

E-governance under the framework of open governance in Georgia: current situation, problems and opportunities

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Abstract

Purpose – The paper explores how local authorities, particularly under the Open Government Partnership (OGP), respond to e-governance challenges in Georgia.

Design/methodology/approach – A weighted scoring system is adopted to assess e-governance in six OGP local authorities (Akhaltikhe, Khoni, Kutaisi, Ozurgeti, Rustavi, and Tbilisi) in four areas, including access to information, digital service delivery, data management, and citizen engagement. Moreover, website analysis with a focus on transparency and citizen engagement supplements the evaluation.

Findings – The findings illustrate that the six local authorities have made certain accomplishments in e-governance and taken steps towards open government; however, these efforts lack coordination and systematic planning. Tbilisi embraces open governance principles with comprehensive action plans, strong transparency commitment, and engaging digital platforms. Kutaisi demonstrates notable progress with user-friendly digital platforms and a streamlined open data portal, emphasizing transparency. Rustavi shows significant development in digital service delivery and citizen engagement and a reputation as a transparent local government. Akhaltsikhe faces challenges in electronic service delivery and citizen engagement. Ozurgeti also encounters obstacles in information disclosure and electronic service delivery, while Khoni lags in information accessibility and citizen engagement.

Originality/value – This research is novel in studying the level of e-government among OGP local members in Georgia by a scoring system. The analysis will empower the government to proactively modify and adjust the situation on a regional scale, aligning with the challenges inherent in the country's unique experiences.

Keywords Open government, E-governance, OGP local, Georgia

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

The Open Government Partnership (OGP) was established in 2011 by a joint initiative of the Presidents of the US and Brazil, with the membership of the governments of Brazil, Mexico, Norway, the Philippines, South Africa, and the United Kingdom. The partnership brings together governments, citizens, and civil society organizations to support indispensable principles of the democratic development of the countries, such as transparency, accountability, access to public information, and citizen engagement (The Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Ajara, 2020).



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Many open government innovations and reforms are taking place at the local level. The platform accomplishes all the above principles by recognizing the significant role that subnational governments play in being closer to the people they serve. The initiative aimed to enhance the openness, inclusivity, and responsiveness of governments at the local level, where cities, states, regions, provinces, counties, and other jurisdictions provide essential services requiring effective and responsive governance ([Open Government Partnership, 2021](#)).

Georgia stands as one of the pioneering member countries, having joined the OGP in 2011, and subsequently, it has created and effectively executed four action plans. There is a notable emphasis on the examination of the e-government phenomenon in Georgia. Nevertheless, the exploration of this issue often remains limited to problem identification, primarily owing to the novelty of the subject and the consequent lack of extensive scholarly focus. Moreover, the existing Georgian literature ignores the study of the possibility of introducing e-governance at the local authority level (the OGP local members). Even more so, it does not deal with the problems of implementing e-governance on the local authorities, while the main state services for the population come precisely at the regional and municipal level.

Many research studies have indicated that the process of digital transformation is intricate and demands the active participation of governments and various stakeholders in the formulation of strategic approaches ([Ziozias and Anthopoulos, 2022](#)). Georgia's e-government primarily takes shape through a distinct commitment delineated in the Open Government Action Plan. Despite aligning all activities with the core tenets of open governance — transparency, accountability, and citizen involvement ([Obama, 2009](#)) — there is a challenge in effectively supporting and disseminating successful practices to other local authorities, due to the absence of a cohesive foundation.

At present, only six out of Georgia's 64 municipalities have become part of the local open governance network. Recognizing the significance of understanding the prevailing scenario regarding the development of electronic governance among local OGP members, this paper aims to shed light on the fact that advancing the open governance landscape in the country requires refining the technologies, forms, and directions of the public administration system across all levels of state governance. Consequently, the local tier of e-government emerges as a pivotal element within the broader political system, where the interaction between society and public authorities achieves its maximum effectiveness. Drawing inspiration from the successful digital strategy in other countries, Georgia can enhance its local open governance network by adopting a similar approach. For example, in China, the central government formulates a top-level digital strategy, guiding local governments to implement tailored digital programs according to their specific conditions. As these local initiatives prove effective, the central government actively promotes and supports their expansion ([Zhang, 2023](#)).

