



USAID
NGA POPULLI AMERIKAN
OD AMERIČKOG NARODA



GROUP FOR LEGAL
AND POLITICAL
STUDIES

EMPOWERING CITIZENS THROUGH SOCIAL AUDIT

Boosting municipal transparency
and accountability



December 2020



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AND POLITICAL
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is an independent, non-partisan and non-profit public policy organization based in Prishtina, Kosovo.

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ABSTRACT

In May 2019, the Group for Legal and Political Studies (GLPS) was contracted by the USAID Transparent Effective and Accountable Municipalities (USAID TEAM) to monitor and assess the implementation of six different infrastructural projects financed by the municipalities of Gjakova, Peja and Gjilan, with the aim to boost transparency of local government, promote accountability of municipal officials, and increase visibility of citizens' complaints and improve the quality of services. In order to do this, GLPS utilized Social Audit, which is one of the numerous social accountability tools that aims to monitor and scrutinize the performance of local governments in implementing various projects, quality of service delivery and management of public funds. Social accountability tools are widely used in developed countries and have proven to be an efficient tool to increase civic activism in demanding more transparent and accountable governments, resulting in an increased quality of services offered by the authorities. In a close consultation with the USAID TEAM, GLPS selected the abovementioned municipalities due to a higher intensity of initiatives undertaken, and the nature of projects selected for monitoring purposes and the stage that the projects were at when the project took place.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The goal of these social accountability initiatives was to promote the transparency and accountability of municipal authorities, boost citizen activism, and improve the overall quality of services provided in the targeted municipalities. Six Social Audit (SA) teams were established to monitor six different municipal projects in Peja, Gjakova, and Gjiilan. The initiative also aimed to raise awareness of the importance of the citizens' role in demanding increased accountability and transparency by monitoring six different municipal contracts. In Peja, the SA teams monitored the construction of the Art School "Odhise Paskali" and that of the House for Elderly Care. In Gjakova groups of citizens, through Social Audit, were able to monitor the construction of the City Park and the revitalization of a 2-km space around the Krena River. Finally, in Gjiilan, the project engaged with monitoring the construction of a Sports Facility in Pogradje and the renovation of the last phase of the space around Mirusha River in the city center.

In Peja, the SA teams ensured that the material used for building the Art School "Odhise Paskali" were high-quality by proposing an additional budget to be allocated for this purpose. As a result, in August 2020, the municipality decided to allocate additional financial means to ensure that the adequate façade is purchased. The same contract also addresses some of the other concerns raised by the SA team, including safety measures and an adequate system to avoid potential flooding.

For the House for Elderly Care, the SA team focused on the outdoor area and recommended that the facilities have direct access to the city park, a proposal that is currently being addressed by the municipality. In Gjiilan, the SA team was concerned about the accessibility of the area around the Mirusha River. As a result, the team proposed that the municipality ensure proper access to people with disabilities. In addition, an area for exhibitions and recreational activities was also recommended. Both suggestions were fully embraced by the municipality and are expected to be addressed with new budgetary planning for 2021. In Gjakova, the SA team managed to agree with the municipality to address all safety measures for the bridges build around the Krena River and ensure accessibility aspects are considered during the final construction phase of the city park.

Changes proposed in all six municipalities might seem few, but are very significant for the daily lives of the citizens of Peja, Gjakova, and Gjiilan. The initiative proved highly beneficial for community mobilization in identifying and mitigation shortcomings identified during the monitoring period. Citizens felt more involved than ever. Mutual communication with local authorities was not previously a common practice, which was evident during this engagement. Social accountability has proven, for the second time, to increase the participation of all parties involved, and to improve the quality and transparency of municipal initiatives that are of mutual benefit. Municipalities across Kosovo should seriously commit to employing social accountability tools in order to institutionalize cooperation with citizens and ensure greater accountability and transparency, which remain fundamentals of democratic governance.

1. INTRODUCTION

GLPS began an initiative to monitor implementation of six different capital investment contracts in three municipalities in Kosovo. The purpose of this monitoring was to assess the quality of services purchased, and ultimately, improve the existing practices and procedures in place in order to ensure the highest quality for the communities. Capital projects monitored including building of schools, sports facilities, parks and recreational spaces in the targeted municipalities of Gjakova, Peja and Gjilan.

During the period of May 2019 and until end April 2020, under the support of the USAID TEAM, GLPS managed to establish six (6) active social audit teams that in many cases went beyond the objectives, and outlasted the project results. The adopted approach enabled citizens to often discuss new initiatives and express their concerns on other issues beyond the selected projects. Besides thorough assessments of the quality of procurement processes, the Social Audit (SA) teams provided municipal authorities with concrete recommendation that were beneficial in further increasing the quality of services provided. Most important, this initiative served the purpose of empowering citizens to play their fundamental role in increasing participatory democracy, through facilitating a well-structured dialogue among them and municipal stakeholders, enabling them to act as game-changers. In a year period, more than three meetings per each project were organized among SA teams and the municipal authorities. In addition, regular formal and informal meetings were organized between members of each of the SA teams. Most of the discussions were organized during the period of May 2019 to September.

In order to achieve this, GLPS employed the social audit approach of monitoring as one of the effective social accountability method to assess service delivery and engage the community. The ultimate goal was to increase transparency, accountability and enhance efficiency of services offered by local authorities, while directly encouraging a well-structured dialogue among citizens and local authorities, which remains limited in Kosovo.

Citizens are encouraged to monitor local governments spending when they have notice the work and results of social audits. In a world where states hold power over the peoples, social accountability tools have the fundamental goal of reclaiming some power to the citizens – the tools hold the government accountable in a more effective and consequential way all the while similarly increase transparency and a respect for human rights in the public sector. In less developed countries such as Kosovo, community engagement is barely existent, while institutional transparency is at limited levels¹. Given the situation, civil society plays a crucial role in acting as a bridge between citizens and the local authorities, by utilizing social audit tools, as means for citizen involvement in keeping their municipal authorities accountable and efficient.

¹ EC Country Report 2020, European Commission, October 2020 (pg. 13). Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/kosovo_report_2020.pdf

Using the Social Audit – one of the many social accountability tools – GLPS was contracted by the USAID TEAM to implement a one-year project in the municipalities of Gjakova, Peja and Gjilan. Social auditing is a time-proven method to monitor and boost good governance practices. GLPS employed a bottom-up approach and provided communities with tools and means to increase their roles in efficiently monitoring their local governments and keeping them accountable on the quality of public services offered and public expenditures. They are the most efficient methods to monitor local government in a way that both pressures representatives as it empowers citizens to demand more and better.

This project is based on a multi-fold approach, including research, analysis and advocacy. Following the data gathering period and the ongoing dialogue among citizens and the selected municipalities, this report provides an overview of the main challenges identified during the monitoring period, a set of policy recommendations, and an overall assessment of the performance of the selected municipalities in offering services and managing with the public funds.

2. METHODOLOGY

Over the course of 12 months, GLPS utilized Social Audit to monitor and evaluate the implementation of six projects initiated by three different municipalities in Kosovo, namely Peja, Gjakova, and Gjilan. The project employed a bottom-up approach, putting citizens' participation at the core of the initiative. During this period, six social audit teams were established and regularly engaged in the monitoring of these projects. In order to do this, customized indicator-based matrices were drafted for each project. Results from the social audit activities were used to spot potential delays, mismanagement of contracts, and lack of transparency.

The specific objectives of this initiative were to monitor local governments; inform citizens and policymakers about the quality level of municipal public services on two specific issues; improve communication between local governments and citizens; point out how local governments allocate funds, budget expenses, and invest public funds; improve the overall wellbeing of citizens as final beneficiaries of these services; and encourage community mobilization. For a better understanding of the socio-political context of these municipalities, GLPS consulted with all relevant stakeholders, including those of the selected municipalities, local civil society organizations, and citizens. The consulting process enabled the team to better evaluate the current situation and design the objectives accordingly.

