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# One-Stop-Shop Public Service Delivery Model: the Case of Georgia



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**Cover image**

*Public Service Hall in Tbilisi*

Photo courtesy of the Public Service Hall of Georgia

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## Executive Summary

The failure of administrative reform of the public sector was one of the most important causes of the political crisis in the fall of 2003 in Georgia. Therefore, it was considered critical by the new government to introduce administrative changes that resulted in a considerable rationalization of the administrative structure. However, these changes also raised questions regarding coordination in redefining administrative responsibilities. There were and still are a number of structural and procedural challenges that the Government of Georgia continues to confront.

Prior to launching a substantial public administration reform within its own administrative system, the Ministry of Justice recognized the need for a sustained plan for coordinating the actions of policy implementers in the process of reform. By reforming the Civil and Public registry systems the ministry has initiated two major reforms to improve public service delivery that eventually changed the culture and nature of communication between the administration and citizens. These reforms triggered the creation of Public Service Halls and Community Centres. Designed according to the One-Stop-Shop public service delivery model, they aimed at simplifying the interaction between the government and citizens.

A distinctive feature of the One-Stop-Shop (OSS) model in Georgia is its clear separation of Back and Front Offices in the public service delivery chain. Public Service Halls and Community Centres serve as front offices for those back office agencies that are responsible for developing public services. They advise on how to improve existing services and design new ones. They represent the administration vis-à-vis citizens and continuously monitor citizens' expectations. The existing model is the result of the thorough and continuous planning of those managers and administrators who initiated the reform in the first place. Today, the Ministry of Justice with its subordinated agencies is undoubtedly in a leading position

in terms of knowledge and experience. It has acquired strong expertise while designing and establishing the Public Service Halls and Community Centres One-Stop-Shop public service delivery structures.

International organisations such as Transparency International continuously commended the Georgian government for maintaining a low level of corruption in the public sector (TI, CPI, report 2015). Customer satisfaction surveys conducted by local research organisations seem to indicate that citizens are satisfied with the quality and effectiveness of the services delivered and are ready to use them repeatedly. They are particularly satisfied by having the possibility to use public services in their immediate vicinity, thus, reducing transportation costs and time for using the services (ACT, survey 2013).

However, the establishment of the existing One-Stop-Shop model was neither an easy nor straightforward process. For it to operate effectively, governments must develop an adequate public service delivery ecosystem, including the elaboration of a legal framework, human resource management, ICT and physical infrastructure as well as the digitization of civil acts and a sound financial management system. It is a highly interconnected system of state agencies which serve as service producers in the back office while delivery of services rests with those agencies which operate front offices. This administrative process requires continuous monitoring, innovation, assessment and creativity.

There are currently 17 regional Public Service Halls in Georgia. Each of them is connected to the central office and is providing more than 200 public services to citizens. Their service outreach is further strengthened by 43 Community Centres at the community level. The Government of Georgia plans to inaugurate 11 centres in 2017.

## Abbreviations

CC	Community Centre
CPI	Corruption Perception Index
CRA	Civil Registry Agency
DFID	UK Department for International Development
GoG	Government of Georgia
IT	Information Technology
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ICAO	International Civil Aviation Organization
MoJ	Ministry of Justice of Georgia
MoF	Ministry of Finance of Georgia
MoLHSA	Ministry of Labor, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture of Georgia
NAPR	National Agency of Public Registry
OSS	One-Stop-Shop (Back Office Front Office)
PSH	Public Service Hall
SLMD	Land Management Department of Georgia
SSA	Social Service Agency
TI	Transparency International
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VPN	Virtual Private Network

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# 1. Introduction

Since early 2004, following the Rose Revolution, the Government of Georgia has rapidly reorganized the public sector in order to increase its efficiency and effectiveness. It has undertaken considerable structural reforms, particularly emphasizing economic growth and anti-corruption. The size of the public sector has been significantly reduced, bringing the private and public sectors into greater balance. The Government of Georgia has also undertaken reform of public administration, reorganizing the system of executive branch administration.