Literature review

Valuable insights through scrutiny and analysis of e-government in Georgia exist in various publications ([Manvelidze et al., 2016](#); [Maisuradze and Nadibaidze, 2016](#); [Nafetvaridze, 2020](#); [Manvelidze and Tebidze, 2019](#); [Inasaridze, 2006](#); [Jibladze and Manvelidze, 2023](#)). Moreover, it is important to acknowledge the extensive documentation of the OGP on a global scale. It is also essential to highlight the OGP as a valuable resource offering detailed information on projects implemented worldwide, including in Georgia. In addition, scholars affiliated with the Institute for the Development of Freedom of Information ([IDFI, 2021](#)) have played an important role in advancing research on specific facets of open government, including the realm of e-government.

The Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Ajara carried out an in-depth inquiry into implementing transparent governance within executive bodies. Nevertheless,

upon a detailed examination at the regional level, it was observed that none of the nine scrutinized agencies were affiliated with the local branch of the OGP ([The Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Ajara, 2023](#)).

Beyond examining the open government action plans in Georgia, [Nikvashvili \(2019\)](#) investigates the interplay between democracy and open government. The study further explores the influence of OGPs and evaluates the execution of commitments, providing a practical analysis of open government in Georgia. Simultaneously, the research delves into the reforms carried out in Georgia from 2004 to 2012, emphasizing the exemplary nature of Georgia and its applicability to transitioning countries, as articulated by the Prime Minister ([Gilauri, 2017](#)).

Georgia's e-government development strategy is primarily shaped by the action plans within the scope of OGP and a significant portion of the state's digital services introduced over the past decade were initiated as a result of OGP membership. These services, outlined in the action plans, subsequently played a pivotal role in advancing the country's e-governance. The implementation of the open government concept holds particular significance within the domain of local governance. Local governments serve as the primary and routine interface between the public and the state, bearing direct responsibility for addressing citizens' daily needs and possessing many opportunities to deploy diverse participation mechanisms ([Gogidze, 2021](#)). However, unlocking the potential of e-government requires not only the willingness of citizens to participate in government activities, but also their ability to stay abreast of technological advancements ([Bekkers et al., 2013](#)).

Moreover, e-government is often considered a source of communication between the state and citizens ([Ndou, 2004](#); [Alshehri et al., 2012](#); [Zhang, 2017](#)). Sometimes, it is merely defined as an Internet-based instrument for delivering services to the public and enterprises. However, implementing the e-government network requires a conversion of operational processes in the public sector. In addition, the literature lacks a comprehensive examination of the challenges facing local governments, particularly those that would be elucidated through an analysis of long-term experiences within the same country. A systematic evaluation of the present status of e-governance within the local OGP members will facilitate the identification of critical success factors and underlying causes of disruptions. Currently, there are no explicit guidelines in place at any government level. In Georgia, there is no single official guide on access to information, which will define the nature of public information, procedures for requesting public information, legal means of protecting rights and practical recommendations on information retrieval. Moreover, there are no open data guidelines produced by public institutions. It is necessary to increase the availability of open data through the national open data portal, as well as to develop an internal training module on the production and publication of open data. First of all, it is necessary for the state agencies to form and manage databases and registers in such a way that it is possible to publish them on the open data portal.

Accomplishments in Georgia within the framework of action plans

Georgia has made significant developments in implementing e-governance initiatives with achievements in various sectors, particularly in providing transparent public services and enhancing citizen engagement. Some commitments were fully realized ([GoG, 2014](#); [GoG, 2017](#); [GoG, 2018a](#); [GoG, 2018b](#); [GoG, 2022](#); [Gogidze, 2012](#); [Gogidze et al., 2016](#); [Gogidze, 2021](#)), while others faced partial completion or ongoing progress. After a detailed study of the action plans, the following challenges were revealed.

Usability issues: Certain platforms, such as the Citizens' Portal and the innovative platform for economic governance, encountered usability challenges. Usability is crucial for the success of any e-governance initiative, as citizens and officials should find these platforms

easy to navigate and use. Improving user interfaces and addressing any technical glitches can enhance the overall user experience.