Focusing on the methodology, the initial phase consisted of data-gathering, followed by a thorough analysis of available documents, site visits and inspections, joint discussions, and numerous meetings and interviews with municipal stakeholders and SA team members. The Social Audit was used to

pinpoint whether the public funds used were efficiently allocated and served the original purpose. In general, the social accountability tool was used served as a bridge among citizens – as end users – and municipal authorities, as those elected to serve them. By the conclusion of the monitoring period, the SA teams agreed on the final results and findings in order to conclude their commitment through public dialogue and evidence dissemination.

Social Audit requires continued and strong willingness for mutual cooperation in order to achieve desirable results. This being said, both citizens and municipal stakeholders should be equally committed to providing all the necessary information and putting forth additional efforts during the monitoring process. Citizens must be eager to regularly and voluntarily commit to numerous meetings and activities organized during this period, while municipalities should equip the SA teams with all relevant documents and ensure proper and regular communication with the teams. In all three municipalities, the cooperation with local authorities ran smoothly and was applauded by the citizens, even though some municipalities were less responsive than others. For example, the Municipality of Gjilan was much harder to reach many times during the monitoring period and, in many cases, delayed actions. Nonetheless, the requests sent from the SA teams were well-received and addressed. In general, both citizens and municipalities are beginning to understand that a mutual dialogue serves both parties to reach concrete results and turn critics into positive actors.

3. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

In order to reach the objectives, the project undertook multiple activities, with special emphasis on the implementation of the Social Audit. This section provides detailed information on how these activities were implemented, as well as in-depth analysis of the findings stemming from the monitoring period.

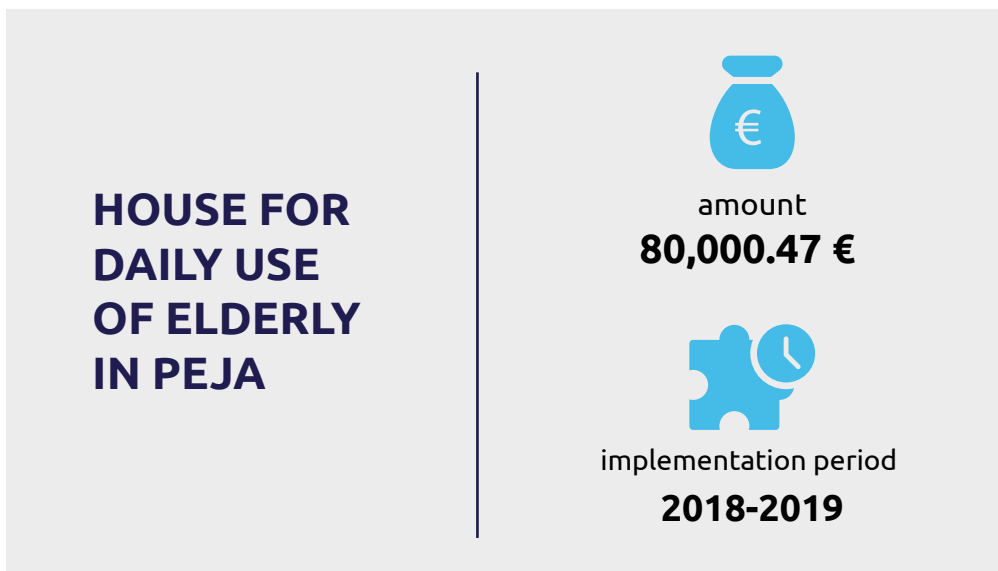
General findings include, in most cases, significant delays of the implementation of contracts within the given timeframe, inappropriate budgetary planning, lack of inclusiveness during the project designing processes, and failure to plan proper safety measures during the construction of facilities

SOCIAL AUDIT IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF PEJA

After an extensive research, GLPS proposed to establish two Social Audit teams for the purposes of monitoring two infrastructure projects financed by the Municipality of Peja. Overall, the cooperation with municipal stakeholders was excellent, them being very responsive towards any request coming from the SA teams and the project members. Procurement documents for the selected projects were easily accessed through their official website and any additional information was provided in a timely manner.



HOUSE FOR DAILY USE OF ELDERLY IN PEJA



Background of the Project

The construction of the Elderly House in Peja was an initiative put forward by the municipality during 2018. The project is fully funded by the municipality and will serve as a living facility to elderly people, a societal group that is long neglected in Kosovo. The project included a modern facility that will provide its users with modern spaces and recreational areas to spend their time. As informed by the municipality, in addition to the facilities, the House will also be fully equipped with a professional staff that will serve the needs of the users. The ultimate purpose is for the House to serve as a place that can be used during the day by the elderly people of Peja, while providing them with recreational activities.

In September 2018, the municipality began a tender process to build a facility that would accommodate the needs of the elderly people of Peja by providing them with the space to sit during the day. After a few meetings

with the municipal stakeholders, the SA team was provided with access to the contract awarded to N.P.N "NPE-ING" L.L.C., with a total amount of 80,000.47 €. Based on the contract specifics, this project was foreseen to be completed within a 14-months period, and was expected to be inaugurated by the end year 2019². The project was to be implemented during 2018-2019, with an estimated amount of 50.000 Euros to be spent during 2018, while the remaining amount to be allocated by the municipality during 2019 through the capital investments fund for year 2018. When the SA team started assessing the situation, the project has already progressed to half of the rough construction being completed, and as the situation was monitored, the contractor kept the right pace and was able to finish the implementation on a timely manner. Even so, the project failed to inaugurate within the given timeframe, for two main reasons. First, the municipality provided an additional budget to also improve the area around the center and link it with the city park, in order for the users to be able to easily access the park area. Second, and the main reason, was the situation with the pandemic that harmed the project. As a consequence of the deadly virus many municipalities are being faced with major challenges in terms of budgetary planning and most budgetary priorities were shifted, mainly due to the consequences that the pandemic has brought. Despite the delays, the overall implementation was highly satisfactory; the SA team found that some aspects should be improved prior to the facilities being functionalized, in particular to accessibility, overall functioning, and accommodation of both genders comfortably.

Social Audit Team and Performance Indicators

Social audit - Peja

Implementation of "HOUSE FOR DAILY USE OF ELDERLY"



Social audit members

- 13 members of different backgrounds, ages, and professions.
- Majority of members are to become potential users of the House



Goals of social audit

- Propose a list of potential activities for the daily functioning of the center.
- Recommendations that directly serve to a better functioning of the House

By the time the SA team was established, more than 60% of construction work was already concluded. To monitor the remaining and final phase, GLPS established a SA team composed of thirteen (13) individuals of different backgrounds, ages, and professions. A considerable number of SA team members were retired individuals who eventually may be the actual users of the House. This team was among the biggest in terms of members and very active throughout the monitoring period.

² Municipality of Peja Website, Notification on the contract awarded, <https://kk.rks-gov.net/peje/wp-content/uploads/sites/24/2019/01/B52-Njoftimi-per-nenshkrimin-e-kontrates-99.pdf> (accessed on September 10, 2020)

During a year-period, GLPS organized numerous joint meetings, as well as one-to-one and informal ones. In addition, several site visits were organized in order for the team to be able to closely inspect the work being implemented by the contractor. Since majority of members are to become potential users of the House, many recommendations derived from this group. At the final phase, the SA team was able to draft a long list of recommendations for the municipal authorities. Apart from the actual monitoring indicators, the SA team managed to also propose a list of potential activities for the daily functioning of the center. The team met regularly to develop a strategy and assess the situation, resulting in some very detailed recommendations beyond the needs of the project, but that directly serve to a better functioning of the House.

Setting up the operational architecture to efficiently carry out social audit is one of the essential aspects that should be considered, as it provides the SA teams with the 'know-how' when conducting monitoring activities. Once the SA teams were constituted, GLPS gathered each of the teams in order to jointly develop a clear and measurable Performance Indicator Table, custom-made for each of the selected projects. The performance indicators should be measurable and closely tied to the particular project. It is mandatory for the SA team to involve during the whole drafting process.



