when welcoming a customer, the operators are instructed to:

- smile as naturally and as pleasantly as possible;
- remain polite when interacting with customers and must not use affirmative phrases;
- be proactive and should listen to customers without interrupting them;
- not use complicated terminology during the interaction and should offer various options to receive a requested service;
- avoid negatively perceived non-verbal behaviour (e.g. employees are advised not to behave impatiently or stand with their arms crossed, and they may not want to lean back while sitting or lean on the table while standing); and
- not use social media, or send messages or read literature that are not related to their immediate work.

If a customer is not satisfied with the service and his/her complaint is related to the work of the centre, then the operator must immediately engage the customer to understand the issue and to
assist in solving it. Also, the operator should thank the customer after the service is finished and wish him/her a pleasant day.

As soon as all documents are collected and filed, the operator deals with the next customer. Employees are expected to take care of their work place by tidying up their desks and are required to adhere to the requirements of a strict dress code. They need to make sure that their identification badge is clearly visible to customers. It appears likely that such a strict code of conduct and adherence to it is the reason for continuous high customer satisfaction as shown in the results of surveys conducted by research organisations and which will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter.

In parallel to the strict corporate standards, operators must regularly undergo trainings to better deliver public services. The PSDA in cooperation with the back office agencies train operators in topics such as:

- granting or cancelling citizenship, type of resident permits and how to issue them;
- registration procedure of civil acts and their issuance, registration of citizens and issuance of identification documents such as passport or IDs;
- issuance of travel document and registration of citizens on an address;
- use e-document software and e-registration of an enterprise;
- produce extracts from state property registry; and
- registration of citizens for purposeful social assistance program and offering social insurance packages.

Operators receive relevant materials either electronically or hard copies or both and are expected to pass an exam after a training period.

This highly intensive service delivery system requires all actors in the front and back offices to work together to establish a service deliver chain. It allows central authorities to interact with the citizen directly as well as to cooperate with the local authorities in respective regions and communities to better deliver public services. Therefore, it is important to look through the findings of customer satisfaction surveys to analyse the impact of this system on authorities and customers.

### The impact of service delivery on customers and authorities

In 2013, ACT, a local research and consulting company, conducted a customer satisfaction survey on behalf of the PSDA of Georgia. The survey focused on those communities where the centres operate and asked citizens about their knowledge of and satisfaction with their work. Overall, ACT engaged randomly selected respondents in 13 communities. The majority of respondents (61%) were aware of the existence of such a centre in their village. Others (39%) knew about the centre, but identified it as a local bank or associated it with a local council. This is less surprising than it may seem considering that the Community Centre is a multi-functional space where citizens can receive not only public services but also financial services. Less than half (43%), however, had received public services in their village at the time of the survey, and a mere fraction of those who had received services (10%) had not used the centres for that purpose. Figure 16.1 shows the percentage of citizens who knew the type of services they could receive in the centres.

We can note that the vast majority of respondents (82%) expressed satisfaction with the services received. In particular, citizens appreciated the quality of services, the rapid response of operators, the comfortable environment, cheap prices and proximity of the locations.
Some very significant factors that help define customer satisfaction were the competency of operators, affordable prices for services and the kindness of staff, and notably the absence of long waiting lines and simple as well as clear language of communication between operators and citizens. These survey results reflect well on the extensive code of conduct for operators and how it is being implemented.

90% of respondents would use the services offered in centres again in the future. However, the majority of citizens did not know the centres also offer public space for free (Figure 16.2).

A similar survey was carried out by IPM, a local research organisation, to assess the satisfaction of customers with the public service offered in local municipalities without Community Centres.

This 2013 study focused on six municipalities. Questions touched on customer knowledge, attitude, perceptions and behaviour. Similar to the results of the centre study, the majority of users (74%) and non-users (75%) of municipal services received information about the municipality from their acquaintances. Figure 16.3 illustrates the type of services that citizens were aware of, and how often citizens used the services in the past.
IPM also asked citizens to assess how well municipalities perform their functions and how well personnel at municipalities respond to citizens (Figure 16.4). The majority was not generally satisfied with the performance of municipalities and their personnel.

Customers expect municipalities to respond to citizens’ demands in a timely manner, to provide precise and clear information, and to improve the quality of advice and the kindness of personnel. The questions aiming to assess how fairly municipalities treat citizens indicated that citizens doubted the fairness of municipalities (Figure 16.5). This fact does not reflect well on the extent to which citizens generally trust the local authorities.
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Despite this, almost half (47%) of those using local municipalities for obtaining public services were satisfied with the work of local municipalities. A mere 11% of users were completely dissatisfied. By comparison, among non-users these proportions were reversed with only a fifth (21%) expressing satisfaction compared to more than half (57%) being more or less satisfied, and another fifth (20%) being completely dissatisfied. The survey showed that on the Likert scale from 1 being the worst and 5 being the best, almost all municipal services received either average or lower than average score in terms of service quality as perceived by citizens, and that non-users suspect service delivery to be worse than perceived by those using them.