Technical compliance issues: The temporary removal of the Unified Authentication System due to technical compliance issues suggests challenges in maintaining systems that meet the necessary technical standards. Ensuring that the e-governance platforms comply with technical requirements is essential for their smooth operation, security, and interoperability.

E-Government infrastructure: The delayed implementation of the innovative platform for citizen engagement reflects challenges in establishing and maintaining robust e-governance infrastructure. This includes technical, organizational, and procedural components essential for seamless e-governance operations.

Data updates: Challenges with the non-updated Open Contracting Data Standard (OCDS) databases for electronic procurement highlight the importance of keeping data up-to-date. Outdated information can compromise the transparency and efficiency of e-procurement systems, emphasizing the need for continuous monitoring and maintenance of data repositories.

Healthcare information access: The partial fulfillment of the healthcare database commitment suggests difficulties in providing comprehensive access to healthcare information. This challenge could be related to data accuracy, privacy concerns, or technical limitations. Overcoming these challenges is essential for ensuring citizens have access to reliable healthcare information.

Web accessibility: Commitments related to adapting official websites for persons with disabilities indicate a recognition of the importance of web accessibility. The need for improvements suggests ongoing challenges in making e-governance platforms inclusive and accessible to all citizens, regardless of their abilities.

Innovative platform challenges: The challenges faced by the innovative platform for economic governance include technical issues limiting usability. This highlights the importance of thorough testing and refining new platforms before full-scale implementation, ensuring they meet user needs and expectations.

Adoption and awareness: Although not discussed earlier, a common global challenge in e-governance initiatives is ensuring widespread adoption and awareness among the target population. Citizens need to be aware of available online services and motivated to use them. Additionally, addressing any digital literacy gaps is important for inclusive participation.

Inter-agency collaboration: E-governance often involves collaboration between multiple government agencies. Challenges may arise in coordinating efforts, sharing data securely, and aligning diverse organizational priorities. Establishing effective inter-agency collaboration mechanisms is vital for the success of holistic e-governance initiatives.

An overview of the historical context of the accomplishments of OGP at the local level

OGP achieves its goal of promoting transparent, participatory, inclusive, and accountable governance by recognizing that local governments, being closer to the citizens, are more familiar with the needs of the locals. Because OGP seeks to support local open government in adopting innovative reforms, OGP found it necessary to establish OGP Local. OGP Local was founded in 2016 and currently unites 106 local authorities and their civil society counterparts. Through the OGP Local initiative, participants can learn how to use open government values such as transparency, accountability, responsiveness, and inclusion to better meet the needs of the citizens they serve (GoG, 2022).

Studying and evaluating the results, as well as identifying the existing problems, trends, and challenges of e-governance at OGP Local in Georgia, will encourage other local authorities to join and follow a guide to open government tailored specifically for Georgia.

While most local governments are not members of the OGP Local, six OGP local governments (Akhaltshikhe, Khoni, Kutaisi, Ozurgeti, Rustavi, and Tbilisi) play a significant role in promoting the values of open government.

Tbilisi City Hall joined the local pilot program along with 15 cities (out of 45 participating candidates worldwide) in 2016 and presented to the international community, which ran from January 2017 to December 2017. Currently, Tbilisi City Hall is in the process of developing the third action plan for the OGP. They are implementing five commitments from the 2018-2019 action plan. In 2020, 11 new local members from the Eastern Partnership region joined OGP Local, three of whom were from Georgia: Akhaltshikhe, Khoni, and Ozurgeti. They joined OGP as part of the 2020 Cohort and are implementing their first Action Plan — Akhaltshikhe 2021-2022; Khoni 2023-2025; [Ozurgeti Municipality \(2021\)](#). Their action plans focus on varied national open government priorities: Akhaltshikhe emphasizes participatory budgeting, inclusion of persons with disabilities, and youth participation; Khoni focuses on anti-corruption and open data; Ozurgeti targets public service delivery, anti-corruption, and fiscal openness. In 2022, Kutaisi and Rustavi from Georgia also joined OGP Local. Kutaisi Municipality was among the first five local governments to join the OGP National Action Plan 2016-2018 and to establish transparency and accountability in the governance process by promoting citizen participation in municipal budget planning. Participation in OGP Local has indeed increased incentives for some Georgian municipalities to share their success stories of open, inclusive, and accountable policy-making and with national and global audiences.