Meeting of the SA Team with municipal officials in Peja

During this phase, in addition to regular consultations with the SA teams, GLPS organized several site visits jointly with the teams in order to inspect the implementation progress more closely, in order to develop realistic indicators for the monitoring period. During this process, the SA teams were provided with all documents relevant to procurement processes of all six projects, in order to have a clearer picture when developing the baseline indicators. It should be noted that the performance indicators should serve as the foundations of the monitoring period, however, they are subject to change depending on the dynamics of execution of work. Indicators for the House for Daily Use of Elderly in Peja are as following:

Indicators from the Social Audit Team

Indicator 1	Project feasibility plan completed prior to commencing the project
Indicator 2	Selection of the tender winner for project implementation based on the criteria as defined by law
Indicator 3	The operating company responsible for the work to be undertaken, selected
Indicator 4	The staff of the construction company responsible for the implementation of the project selected
Indicator 5	Project implemented according to the dynamic plan and deadlines stipulated in the contract
Indicator 6	Budget for the implementation of the project well planned and based on real market prices for this type of project
Indicator 7	If any delays occurred, the dynamic working capacity increased by pressuring the contracted company, through municipality representatives
Indicator 8	Regular monitoring of project implementation by the relevant municipal departments
Indicator 9	Regular monitoring of project implementation by the social audit team
Indicator 10	Regular meeting (very frequent, and on need basis) of members of the social audit team regarding the project implementation process
Indicator 11	Regular meetings of the members of the SA team with the Municipal Assembly regarding the project implementation process starting from September 2019 and till the end of the project
Indicator 12	The efficiency and efforts of the Procurement Department within the municipality in coordinating, communication and improvement of the mission of the Social Audit team
Indicator 13	At least 100 citizens and daily users are satisfied with the implementation of the project
Indicator 14	The House is fully functional by the given deadline stipulated in the contract
Indicator 15	Healthcare services are provided regularly to elderly people using the House, as foreseen by the municipality
Indicator 16	The maintenance of the House is being provided regularly, including hygiene and systematic healthcare services

Main Findings from the Social Audit

The vast majority of the SA team members for this project were of also potential users of this centre, which was an advantage during the monitoring period. At the initial monitoring phase, the SA team concluded that the municipality does not have a clear strategy or a long-term plan on the functionality of the facilities, once inaugurated. Also, the execution of work was going at a slow pace and there were significant delays identified. The House for Daily Use of Elderly in Peja was planned to finalize by end of 2018, yet, when the SA team started monitoring only 50% of work was concluded. What is more, neither municipal authorities nor the contractor provided

us with solid argument on the causes that led to this delay. Due to the composition of the SA team, findings from the monitoring period were specific and contributing towards the functionality of this House. Overall the SA team was satisfied with the progress made so far, in terms of quality of material used and the overall construction aspects.

Findings

- lack of adequate accessibility for people with disabilities,
- lack of proper intimacy when used by both genders



Some of the main conclusions drawn from the initial monitoring period were closely linked to the usage of the facilities including the lack of adequate accessibility for people with disabilities, and whether the facilities will offer proper intimacy when used by both genders.

Recommendations for the Project

Although a modern facility, the House for Elderly Care was planned without all the necessary considerations for the elderly, and a clear and long-term strategy in terms of internal functioning. When the SA team met with the municipality representatives, many questions were raised with regards to the services that are to be provided by the House for Elderly Care once inaugurated. After several meetings with the municipality, the SA team concluded that they lack a proper vision that would provide the users with better services during the usage of the facilities.

One of the main concerns of the team was for the facilities to be easily accessible by all users. This said, the team strongly advocated to the municipal authorities for the contractor to ensure that the House provides full access to people with disabilities, and fast and easy access for all users, including comfortable furniture. In the last meeting among SA team and the municipality, as well as from the site inspections, all accessibility requirements were met, and this is a major achievement of the SA team, who were very vocal on this matter.

Another important aspect for the SA team was for the facilities to provide adequate intimacy while using the house. This said, the SA team recommended for the municipality to consider employing a flexible approach in this regard by enabling spaces, that if required by users, to be utilized only by women or men. As a solution thought was providing the facilities with some soft division panels in a form of a greenery wall that are not static but can be used whenever such a request arises. In terms of staff members, the SA team recommended the municipality for the staff working in the House for Elderly Care to be equally distributed among both genders.

Finally, the SA team also proposed to municipal authorities to consider an additional budget in order to arrange and maintain the outdoor space, and provide direct access to the main city park which is just a few meters away. Other recommendations delivered by the SA team included the following:

- ✓ Drafting of a proper four-year strategy for the activities to be undertaken by the Elderly House;
- ✓ Ensure the furniture purchased is comfortable for usage;
- ✓ Establish a library that would be available to all users and ensure it is regularly enriched with new titles, daily newspapers and other informational documents available to them;
- ✓ On a regular basis, organize different debates with experts, in specific to health issues and ensure members are proactively participating in such activities;
- ✓ Municipal authorities should facilitate a cooperation memorandum between the House for Elderly Use and the art school "Odhise Paskali", in order for the latter to organize mini programs and musicals for the users of the elderly care;
- ✓ The Healthcare Services Department at the municipality should ensure systematic medical checks are provided to the users of the Elderly House and medications are provided free of charge, if possible.

Actions Undertaken by Municipal Authorities

Recommendations were all thoroughly discussed with municipal stakeholders, and they committed before the team that all of them will be foreseen with the next year's budgetary reviewing. GLPS will closely follow the progress of this commitment and the extent to which the municipality ensured these recommendations are implemented. Due to most recommendations pertaining to the period after the House for Daily Use of Elderly People, actions can only be evaluated after the facilities are inaugurated, which is expected to happen by the end of this year.

This facility will be fully managed by the Department for Healthcare Services within the municipality, and is one of the first models which will be fully available for the third-generation citizens, and will function all year long. The SA Team pushed forward the idea of having regular medical checks for the users of the center, which is something that has been promised by the municipal authorities.

On the other hand, the recommendation to provide direct access to the park and to maintain the outdoors space was fully accepted by the municipality. As a result, the contractor has committing in delivering this aspect and citizens will be able to have a fast access to the park area nearby.

ART SCHOOL “ODHISE PASKALI”



Background of the Project

When in 2017 the Municipality of Peja decided to demolish the old art school's facilities, a huge debate was initiated by the local civil society organizations, artistic community and media. Strongly opposing the municipality's decision, many of them argued that demolishing the old facilities is a crime against cultural heritage and the city's identity³. Moreover, the old school was considered to be among the very few Austro-Hungarian architecture buildings that were still existent in Peja.

Despite the ongoing harsh criticism and disapprovals, the municipality decided to demolish the old facilities arguing that they impose serious life-threatening risks and are no longer available for use by the students and staff. This said, in August 2017, the municipality opened a procurement process to construct a new and more contemporary school for the art lovers of Peja, but not only. Young students from all across Kosovo are enrolled in this school. The estimated budget was 480,000 €, fully funded by the municipality. Out of eight eligible bidders, the municipality selected "Armendi FA" as the successful bidder with the lowest price of 331, 562.30 €.

The municipality's approach during this process was highly criticized as non-inclusive, as none of the beneficiaries or citizens were consulted during this period. However, the municipality proceeded with signing a contract by end of October 2017, providing the contractor with a timeframe of 14 months to implement the project, with an end date of December 31, 2018.

³ KultPlus, 07 September 2017, "A trace of collective memory disappears in Peja, the building of the school "OdhisePaskali" is demolished", <https://www.kultplus.com/trashegimia/zhduket-edhe-nje-gjurme-e-kujteses-kolektive-ne-peje-rrenohet-objekti-shkolles-odhise-paskali/>



Meeting of the SA Team with municipal officials in Peja

Social Audit Team and Performance Indicators

Social audit team

Implementation of "HOUSE FOR DAILY USE OF ELDERLY"



Social audit members

- 10 members
- the team included the school director, teachers, students and parents.