The new leaders had inherited a challenging governance apparatus characterized by weak and disorganized institutions, lacking in transparency and accountability, poor inter-ministerial coordination, and ineffective public outreach and communication. Therefore, strengthening public sector capacity and ensuring its sustainability was considered a top priority for the government. The ultimate goal of public administration reform was to enable government institutions to provide public services to the citizens in an effective, timely and customer friendly manner.

There is no universally accepted definition of what constitutes public service delivery across countries with widely different politico-administrative systems. Traditionally, the notion of public service derives from the French administrative law and the main purpose is to satisfy societal needs. The government must guarantee, regulate and control public services delivery as they are essential to the social development and societal interdependence (Duguit, 1911).

The classical model of public service delivery, characterized by a defined hierarchy of offices with strictly separated competencies, has come to be seen as synonymous with bureaucracy, control and hierarchy (Weber 1964; Wilson 1887). Since the 1970, it has been replaced with New Public Management (NPM) which has improved public service delivery through using private-sector

and business approaches (Osborne and Gaebler 1992; Hood 1995). However, the openness, accountability and most importantly the citizens' trust in the public administration remained problematic. As a response, in the 1990s, scientists proposed that the government moves from being the sole player and controller to be an agenda setter. Administrators see citizens not only as voters, clients or customers but also as citizens with whom they share authority. They reduce control and trust in the efficacy of collaboration (Osborn 2010).

Concentration on public service delivery is a direct response to the ineffectiveness of a fragmented public sector in which various public services are provided by different state agencies. The concentrated public service delivery model has become an important mechanism for teaming up and solidifying governance relations (Christensen, 2012). The effective delivery of public services under the One-Stop-Shop model heavily depends on the structure of government, and the allocation of responsibilities and duties across government agencies (Wimmer, 2002).

One-Stop-Shop, initially developed in Australia, was so unconventional to the traditional hierarchical administrative culture that it was closed down in the mid-1980s (Wettenhall and Kimber, 1997). However, the idea survived and returned to the agenda of public administration as a sub-element of New Public Management reform and its customer orientation concepts.

Today, with a diversified structure and nature it can be found in Australia in the form of local government One-Stop-Shops, in New Zealand (Service Centers), in Germany (Buergerbüro or citizens' offices), in Canada, in France (Maison Services Publique), in the Slovak Republic (Integrated Service Points), in Azerbaijan (ASAN xidmət or easy service), in Kazakhstan («State-owned corporation «Government for citizens» NJSC) and in Georgia in the form of Public Service

Hall (PSH) also known as Justice Houses and the Community Centres (CC).

The aim of this case study is to better understand the complex nature of the One-Stop-Shop (OSS) public service delivery reform in Georgia as well as to analyze the challenges and potential benefits that the large scale changes in public sector brought to government and citizens. By apprehending this case study, governments, international organisations or any other actor intending to embark on or to support public service delivery reform in their own countries will learn about the intricacies and trajectory of the reform that the Government of Georgia undertook to design and implement the OSS public service delivery system.

The first few chapters of the study will focus on the evolution of the Civil Registry Agency

and the National Agency of Public Registry. In particular, the challenges that the Ministry of Justice of Georgia faced while establishing these two flagship agencies that played a crucial role in designing and implementing public service delivery reform in the country will be discussed. The study will touch upon the administrative and institutional reform that eventually triggered the creation of a One-Stop-Shop ecosystem in public service delivery reform. Then, the study will continue by describing the evolution of Public Service Halls and Community Centres. These are two main administrative channels of public service delivery under the Ministry of Justice and are instructed to directly interact with citizens in a timely and customer friendly manner. The study will conclude by discussing recommendations, describing challenges and highlighting lessons to be learnt from the reform.

## 2. Historic Background to Public Administration Reform in Georgia

In 1999, Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index ranked Georgia as one of the most corrupt countries in the world. Georgia held 84th position in the list (TI CPI, 1999). This is not surprising. At the time Georgia was considered a `Failed State` where endemic corruption in the public sector and social problems progressively created massive discontent in the population (Foreign Policy, 2010). Government was not capable to openly acknowledge the problems of corruption in the public sector and was not willing to confront corrupt companies and corrupt officials by enacting robust anti-bribery policies.

The failure of administrative reform of the public sector was one of the most important causes of the political crisis that culminated in the Rose Revolution in the fall of 2003. Therefore, it was considered critical by the new Georgian government to address the problem of insufficient government capacity in order to improve political

integration and promote greater political stability in Georgia.