Research method

This study aims to explore the reactions of local authorities, particularly those associated with the OGP, and the challenges faced by Georgian authorities. A detailed analysis of the current situation will enable local authorities to timely implement necessary changes to improve electronic governance as an institutional mechanism. A key component influencing this analysis is the element of time. The decade-long trend at the national level distinctly illustrates the challenges that local OGP members are likely to encounter. However, since the local government members in Georgia have only been part of the local open government for the past few years, making predictions is challenging. This difficulty primarily arises because the action plans have not yet reached their completion deadlines, and consequently, the final reports are limited.

Additionally, it is important to highlight that under the Open Government Action Plan, an agency was responsible for executing diverse obligations, while the Open Government Secretariat played a coordinating role. However, notably, no control mechanism is explicitly mentioned aside from the Independent Reporting Mechanism (IRM) reports. At the local level, there is a specified agency responsible for coordinating, controlling, and implementing.

The analytical framework of this study is as follows. The commitments related to e-governance outlined in the Open Government Action Plans of Georgia were categorized into four distinct groups: (1) Access to Information and Participation, (2) Digital Service Delivery, (3) Data Management and Open Data, and (4) Citizen Engagement and Feedback ([Table 1](#)). The authors subsequently formulated criteria aligning with established indicators of e-government development, while also considering distinctive aspects relevant to the region and the specific experiences of e-government at the country level. Creating a new approach to evaluate local open governance is appropriate for investigating identified issues and assessing the current state.

The authors implemented a rating system employing 10-, 12-, 13-, and 15-point scales to evaluate the criteria. The score assigned to each criterion was based on the degree to which it met the specified requirements. The specific score for each criterion was determined by the weight assigned by the authors. This structured approach aims to comprehensively assess

Index	Category
Access to Information and Participation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Availability of Information: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How accessible is information about local government initiatives and what is the level of awareness about e-government in society? (12%) 2. Public Awareness: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Measures the awareness level of citizens about local government initiatives related to SDGs (13%).
Digital Service Delivery	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Online Services for SDGs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Evaluation of digital platforms providing services related to SDGs, such as reporting tools, information portals, etc. (15%). 4. User-Friendly Platforms: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assessment of the usability and accessibility of digital platforms for citizens to engage with SDGs (15%).
Data Management and Open Data	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Data Availability: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The presence and accessibility of data related to SDGs at the local level (10%). 6. Open Data Policies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The extent to which local authorities implement policies for making SDG-related data open and accessible (15%).
Citizen Engagement and Feedback	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Participation in Decision-Making: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Evaluation of mechanisms allowing citizens to actively participate in local decision-making processes related to SDGs (10%). 8. Feedback Channels: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Existence and effectiveness of channels for citizens to provide feedback on local SDG initiatives (10%).

Table 1.
Distinct categories
with component values Source: By authors

diverse dimensions of open governance. The specific numbers and percentages are a result of careful consideration and weighting of criteria within each category, enhancing transparency and credibility in the evaluation process.

Simply put, a weighted scoring system is crucial for evaluating Georgia's open governance as it acknowledges the varying importance of different criteria. This method acknowledges their relative importance in achieving policy goals by assigning higher weights to more significant criteria. By doing this, the evaluation improves and becomes more refined, policy-focused, and aligned with the hierarchical importance of different criteria. Furthermore, weighted scoring incorporates stakeholder perspectives by giving higher weights to criteria that align with their interests. This ensures that the evaluation process is in tune with the needs and expectations of citizens and other stakeholders involved in open governance. Citizens' confidence in the government and its technology is influenced by their perceptions of specific technological tools (Carter and Belanger, 2005). People's actions related to digital policies are driven by their perceptions. The evaluation method, by aligning with these perspectives, improves the credibility and inclusiveness of the assessment, offering a broader insight into open governance. In Georgia, having specific digital services is essential for effectively involving citizens. The weighted scoring system reflects this by assigning a higher score to the initial commitment (establishing digital services) compared to the subsequent commitment (citizen involvement), acknowledging the sequential importance of these steps.