Goals of social audit

- drafting a list of findings that were later transposed into recommendations

When our initiative took place, approximately 70% of rough construction of the art school was concluded. To monitor the remaining implementation, an SA team composed of ten people was created. The school has a special profile and is home to more than 400 students. To ensure diversity, the team included the school director, teachers, students and parents. To evaluate the overall performance, the SA team put joint efforts in drafting a list of findings that were later transposed into recommendations. In a year period, more than ten meetings and visits were organized. The list of indicators developed for this project is provided below.

Indicators from the Social Audit Team

- | | |
|--------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Indicator 1 | Project feasibility plan completed prior to commencing the project |
| Indicator 2 | Selection of the tender winner for project implementation based on the criteria as defined by law |
| Indicator 3 | The operating company responsible for the work to be undertaken, selected |

Indicator 4	The staff of the construction company responsible for the implementation of the project selected
Indicator 5	Project implemented according to the dynamic plan and deadlines stipulated in the contract
Indicator 6	Budget for the implementation of the project well planned and based on real market prices for this type of project
Indicator 7	If any delays occurred, the dynamic working capacity increased by pressuring the contracted company, through municipality representatives
Indicator 8	Regular monitoring of project implementation by the relevant municipal departments
Indicator 9	Regular monitoring of project implementation by the social audit team
Indicator 10	Regular meeting (very frequent, and on need basis) of members of the social audit team regarding the project implementation process
Indicator 11	Regular meetings of the members of the SA team with the Municipal Assembly regarding the project implementation process starting from September 2019 and till the end of the project
Indicator 12	The efficiency and efforts of the Procurement Department within the municipality in coordinating, communication and improvement of the mission of the Social Audit team
Indicator 13	At least 200 students and other citizens satisfied with the implementation of the project
Indicator 14	The Art School is fully-functional by the given deadline stipulated in the contract
Indicator 15	The maintenance of the Art School is being provided regularly

Main Findings from the Social Audit

It should be noted that significant delays were identified for this project. Although the contract stipulates an ending date on December 2018, the project was yet at its 60% when the SA Team was established on May 2019. One of the main findings leading to this significant delay was the inappropriate budgetary planning for the materials to be used for construction. More precisely, the budget planned for the construction of the façade was incompliant with the quality of the material specified in the terms and conditions. As a result, the contractor lacked financial means to purchase the same quality façade, while other options were highly opposed by the SA Team.

This situation led to many complications during the process and significantly hampered the overall implementation. In this case, the municipality failed to properly assess the bidder's proposal and easily identify such discrepancies with a simple market research. If the municipality would have properly assessed the proposal, such inappropriate budgetary planning would be avoided. The school is one year late and is yet to be inaugurated by end of this year, with this being the main reason for such a delay. In addition, the SA Team concluded that in some cases raw materials used for the school are less qualitative than what was originally planned. For example, linoleum was used in some cases.

This product has a five-year life expectancy and should be replaced afterwards. In addition, sheets of tin on the roof do not cover all the frames because of that the facade drains into water. Furthermore, new school facilities lacked appropriate accessibility standards, and there were many aspects that needed immediate attention in terms of safety. The school staff has identified many of these issues even prior to engaging with the SA Team but did not have the chance to discuss them with the local authorities.

Findings

- the inappropriate budgetary planning for the materials to be used for construction
- the project did not foresee separate toilets for the school staff
- the school was built below the street level
- the school lacked proper air/ventilation system



Recommendations for the Project

Through the SA Team, the director and the rest of the staff members were able to compile a detailed list of issues that were of an immediate need of attention, and had long discussions with municipal representatives in the upcoming period. For instance, the project did not foresee separate toilets for the school staff, so they made an ad-hoc solution by transforming toilets for people with disabilities into toilets to be used by the school staff. This said, the accessibility standards were violated and not nearly ensured. As a result, the SA Team requested the municipality to find an appropriate solution in order to guarantee the accessibility standards are met.

In terms of safety, an issue that was highly concerning was that the school is built below the street level; therefore, it is exposed to potential risk of flooding. From the meetings held, the SA Team found out that water already started to drain in three places. This is an immediate risk that was required to be addressed by the municipality. Similarly, the stain-steel stairs seemed to not be sufficiently secure to withstand the movements of the students. This way, the SA Team asked the municipality to make sure that these stairs are inspected prior the school is to be functionalized.

The facilities also lacked proper air/ventilation system. In the hallway, there were sitting areas that might be dangerous to use considering the age of the students. All these issues were presented in front of municipal stakeholders. Another concerning aspect was the plexus glass used for the upper construction of the school. It should be inspected whether it imposes a risk in cases of natural disasters. In general, the SA Team evaluated that there are many safety aspects that should be addressed prior the facility is functionalized, and external engineers must be engaged to assess the overall safety standards.

Actions Taken by Municipal Authorities

The SA team took immediate action in discussing alternatives with the municipal authorities. Providing additional funding for the façade, the risk of flooding, plexus glass used for construction of the roof, unstable stainless steel glasses was discussed as an option. All these aspects were fully taken into consideration by the authorities. The municipality reacted promptly upon the request by providing additional budget for the project, so that the adequate façade is processed.

To address the abovementioned concerns and recommendations, in July 2020, the municipality opened an additional procurement process and a contract of 63,996.00 € awarded to Green Construction LLC, under the title "Construction of the Art School Odhise Paskali – Final Phase⁴". The contract was provided for the remaining work, including the façade, ground leveling to mitigate potential flooding, safety measures and other aspects that remained unfinished.

SOCIAL AUDIT IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF GJILAN

In the Municipality of Gjilan, GLPS brought together two different SA teams for the purposes of monitoring two infrastructural initiatives undertaken by the municipality. In comparison to other selected municipalities, Gjilan was the less responsive one and many documents were received with significant delays. Similarly, the municipal officials were hard to reach and barely available for more frequent meetings. On the other hand, Gjilan is the only municipality that contracts an external company to oversee the implementation of contracts awarded.

THE PROMENADE OF THE SOUTHERN PART OF MIRUSHA RIVER



⁴ Municipality of Peja website. Via: <https://kk.rks-gov.net/peje/wp-content/uploads/sites/24/2020/07/B08-Njoftim-per-dhenje-te-kontrates-2-3.pdf>

Background of the Project

A river flowing downtown Gjilan was imposing huge problems for citizens living nearby. What was known as Mirusha River was mostly a canal that had an unbearable smell, due to sewage problems. In order to address this pertinent issue, a procurement process was opened by the municipality in 2012. A total sum of 3.7 Million Euro was allocated for this purpose, in addition to two other contracts foreseen for the renovation purposes. The project was divided into phases, with the municipality planning for the area to be totally revitalized by the end of 2019.

In July 2017, the municipality opened a procurement process for the revitalization of the space around southern part of the river. A total amount of 350,000.00 €, and the project was foreseen to be concluded within a period of 180 days⁵. As a result, in October 2017, "EL-BAU" Sh.p.k. was awarded the contract with a total amount of 294,489.00 €. The final goal of this project was to revitalize the space around the southern part of the river, ensure sewage is well isolated and the issue with the unbearable fecal smell is solved.



Meeting with the SA Team for Mirusha River in Gjilan

⁵ Municipality of Gjilan, Website, Via: file:///C:/Users/GLPS-3/Downloads/B52%20Njoftimi%20per%20nenshkrimin%20e%20kontrates.Pdf

Social Audit Team and Performance Indicators

Social audit team

Implementation of "THE PROMENADE OF THE SOUTHERN PART OF MIRUSHA RIVER"



Social audit members

- a group of twelve (12) citizens



Goals of social audit

- to 'pressure' municipal authorities to conclude the project within a short time

The contract to revitalize the southern part of the River Mirusha was signed on October 2017, with the aim of the work to be concluded within a period of 180 days. One of the main issues the citizens of the area were experiencing was the unbearable smell due to the sewage problems. As often, the contractor failed to deliver within the agreed timeframe. When our project commenced in May 2019, almost a year later, only around 70% of work was concluded. For the purposes of accelerating the process, GLPS started identifying citizens living nearby and that could join the Social Audit team for this particular project. As a result, within a month, a group of twelve (12) citizens joined the SA Team, under a specific list of indicators to be monitored.