In 2016, ACT repeated its customer satisfaction survey to assess potential changes in the level of satisfaction with the performance of centres compared to the 2013 results. This study almost doubled the number of communities surveyed, covering 25 villages. The survey results showed that the majority of the population (97%) had heard about the centres in their respective communities and more than half among those (59%) had heard about at least one of the service provided by CCs. In terms of service ranking, the majority of citizens (62%) had heard about passports and identity cards services, almost half of them (41%) had heard about land registration services, and a third of them (27%) had heard about birth certificates issuance.

Similar to the 2013 survey, the survey in 2016 showed that the main source of information about CCs remained neighbours or friends. More than 80% of citizens received the information from those sources. The most commonly used services as mentioned by citizens are shown in Figure 16.6.
It should be noted that the overwhelming majority of the population were satisfied with the quality of services received. Citizens positively assess the location and accessibility of the centres. In general, customers (98%) did not face obstructions or other difficulties when approaching the centres and they usually are consulted by a representative upon arrival. 19% of customers received services by paying certain fees and 91% of those who paid fees for services believe that the price of the service was acceptable.

The only points of criticism are the occasional waiting lines or queues. 31% of customers believe that the centres must introduce better line management to meet the citizens’ demands. It is important to note that the issue of waiting lines was not mentioned by the customers in the survey conducted in 2013. The most likely reason for the occurrence of waiting lines is the popularity of the community centres among customers and that ever greater numbers of citizens use a CC to receive services.

The survey also reviewed the utilisation of public space offered by the Community Centres to citizens for free. In contrast to the results in 2013, more citizens mentioned that they are aware that the free space is available (Figure 16.7). However, it is not clear whether they use it frequently or not.

In parallel to exclusive services offered by the centres, citizens can receive so-called additional or specific services (Figure 16.8). For instance, customers are aware that they can receive assistance to submit an electronic application for the programme ‘Produce in Georgia’ or use notary services available in the centres.

The comparison of two surveys conducted in 2013, clearly shows that customers praise the services at Community Centres for the same reasons that they criticise the performance of local municipalities. In particular, citizens are highly satisfied with the quality of response of operators. They value the kindness of staff as well as the clarity of procedures and the time they save while interacting with the personnel. In contrast, citizens are not satisfied with the level of

![Figure 16.7 Knowledge about public space available for free in centres, 2016](image1)

![Figure 16.8 Awareness about additional services available in the centres, 2016](image2)
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transparency of municipal procedures. In particular, the ambiguous response they often receive from personnel and the frequency of being redirected to other institutions to receive services.

The survey conducted in 2016 affirmed once again that a clear majority of customers is satisfied with the services provided by the Community Centres. The main factors that determine customer satisfaction is the territorial proximity, high-quality and fast provision of services. Citizens praise the customer-oriented personnel and service-minded environment.

The surveys also identified neighbours and friends as the main source of information about the public services that either centres or municipalities offer. While this proves that satisfied customers are important to attract others, it also shows that more needs to be done to disseminate information about public services and to communicate directly with citizens to continue improving.

The one aspect on which both Community Centres and municipalities scored poorly, however, is the engagement of citizens in decision making. The biggest challenge for both central and local authorities still remains the genuine engagement of citizens in decision making. The studies conducted on behalf of state agencies and international organisations continually showed that citizens feel that they are not properly consulted in the process of public service policy design and implementation.

Conclusion

With the current administrative and procedural structure of public service delivery, Georgia can be considered to operate a mixed model of public services. The large number of public services that previously belonged to local municipalities are today provided by the central authorities. However, there are a set of important public services that still fall under the exclusive competencies of local authorities. It is evident that the existing model of service delivery creates competition and sometimes tension in the relationship between central and local authorities.

The central authority uses the OSS model of public service delivery and the surveys show that the citizens are satisfied with the quality of services.

In contrast to the central government, the local authorities need to improve the quality of services delivered and to ensure that they technological base is not lagging behind. To avoid misconception among the population and to portray the customer friendliness of authorities, both layers of government might consider the possibilities of greater co-operation in developing and delivering public services.

Community Centres can serve as good examples of cooperation between central and local authorities as it brings the central services to local communities and simultaneously helps local authorities to improve their image vis-à-vis citizens. However, this is not enough as citizens demand more genuine engagement in decision making while designing and implementing the state policies.

The centrally operated agencies could co-operate more effectively with local authorities to share their experience and knowledge on how to transform the public service delivery structure in local municipalities. It would be wiser for local authorities to model their public service delivery structure according to the One-Stop-Shop principles which have been effectively used by the central agencies.

The central authorities’ concern with local governments success should logically extend to making sure that local government services are provided in a timely and customer-friendly manner. Local governments and local services are where most citizens interface with government. Therefore, increasing citizens participation in local decision making while developing local government public service reform will help central and local government to make future public service delivery structures more effective and sustainable.
Glossary

ACT – research and consulting company
CC – Community Centre
CRA – Civil Registry Agency of Georgia
GoG – Government of Georgia
ID – identification card
IPM – research and consulting company
Mechanizatory Ltd – a limited liability enterprise under subordination of MoA
MoA – Ministry of Agriculture of Georgia
MoLHSA – Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia
MoJ – Ministry of Justice of Georgia
NAG – National Archive of Georgia
NAPR – National Agency of Public Registry of Georgia
OSS – one-stop-shop model
PSH – Public Service Hall (also known as Justice House)
PSDA – Public Service Development Agency of Georgia
SSA – Social Service Agency

References