The decision to use certain criteria for evaluating open governance is influenced by the unique characteristics of the region. To elaborate, the evaluation of information disclosure by OGP local members and adherence to open data practices follows a standardized approach

known as the proactive publication of public information ([The Legislative Herald of Georgia, 2010](#)). This standard puts a mandatory responsibility on state agencies to adhere to specific requirements. These requirements, in turn, clearly outline the procedures for both soliciting and proactively disseminating public information in electronic format.

In addition to the analysis of public information, this paper includes the study of the websites of OGP Locals. In terms of the development of open governance, a rating of OGP Locals was created. The authors examined the websites of six Georgian local OGP members' city halls ([City Hall of Rustavi Municipality, 2022](#); [Tbilisi City Hall, 2010](#); [Akhaltikhe Municipality, 2024](#); [Khoni Municipality, 2021](#); [Kutaisi City Hall, 2024](#); [Ozurgeti Municipality, 2021](#)) to gain insights into local government transparency. The evaluation focused on the accessibility of information regarding activities, policies, and decision-making processes. Additionally, we scrutinized all open data, including datasets, reports ([IDFI, 2023](#)), and submissions to the Legislative Herald of Georgia ([The Legislative Herald of Georgia, 2013](#)) and City Council, highlighting a dedication to transparency within legal bounds.

The review extended to local government policies concerning access to Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)-related data, underlining a commitment to citizen information access. This involved assessing online platforms and user-friendly features, enhancing citizen engagement. Furthermore, the authors examined mechanisms for citizen participation and feedback embedded in local OGP websites. Effective channels for citizen feedback exemplify the local government's dedication to incorporating community perspectives. Analyzing website content, interactions, and responses provides a comprehensive overview of local government initiatives to facilitate citizen access, engagement, and feedback. The research includes these open governance evaluation indicators: free access to information, open data, open dialogue, and the presence of electronic services on the web page. In the evaluation indicator, the individual criterion is assigned a corresponding point, which is evaluated by one of three indicators and determines the quantitative indicator of a specific service and quality.

Findings and analysis

Based on the analysis of public information published by OGP Locals and observing the web pages according to the above-mentioned indicators, the authors evaluated the current situation in terms of the development of open governance.

Over the years, OGP participation has grown beyond the national executive branch, and some countries have included the legislative and judiciary branches along with diverse autonomous bodies and local governments in the OGP process. It is considered necessary to study only the websites of executive bodies (City Hall) because legislative bodies (in the case of the Sakrebulo) in Georgia are not members of OGP Locals.

The observation of the web pages of the City Halls in OGP Locals revealed that none of the agencies has submitted reports in a machine-readable format. However, reports are partially published, mainly referring to quarterly and annual budget performance. For example, on the website of Ozurgeti, the agency has published its resolutions, ordinances, orders, minutes of the session, and general meeting minutes, yet not in a machine-readable format. After 2019, the work reports of the activities, committees, and other working groups of the agency and its subordinate Non-Entrepreneurial (Non-Commercial) Legal Entities have not been made public on the agency's website.

For the Access to Information and Participation indicator, it is evident that citizens can request public information online in every municipality except Khoni. Khoni lags behind others in online information provision, lacking effectiveness and updates compared to other municipalities. Information about advertised vacancies is easily available on the websites of all target municipalities. They will post information about this in the news section and

indicate a special link on the website of the Civil Service Bureau (hr.gov.ge) for further announcements. Citizens should use the website managed by the Civil Service Bureau to apply for jobs and employment in government agencies, as this is the only way to participate in competitions and start a career in public service.

The availability of information about grant competitions announced by the OGP local cities in Georgia also varies. Kutaisi and Rustavi have more updated web pages than Khoni, Ozurgeti, and Akhaltsikhe, whereas Tbilisi consistently upholds a strong commitment to transparency.

There are variations in the accessibility of information on official websites regarding contracts signed by the target municipalities for various projects. In Khoni, Akhaltsikhe, and Ozurgeti, such data is seldom disclosed on their official websites. In contrast, Kutaisi and Rustavi exhibit a higher frequency of transparency in publishing contract details, while Tbilisi consistently provides this information.