The main goal of the SA Team was to 'pressure' municipal authorities to conclude the project within a short time. In order to receive first-hand information, the project conducted several site visits to the construction area. The first field inspections were unpleasant, and the team members barely stood the dreadful smell in the area. During the meetings the SA Team had with the local authorities and the contractor, they were informed that the main reason for the delay was the unforeseen challenges with the sewage and the additional work needed due to the issue. As informed, with the then pace of work, the project was foreseen to be concluded by end 2019. The SA Team was highly committed towards closely monitoring the project and many site visits took place during the project period.

In general, the SA Team was highly concerned with the delays on the implementation of this project. According to them, the revitalization of the area around River Mirusha was a long-promised initiative in each of the electoral process for 20 year now. Nevertheless, the project is thus far delayed and unlikely to be finished during 2020.

Indicators from the Social Audit Team

- | | |
|--------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Indicator 1 | Project feasibility plan completed prior to commencing the project |
| Indicator 2 | Selection of the tender winner for project implementation based on the criteria as defined by law |

Indicator 3	The operating company responsible for the work to be undertaken, selected
Indicator 4	The staff of the construction company responsible for the implementation of the project selected
Indicator 5	Project implemented according to the dynamic plan and deadlines stipulated in the contract
Indicator 6	Budget for the implementation of the project well planned and based on real market prices for this type of project
Indicator 7	If any delays occurred, the dynamic working capacity increased by pressuring the contracted company, through municipality representatives
Indicator 8	Regular monitoring of project implementation by the relevant municipal departments
Indicator 9	Regular monitoring of project implementation by the social audit team
Indicator 10	Regular meeting (very frequent, and on need basis) of members of the social audit team regarding the project implementation process
Indicator 11	Regular meetings of the members of the SA team with the Municipal Assembly regarding the project implementation process starting from September 2019 and till the end of the project
Indicator 12	The efficiency and efforts of the Procurement Department within the municipality in coordinating, communication and improvement of the mission of the Social Audit team
Indicator 13	At least 400 citizens are satisfied with the implementation of the project
Indicator 14	The area is fully functional, the sewage problem with the smell is solved, by the given deadline stipulated in the contract
Indicator 15	The Promenade is regularly maintained by the municipality, including cleaning and gardening

Main Findings from the Social Audit

At the beginning of the monitoring process, the SA Team for the River Mirusha project was provided with the full tender dossier and other relevant documents. One of the main challenges encountered in the very beginning were the difficulties to access the relevant documents for the project. While some documents were accessible online, the project plan, feasibility aspects, and some other information were not available. Moreover, the team concluded that the procurement process was followed by some issues that raised concerns among them. For instance, they found out that the deadline for tendering was shortened to 18 days, while the Law on Public Procurement requires a 20-day period for the tendering procedure to remain open. In addition, an economic operator whom was declared non-eligible during the tendering procedure due to discriminatory criteria was subsequently contracted by the winning bidder "EL-BAU", despite the abovementioned issues. One of the main concerns of the SA Team was the significant delays encountered.

Due to the sewage problem, the nearby area was a difficult one to live, and the smell coming from the river was alarming. Many of the members living in the area were part of the SA team and they shared their experiences with the rest of the members. The most challenging aspect for the group was to

find means to pressure the municipality to pick up the pace and conclude the remaining work as fast as possible. Another aspect that divided the team in terms of opinions was the issue with covering one part of the river in order to prevent further smelling coming from the canal. While majority of them was pro covering the river, few of them found the idea wrong, unnecessary and against the environment standards. Both opinions were discussed with the municipal stakeholders and covering some parts of the river with concrete was the best option and probably the final one. According to them, covering the river will not only solve the smelling problem but it will also protect the area from potential flooding in cases of natural catastrophes.

Overall, significant delays were apparent during the execution of work for the revitalization of the southern part of the River Mirusha. This said, it is open to discussion whether the contracted company has the full capacities and is able to monitor all initiatives undertaken by the municipality. The project of River Mirusha is a long promised one and it has been seven years since the whole process started. However, it is 2020 and the municipality failed to keep the promise⁶. Moreover, one of the contractor's that was initially evaluated as ineligible due to discriminatory criteria was sub-contracted by the winning bidder despite the fact.

Findings

- significant delays encountered.
- one of the contractors that was initially evaluated as ineligible due to discriminatory criteria was sub-contracted by the winning bidder despite the fact



Recommendations of the Social Audit

The SA Team also concluded that the project lacks recreational areas and greenery spaces in order for citizens to make the best use of it. This way, the SA Team compiled a list of proposals for the local authorities to consider with the final work. A playground for children with disabilities, a mini-sports corner, a small library, and a corner where artworks can be exposed, were among the ideas proposed by the SA Team. Ultimately, the team considers that this southern area should serve well to all those living nearby and should be a place where citizens can enjoy themselves, and this could only be achieved through ensuring such recreational spaces for them.

Actions Undertaken by Municipal Authorities

These ideas were well-received by the municipal officials and the team was promised that additional budget was allocated during August 2020⁷ to address these common issues. Fundamentally, the team considered that these concerns would be better avoided if the municipality employs an inclusive approach and the citizens are included in these initiatives from the

⁶ Kallxo.com, "The legend of Mirusha: The 3.7 mil Euro project is not concluded event after 7 years", 23 December 2019, Via: <https://kallxo.com/krypometer/legjenda-e-mirushes-projekti-3-7-milionesh-nuk-perfundon-as-pas-7-viteve/>

⁷ Municipality of Peja (website). Available at: <https://kk.rks-gov.net/peje/wp-content/uploads/sites/24/2020/08/KONTRATA-Nr.-021.pdf>

beginning and not only after the project is about to be concluded. Overall, by implementing this procurement activity, the municipality will solve a long-standing issue which, as per the SA team findings, is the sewage smelling and the high risk for the neighborhoods nearby.

SPORT FACILITIES IN POGRAGJE



Background of the Project

In 2018, the Municipality of Gjilan opened a procurement process for the construction of a Sports Facility for Small Football, Volleyball and Basketball⁸ in a small village of Pogradje, a few kilometers from the city. For this purpose, an amount of 30,000.00 € was allocated from the municipal funds. In July 2018, a contract was signed with the company named “H-Projekt”, who agreed to conclude the project in couple of months and within year 2019. Of all projects monitored, this was the only one that was finished within the given timeframe. With a total amount of 22.568,64 €, the contractor managed to deliver on time, and the facilities were already being used by the inhabitants.



Meeting with the SA Team of Pogradje

8 Municipality of Gjilan. Available at: <https://kk.rks-gov.net/gjilan/wp-content/uploads/sites/11/2018/07/B05-Njoftim-per-Kontrat-terenet-sportive.pdf>

Social Audit Team and Performance Indicators

Social audit team

Implementation of "SPORT FACILITIES IN POGRAGJE"



Social audit members

- a team of eighteen (18) people



Goals of social audit

- to inspect whether the project was delivered according to the contract specification

When the SA team was established, the project was already concluded and functional. On a very positive note, the project surprisingly found a well-organized village and a very active community in Pogradje. From numerous visits conducted, the project was happy to find that the Village Council is a very active one, and even the idea to construct the sports facility came from the village inhabitants themselves.