Regarding the disclosure of information about winning companies in tenders, Rustavi, Tbilisi, and Kutaisi distinguish themselves by consistently sharing such details. These cities demonstrate a steadfast commitment to transparency in their procurement processes by consistently providing information about the companies that secure tenders.

The assessment of the second indicator refers to Digital Service Delivery, which is the presence of e-services among OGP Local members. The study of the websites revealed that there are certain mechanisms of electronic services in all six of them, which involve electronic communication and mainly aim to apply by electronic form. Except for Tbilisi, the other municipalities have not developed tools for e-decision processes, and they have not made their websites accessible to individuals with disabilities. According to this indicator, citizens mostly do not have an opportunity to meet officials in senior positions online, book an appointment online with them, or participate in public discussion and leave comments on any issue. In addition to the fact that the website does not provide the above, there is no data about similar activities carried out by other social platforms. Despite the importance of the existing indicator, there is no legislative mandate requiring municipalities to develop e-government; this development occurs under the Open Government Action Plan in Georgia. A reference to specific legislation or official documents would be useful for substantiation.

The third indicator, focusing on Data Management and Open Data, reveals that none of the local authorities have implemented comprehensive policies aimed at guaranteeing the transparency and accessibility of SDG-related information. Progress in this area is happening on an individual and inconsistent basis, without a structured plan or framework provided by legislation. For example, the Tbilisi City Hall and Sakrebulo websites have taken steps to update and provide crucial databases such as decrees, orders, resolutions, and draft acts. Additionally, it provides access to project estimates and various reports, indicating a structured approach to open data provision. However, the positive impact of these updates is lessened by the website's structural complexity, due to its operation under two separate domain addresses, www.tbilisi.gov.ge and www.tbsakrebulo.gov.ge, which may confuse users and hinder seamless navigation. In contrast, the city of Kutaisi appears to have a more streamlined and user-friendly approach to open data. Their data is easily accessible and searchable, organized not only chronologically but also by content type. Furthermore, Kutaisi's open data initiative is characterized by a wide array of available documents, including explanatory cards, annexes to resolutions, regulations, and important correspondence. Importantly, Kutaisi's open data portal is updated regularly, ensuring that users have access to the most current information. For open data on Ozurgeti's web page, it is easy to find and provides the newest normative acts, but, under the legal acts section (archive), the data is not available. On the websites of Khoni, Rustavi, and Akhaltsikhe, users can find general regulatory acts rather than specific legal acts.

Regarding the publication of the documents certifying the education of the members of the City Hall, Tbilisi holds the leading place, followed by Kutaisi and Rustavi. However, there is no complete list of people working there. The information available includes the political officials and deputies, although the names of structural units and staff lists are easily searchable.

For the fourth indicator on Citizen Engagement and Feedback, Tbilisi shows high citizen involvement in budget development, as do other locals. However, none of the OGP Locals provides mechanisms for online citizen participation in budget drafting or request submissions. Evaluation scores for the publication of quarterly budget reports are consistently high across all municipalities. As a result of the study of the websites of the OGP Local, it was revealed that the indicator related to the budget, which in turn includes a certain number of electronic communication services, exists on the portals of all OGP Locals. However, information regarding salaries, bonuses, and business trips is not available on their websites.

The situation is also satisfactory with the Livestreaming criterion, as a tool for citizen involvement. Live streaming makes it easier for citizens to watch and follow online broadcasting of the committee, bureau, and other meetings of the mentioned municipalities. According to the law, when the demand to attend an open meeting of public agencies exceeds the available seats in the meeting hall, the authorities are mandated to take action. This entails either broadcasting the meeting or providing alternatives such as audio feeds or online streaming for those interested to follow the proceedings. This legal provision ensures that when there is high demand, accessibility is maintained through broadcasting or technical listening options for potential attendees. Tbilisi consistently offers real-time reporting of the city council, bureau, and committee sessions conducted by the agency. This coverage is accessible on the official website, various social media platforms, and through television and radio broadcasts. Conversely, Kutaisi, Rustavi, and Akhaltsikhe primarily focus on broadcasting the main sessions. Despite regulations mandating coverage through a TV-radio company and Facebook, their commitment seems limited compared to Tbilisi. In contrast, Akhaltsikhe's regulations do not specifically require session broadcasting, and this lack of obligation is evident in their actual practices. At the bottom of the ranking is Khoni, where session coverage is notably absent on their website and social media channels. Furthermore, their website frequently undergoes maintenance or remains in a testing phase, which impacts user accessibility. The study indicates that OGP Locals have made notable improvements in advancing open governance, owing to preparedness and consistent efforts. However, these endeavors are found to be insufficient, lacking a systematic approach, and often spontaneous.