In order to inspect whether the project was delivered according to the contract specifications, a team of eighteen (18) people was brought together under the social audit. In addition to the specific project that was being monitored, the SA Team brought forward many other issues on other initiatives and that were thoroughly discussed with the municipal authorities. This SA Team in particular was a very active one and many ideas were discussed during the regular meetings held. *(A photo from the Social Audit Team meeting, August 2019)*

Indicators from the Social Audit Team

Indicator 1	Project feasibility plan completed prior to commencing the project
Indicator 2	Selection of the tender winner for project implementation based on the criteria as defined by law
Indicator 3	The operating company responsible for the work to be undertaken, selected
Indicator 4	The staff of the construction company responsible for the implementation of the project selected
Indicator 5	Project implemented according to the dynamic plan and deadlines stipulated in the contract
Indicator 6	Budget for the implementation of the project well planned and based on real market prices for this type of project
Indicator 7	If any delays occurred, the dynamic working capacity increased by pressuring the contracted company, through municipality representatives
Indicator 8	Regular monitoring of project implementation by the relevant municipal departments

Indicator 9	Regular monitoring of project implementation by the social audit team
Indicator 10	Regular meeting (very frequent, and on need basis) of members of the social audit team regarding the project implementation process
Indicator 11	Regular meetings of the members of the SA team with the Municipal Assembly regarding the project implementation process starting from September 2019 and till the end of the project
Indicator 12	The efficiency and efforts of the Procurement Department within the municipality in coordinating, communication and improvement of the mission of the Social Audit team
Indicator 13	At least 100 citizens are satisfied with the implementation of the project
Indicator 14	The Sports area is fully functional by the given deadline stipulated in the contract
Indicator 15	The sports facilities are regularly maintained by the municipality, including cleaning and gardening

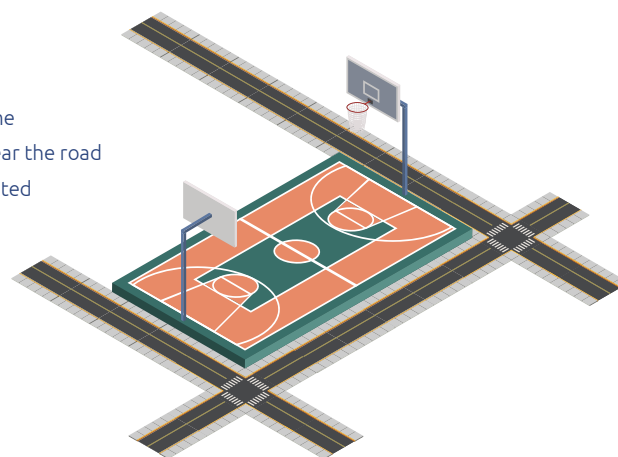
Main Findings from the Social Audit

In principle, the community was largely satisfied with the quality delivered for the construction of the sports facility in Pogradje. They were mostly pleased about the project being concluded within the foreseen timeframe. Nevertheless, some minor issues were yet of a concern for them. For instance, majority of them prepared to use a more user-friendly material for the flooring and not the asphalt that was used. They preferred artificial grass as the facilities are also used by children, that way, potential injuries could be avoided. In addition, safety nets are also lacking and as the facilities are near the road, often children are exposed to potential risk from the cars.

Finally, the area nearby facilities was left untreated. Since people use the field during the night as well, the citizens were obliged to voluntarily set proper lighting when used at that time. As a result, the SA Team proposed for the municipality to consider additional budget for safety measures to be properly in place. One of the key challenges during the monitoring period was the accessing some of the documents.

Findings

- largely satisfied with the quality delivered for the construction
- concluded within the foreseen timeframe
- lack of safety nets as the facilities are near the road
- the area nearby facilities was left untreated



Recommendations for the Project

Overall, citizens were complaining about the lack of inclusiveness approach and proper communication with their constituents. The community in the small village of Pogradje served as a perfect example of what an organized community can achieve. During the monitoring period, the SA team of this village did not only raise their concerns on the selected project, but they went beyond their mandate. They seized the opportunity to discuss other aspects that would further improve the well-being of the village inhabitants, whenever a meeting with the local authorities was organized.

Actions Undertaken by Municipal Authorities

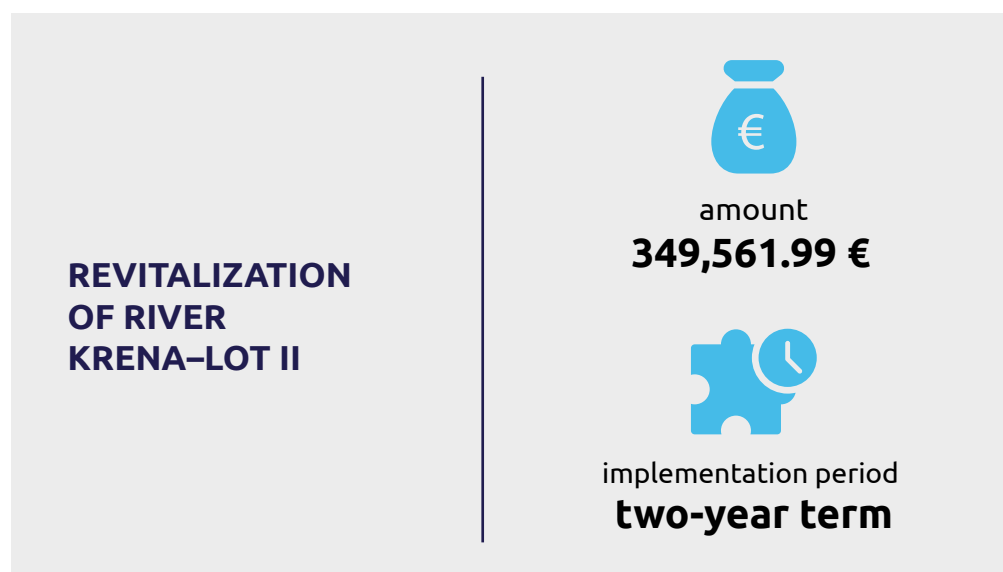
What remains to be seen is whether there is an increased willingness of municipal authorities to engage in a well-structured and professional dialogue with the citizens whenever similar initiatives are undertaken. As the project was concluded and most aspects of concern regarding the sports facility were already addressed by the community itself, there was anything left for the municipal authorities to do in this regard. However, one the SA Team of Pogradje managed to present numerous new ideas in front of the municipal stakeholders and pushed forward the fact that it is mandatory for the local authorities to employ an inclusive approach whenever new procurement activities are made available.

It remains to be seen whether these requests are properly addressed in the upcoming period. Cooperation with external parties is one of the key aspects that the municipality should for certain consider improving. In principle, municipalities should commit towards continuous improvement of communication with their citizens, resulting in an increased transparency and accountability. Despite these difficulties encountered in the beginning, municipal official were responsive to the meetings organized, with them attending each meeting requested by the SA teams. On a positive note, during a meeting with the Mayor, the project was informed that the municipality already contracts a company to oversee the implementation of all contracts implemented by the municipality, which is among few municipalities that employ such approach.

SOCIAL AUDIT IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF GJAKOVA

In the Municipality of Gjakova, two similar infrastructural projects were selected for assessment, differing only in terms of size. The first one was the main city park which was considered one of the biggest initiatives undertaken during this mandate, while the second one included revitalization of the riverbed of few kilometers of the River Krena. Overall, the municipality was very responsive towards the project and many joint activities were organized during the implementation period.

REVITALIZATION OF RIVER KRENA–LOT II



Background of the Project

In July 2017, the Municipality of Gjakova signed a two-year contract with N.T.Sh. “Korben” for the purpose of the revitalization of 2.5 km of space around River Krena in the city – Lot 2. The project was initiated by the Municipality and was co-financed by then the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning. For this purpose, a budget of 349,561.99 € was agreed. The main goal for this project was to provide the citizens living nearby with an area that could be used for recreational purposes. In the past, River Krena was highly polluted with garbage and smelled a lot due to problems with the sewage. As a result, the municipality reacted through Lot 1 to address these multiple problems. As the first Lot has been concluded, the second one would deal with the last 2.5 km remaining.

The idea was to provide citizens with a pleasant space to spend their spare time, and in the meantime avoid the longtime problems with garbage and smelling while preserving the nature around. As stipulated in the contract⁹, the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning has planned to finance the whole amount for the first year, with an overall budget of 220.000 Euros, while the rest will be financed by the municipality.

9 Municipality of Gjakova, available at: <https://kk.rks-gov.net/gjakove/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2018/07/Rregullimi-i-shtratit-t%C3%83%C2%AB-lumit-Krena-nga-ura-n%C3%83%C2%AB-rrug%C3%83%C2%ABn-Yllka-Domi-deri-n%C3%83%C2%AB-ur%C3%83%C2%ABn-e-rrug%C3%83%C2%ABs-Ismail-Qemali-Gjakov%C3%83%C2%AB.pdf>



Meeting with the SA Teams in Gjakova

Social Audit Team and Performance Indicators

A Social Audit Team of ten (10) citizens was established to further monitor and assess the implementation of this particular project. When the SA team started the monitoring activities, the project was at approximately 40% of work concluded. The project was signed in July 2017 and was expected to be fully functional within a two-year term. During the initial meetings held, the team did not anticipate any delays considering the pace of implementation, with the project realistically to be finished by December 2019 the latest.

After consulting all available documents and after numerous joint discussions, the SA Team unanimously agreed that the project has a vision and is fairly creative. Furthermore, they congratulated the quality of the material being used in most of the areas that were under construction back then.

Indicators from the Social Audit Team

- | | |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Indicator 1 | Project feasibility plan completed prior to commencing the project |
| Indicator 2 | Selection of the tender winner for project implementation based on the criteria as defined by law |
| Indicator 3 | The operating company responsible for the work to be undertaken, selected |
| Indicator 4 | The staff of the construction company responsible for the implementation of the project selected |
| Indicator 5 | Project implemented according to the dynamic plan and deadlines stipulated in the contract |
| Indicator 6 | Budget for the implementation of the project well planned and based on real market prices for this type of project |
| Indicator 7 | If any delays occurred, the dynamic working capacity increased by pressuring the contracted company, through municipality representatives |

Indicator 8	Regular monitoring of project implementation by the relevant municipal departments
Indicator 9	Regular monitoring of project implementation by the social audit team
Indicator 10	Regular meeting (very frequent, and on need basis) of members of the social audit team regarding the project implementation process
Indicator 11	Regular meetings of the members of the SA team with the Municipal Assembly regarding the project implementation process starting from September 2019 and till the end of the project
Indicator 12	The efficiency and efforts of the Procurement Department within the municipality in coordinating, communication and improvement of the mission of the Social Audit team
Indicator 13	At least 500 citizens are satisfied with the implementation of the project
Indicator 14	The City Park is fully functional by the given deadline stipulated in the contract
Indicator 15	The Park is regularly maintained by the municipality, including cleaning and gardening

Main Findings from the Social Audit

Overall, this municipal initiative was welcomed by citizens. After many field visits, the SA Team concluded that the raw material used for construction purposes is of a high quality, and that the project was creatively designed. The path that connects the park with Shkugez area was strategically thought well. In terms of implementation, the project was timely concluded with only a slight delay of a month. As of now, the space is fully functional and frequently used by the citizens of Gjakova. In spite of this, there were some concerns that were thoroughly discussed with the municipal stakeholders.

The SA Team criticized municipality's approach during the process. More precisely, the team concluded that the municipality did not properly consult citizens or the professionals during the designing phase. Although assessed as a highly creative project, it considerably lacks areas that could be used for recreational purposes by the citizens. Should they have been consulted, such aspects could have been avoided, argued the members of the SA team. When the contract notice was published, the project was already designed and citizens were not involved at all, which was negatively evaluated considering the high number of citizens that will be using the area. However, the team committed to improve the situation during the monitoring period and provided the municipality with a list of recommendations on this matter.

Findings

- the raw material used for construction purposes is of a high quality
- the project was creatively designed
- citizens or the professionals were not properly consult during the designing phase
- it considerably lacks areas that could be used for recreational purposes by the citizens



Recommendations for the Project

For the Revitalization of the Krena River, the SA team required that during this working phase the contracting authority should ensure the river is not being abused. In addition, they asked the municipality to remain cautious regarding the environment protection, including waste and sewage that might pose serious threats around the area. Furthermore, they emphasized the fact that the area needs regular maintenance in order best serve citizens.

Another major concern that also led to some minor delays was the illegal buildings surrounding the area. As the project progressed, many illegal businesses started to build near the area, and that could seriously harm the overall project. The SA Team recommended the authorities to provide construction permits only as per the official quotes for the area in order to avoid any such harmful events that could ruin the overall idea.

Another mainly safety related concern was for the bridges being built in the area, which were assessed as unsteady and dangerous to use due to not being horizontal but arched bridges. As such, they impose danger to elderly people and children, especially in winter. Also, the team recommended the authorities to inspect the contractor during the time these bridges are built so that the flow of the river is not harmed in any way. In addition, the SA Team recommended the authorities to also deal with the excessive waste disposed in the area and the sewage.

On a positive note, they applauded the local authorities on the quality of material used on different parts of the area. They also are aware of the significance of this project has in properly addressing the flow of the river, and that it will provide a lot of new parking lots. In addition, they also stated that the project itself did not foresee any recreational areas whatsoever, and this is an issue that should be thoroughly discussed with municipal representatives. Additionally, the municipality was criticized for not consulting the community when designing the project.

Actions Undertaken by Municipal Authorities

Local authorities were welcoming of the fact that the SA team for this particular project included engineers, architects and people of relevant experience in similar projects. Most recommendations deriving from the monitoring period were adapted by the municipality. The project has been inaugurated and there was an overall positive citizens' feedback for the project.

The bridges that were already constructed were not addressed due to lack of budget, however, the municipality promised to consider this aspect for the remaining part of the river, whenever a new procurement process is opened. As such, the project is considered attractive, and most importantly, has addressed a pertinent smelling problem that the area imposed when was left untreated.

MAIN CITY PARK



Background of the Project

In April 2019, the municipality signed a contract worth 362.388,18 € for the construction of the City Park in the center of Gjakova. A consortium of two companies undertook the implementation of a three-year project¹⁰. Under the presence of the Mayor himself, the project started implementing on April 2019¹¹. The city park is one of the biggest projects undertaken during this four-year mandate and aims to serve all citizens of Gjakova. According to the design, this park will be unique and one of the biggest parks in Kosovo.

The park is foreseen to be rich in terms of plantation and with a few recreational areas within. Two small coffee shops, a flower shop and a small library will make this park even more unique. The park will have a surrounding wall of 80 cm and will have six entrances available for its users. The overall project was foreseen to be concluded during 2019. Although an initial procurement process started before that, it was cancelled due to some problems identified with one of the companies considered to have close ties with the political party the Mayor represents¹².

¹⁰ Municipality of Gjakova, Website. Via: file:///C:/Users/GLPS-3/Downloads/B52%20Njoftimi%20per%20nenshkrimin%20e%20kontrates%20(2).Pdf

¹¹ Koha.net, "The work for construction of the city park in Gjakova begins", 18 April 2019. Via: <https://www.koha.net/kosove/157578/nisin-punimet-ne-rregullimin-e-parkut-te-madh-te-gjakoves/>

¹² Arbresh.info, "Gjakova may remain without the park as the tender will not be awarded to a person from the AAK", 13 March 2019. Via: <http://www.arbresh.info/lajmet/gjakova-mbetet-pa-e-rregulluar-parkun-e-qytetit-tenderin-assesi-ta-merr-njeriu-i-aak-se/>



During the construction of the City Park in Gjakova

Social Audit Team and Performance Indicators

Social audit team

Implementation of "MAIN CITY PARK"



Social audit members

- a team of eighteen (18) people



Goals of social audit

- to inspect whether the project was delivered according to the contract specification



regular visits and meetings
with municipal authorities

When a team of ten (10) people gathered under the Social Audit Team, the park already started implementing, with almost 30% of work concluded, and is planned to be concluded within a year. The park will serve to a large number of citizens and will serve as a perfect spot due to its strategic location. For the purposes of closely inspecting the implementation of the project, the SA Team combines regular visits and meetings with municipal authorities.