The analysis of public information and the examination of OGP Local cities' web pages reveal a significant trend towards open governance. Notably, Tbilisi and Kutaisi have taken steps in this direction. Further investigation into unified electronic portals highlights substantial progress in Rustavi and Ozurgeti, with Tbilisi distinguishing itself for a conceptual approach, including an action plan for open governance development. Kutaisi, however, shows minimal progress.

It is crucial to acknowledge the role of open governance as a central component of local self-government reform, which can potentially establish a foundation for enhanced governance quality not only within OGP Local cities but also in other municipalities. It is believed that, at a minimum, Georgian authorities should recommend enhancing the efficiency of state and local self-government bodies, aligning with the principle of openness, to achieve set goals. Looking ahead, any future information system related to governance, necessitating public discussions, is deemed beneficial. An evaluation of the efficiency and effectiveness of such technologies needs to be assessed, ensuring citizen engagement in developing and refining Municipal Council and City Hall acts at the self-government level.

Conclusion

To investigate the state of open governance among local program members, this paper employed various sources of information, including data from the municipalities' websites and electronic portals mandated to publish public information proactively. This research employed qualitative methods such as document analysis and observation to assess the current level of open government development in each self-governing city. This approach allowed us to create a ranking of self-governing cities based on the specific indicators developed. In particular, the methodology, which includes specific criteria aligned with established indicators, also accounts for regional nuances and the unique experiences of e-government at the country level. A noteworthy revelation in this context is the absence of reports from any of the involved agencies in a machine-readable format. This finding underscores a substantial gap in both transparency and accessibility within the OGP framework. While reports may be partially available, the lack of machine-readable formats hampers the efficient dissemination and analysis of information, posing a significant challenge to the fundamental principles of accountability within the OGP initiative. Addressing this gap is essential to ensure that the intended benefits of openness and transparency are fully realized, fostering a more robust and accountable governance structure.

A notable exception is that all municipalities, except Khoni, provide electronic access to public information. This indicates a positive trend towards embracing technology for information accessibility across most regions. However, the absence of electronic information request services in Khoni highlights an area that may need improvement. This sheds light on a specific instance where the trend is not uniformly positive, encouraging a closer examination of the factors contributing to the lack of electronic access in Khoni. More detailed analysis is required to understand the unique challenges or barriers present in that particular municipality, facilitating targeted efforts for improvement in public access to information.

The analysis revealed inconsistencies between national policies mandating reports in machine-readable formats and their actual implementation at the local level. It suggests that while there might be a broader commitment or directive for government agencies to publish reports in a machine-readable format, the implementation or adherence to this requirement is lacking among local OGP members.

In summary, the analysis reveals that while all members of the local programs have taken some steps towards open government, these efforts lack coordination and systematic planning. For example, Tbilisi embraces open governance principles with comprehensive action plans, strong transparency commitment, and engaging digital platforms. Kutaisi demonstrates notable progress with user-friendly digital platforms and a streamlined open data portal, emphasizing transparency. Rustavi shows significant development in digital service delivery and citizen engagement, enhancing its reputation as a transparent local government. Akhaltsikhe faces challenges in electronic service delivery and citizen engagement, which requires further development. Ozurgeti encounters obstacles in information disclosure and electronic service delivery, highlighting areas for improvement. Khoni faces similar challenges in information accessibility and citizen engagement, which needs to adopt best practices. Although there have been significant advancements in e-government within the OGP Local cities, several areas still require improvement. It is imperative to further develop e-government as an institutional mechanism, particularly focusing on enhancing transparency, fostering citizen engagement, and facilitating access to vital information.

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