Prior to the meetings, the SA Team consulted all documents available in order to have an overview of the whole procurement process that was followed with a lot of attention due to the Procurement Review Body (PRB) cancelling the initial contract agreed with another consortia, mainly due to political ties of the owners. In 2018, the municipality of Gjakova awarded the contract to

a consortium of companies, with one of the owners being a member of the same political party as the Mayor of Gjakova. After a complaint filed by one of the bidders, the PRB required a re-assessment of the contract. The complaint stipulated that the municipality intentionally tried to prevent other bidders the opportunity to complain, by unlawfully trying to shorten the period other bidders could use for filing complaints. Despite the PRB's decision, for the second time, the municipality awarded the same consortium.

After a third re-assessment was requested, the municipality finally suspended the contract. A new contract with another consortium was reached only in April 2019. The aim of the Social Audit Team was to assess whether the project is respecting the implementation pace and is respecting the contract specification appropriately.

Indicators from the Social Audit Team

Indicator 1	Project feasibility plan completed prior to commencing the project
Indicator 2	Selection of the tender winner for project implementation based on the criteria as defined by law
Indicator 3	The operating company responsible for the work to be undertaken, selected
Indicator 4	The staff of the construction company responsible for the implementation of the project selected
Indicator 5	Project implemented according to the dynamic plan and deadlines stipulated in the contract
Indicator 6	Budget for the implementation of the project well planned and based on real market prices for this type of project
Indicator 7	If any delays occurred, the dynamic working capacity increased by pressuring the contracted company, through municipality representatives
Indicator 8	Regular monitoring of project implementation by the relevant municipal departments
Indicator 9	Regular monitoring of project implementation by the social audit team
Indicator 10	Regular meeting (very frequent, and on need basis) of members of the social audit team regarding the project implementation process
Indicator 11	Regular meetings of the members of the SA team with the Municipal Assembly regarding the project implementation process starting from September 2019 and till the end of the project
Indicator 12	The efficiency and efforts of the Procurement Department within the municipality in coordinating, communication and improvement of the mission of the Social Audit team
Indicator 13	At least 500 citizens are satisfied with the implementation of the project
Indicator 14	The City Park is fully functional by the given deadline stipulated in the contract
Indicator 15	The Park is regularly maintained by the municipality, including cleaning and gardening

Main Findings from the Social Audit

Overall, the SA Team was highly satisfied with the implementation so far. Most of work was being conducted within the given timeframe and according to the initial plan. Nevertheless, minor delays have been identified and the SA Team alerted the municipality on this. In general, the SA Team remained skeptical on the idea of having coffee shops inside the park, since many of them can be located just outside the park area and are easily accessible. Another issue that was discussed with the municipality is the lack of accessibility means for people with disabilities.

One of the recommendations of the team was to install some static games and exercising tools for this community, an idea highly welcomed by the officials. At the end of the project, the SA Team agreed to discuss with Handikos in order for them to file a requirement for such tool to be made available by the municipality. Due to the pandemic and some slight delays, the inauguration of the park has been delayed and is expected to be finished only by the end of 2020.

Findings

- minor delays
- the lack of accessibility means for people with disabilities



Recommendations for the Project

The SA team aimed to push forward numerous recommendations that help accelerate the process of implementation and provided the local authorities with extensive lists with recommendations to improve the overall implementation period. Regarding the park, the SA Team reminded the municipality that the park will also be used by people with disabilities and providing them with means to enjoy the park, many options can be available for them. In this regard, the team agreed with the municipality to seek help from Handikos in order to make this possible. Also, the team recommended the municipality to use less concrete during the concluding phase, and ensure more greenery areas and smooth paths for the citizens of all ages.

Actions Undertaken by Municipal Authorities

The city park is yet to be finished and the project will closely follow whether the recommendations of the SA Team were considered during this conclusion phase. Although initially the progress was evident, during the upcoming months, due to the pandemic mostly, the pace has significantly slowed down. Although it is almost the end of the year, the project is nowhere near to be concluded. This said, it remains to be seen whether recommendations coming from the SA team are taken into consideration, as municipal authorities claimed to.

4. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The Social Audit, jointly designed by USAID TEAM and GLPS resulted in a valuable instrument to ensure public accountability, participatory democracy, and transparency during service delivery. Moreover, through Social Audit citizens were able to increase their relevance and keep their elected ones accountable for the promised initiatives. By engaging citizens in monitoring the public funds expenditure, the project managed to increase citizenry activism in identifying shortcomings of the performance of local governments in general.

In most cases, municipalities disregard the community and only in few occasions are they consulted during the project planning phase and onwards. In a worst-case scenario, citizens are repeatedly excluded from the decision-making processes.

This initiative supported by the USAID TEAM sought to provide a perfect example on how proper results can be achieved when citizens are included and consulted by the local authorities. In Peja, the project managed to even interlink both projects by proposing the “OdhisePaskali” Art School to sign a Memorandum of Understanding with the House for Daily Use of Elderly people, in order for the former to provide with music concerts for the elderly citizens.

In most cases, the Social Audit teams were able to provide concrete advises on safety measures in order to avoid any danger for the end users of these infrastructural projects. In Gjilan, the project enabled the very active community of Pogragje to consult the local authorities on many other initiatives beyond the project that the group was monitoring at that given period. In turn, our team also tried to push forward numerous policy recommendations for the aforementioned issues tackled during the project.

Although some of the changes might seem minor and technical in their nature, they have a major impact in the daily life of the citizens of these municipalities. In most cases, vast results were achieved. Citizens engaged were able to push forward their recommendations and most implementation processes were accelerated whenever there was a need.

During the joint dialogue with the municipal authorities, citizens involved were given the opportunity to discuss other matters, initiatives and concerns, beyond their mandate and the projects they were assessing. As a result, they were provided with a window to address many shortcomings that were of a greater concern, and had the chance to professionally put forward ideas that will outlast the project implemented by the GLPS. Most importantly, during the whole period, the communities felt involved in the decision-making process during the implementation of these procurement processes, and did not feel neglected by the local authorities. Finally, the project served as a perfect exemplary in increasing and empowering citizen involvement and the reactive approach in keeping their municipalities accountable and transparent with regards to the initiatives that are directly financed by their taxes.

Policy Recommendations

Based on the work of social audits in three municipalities, GLPS has prepared the following policy recommendations for implementation of their capital investment projects:

- ✓ Preparing feasibility studies should become a regular part of any contract in order to avoid any further changes or interventions during the project implementation; The feasibility plan should be the first step undertaken prior to commencing any project, be it infrastructural or service delivery;
- ✓ It is crucial for each municipality to employ an inclusive approach and prior to starting the implementation of a particular project, they should always organize consultative meetings with all relevant stakeholders and the end beneficiaries so that their needs are properly addressed;
- ✓ Municipalities should ensure all relevant documentation for each project are available online and easily accessed by all citizens;
- ✓ Municipalities should establish complaint systems that are fully functional in order to encourage citizen involvement and improve accountability;
- ✓ In order for the municipalities to increase the efficiency, service quality and transparency, social audit tools remain a precondition;
- ✓ For the social audit tools to be properly utilized, municipalities should allocate a certain budget so that the community initiatives are involved and have the minimal means to utilize social accountability tools;
- ✓ Social accountability tools enable local governments to increase cooperation and enhance dialogue with their constituents; They serve as mechanisms to increase accountability and transparency as well as the trust of citizens towards institutions;
- ✓ Municipalities should consider social audit tools as an innovative approach to improve their quality and increase the participatory democracy.

EMPOWERING CITIZENS THROUGH SOCIAL AUDIT

Boosting municipal transparency
and accountability