Since 2003, major political changes have been introduced by the Government of Georgia. These changes hold the prospects for significant improvements in government efficiency and economy. The effectiveness of these changes depended to a large extent on the success of the reform of the administrative system. The improvements in public management started with the restructuring of the public sector. To begin with, the government announced the creation of a smaller and more efficient public sector.

The reform agenda was developed by a new set of managers with private sector experience. A new law on "Structure, Functions and Responsibilities of the Executive Branch" was adopted by the Parliament in February, 2004 (GoG, law 3277, 2004). The Law on "Public Service" was amended



by the Parliament in June, 2004, in such a way as to establish the Council on Public Service and a Public Service Bureau as the key state bodies to lead the public service reform agenda (GoG, MoJ, law 760, 2004). The Council on Public Service was established to provide an oversight board to guide the process of administrative modernization. Substantial assistance from donor organizations was provided to help begin the modernization of public administration in Georgia.

The administrative changes resulted in considerable rationalization of the administrative structure, but they also raised questions regarding the coordination in redefining administrative responsibilities. There were and still are a number of structural and procedural challenges that the Georgian Government continues to confront, especially in relation to the One-Stop-Shop (OSS) public service delivery process. For instance, the financial structure of the service delivery chain remains vague, which impacts the financial efficiency of the service delivery agencies. Such uncertainties could be reduced if state agencies in the back and front offices of the One-Stop-Shop public service delivery chain were to develop a clear and fair structure for service fee allocation. The Ministry of Justice should ensure that there is a horizontal interaction between back and front office agencies to jointly negotiate a financial formula to make the fee transfer mechanism more predictable (PSH, Interview with a respondent, 2014).

Improving institutional capacity does not merely mean articulating existing administrative structures or adding new administrative units to carry out previously undesignated tasks. Rather, improving institutional capacity implies horizontally integrating administrative procedures and activities to increase effectiveness and efficiency.

The Ministry of Justice recognized that there was a need for a sustainable plan for coordinating the action of policy implementers in the process. This approach was to become a guiding principle prior to launching a substantial public administration reform within its own administrative system. The ministry has initiated two major reforms to improve public service delivery in the country. Namely, it embarked on reforming the Civil and Public registry systems that eventually changed the culture and nature of communication between the administration and citizens. The reform that triggered the creation of Public Service Halls and Community Centres in the country was designed according to the One-Stop-Shop public service delivery model and aimed at simplifying the interaction between the government and citizens.

In order to better understand and describe the existing model of public service delivery, it is important to analyze roots and origins of the reform. Therefore, the next few chapters of this case study will focus on the evolution of Civil Registry as well as Public Registry agencies in Georgia.

### **3. OSS Public Service Delivery Model of Civil Registry Agency under MoJ**

The Ministry of Justice of Georgia (MoJ) has identified the development of an appropriate civil registration system as one of the top priorities on its reform agenda. The reform envisaged the rationalization of the entire, hitherto fragmented, inefficient and ineffective system of civil acts registration and the administration and issuance

of identity cards and passports. The reform of the civil registration system was based on international experience and aimed at establishing a system based on One-Stop-Shop principles of public service delivery. The successful implementation of the reform would allow the government to unify citizens' database, streamline information

flow and to securely share information within state institutions and between administration and citizens.

The civil registry reform started in 2004 when the Passport Issuance Bureau, Citizens' Registration and Civil Acts Registration Bureaus were united and brought under the management of the Ministry of Justice (Gagnidze, 2009). Merging public services under the ministry was not straightforward process. There was some attempt prior to 2004 to bring citizens related services under the management of one state institution. However, this process was obstructed by the Ministry of Interior as these services served as a perfect "black" income for state officials in the ministry (Interview with a respondent, 2014). The transfer of several services like passport issuance and civil acts registration was a political decision. Political actors agreed that the Ministry of Justice would be in a better position to provide citizens with basic, necessary documentation. As a result, the Ministry of Interior transferred responsibility on these services to the Ministry of Justice (Interview with a respondent, 2014). Unification of services initially allowed the ministry to create the Civil Registration Department. In 2006, a new semi-independent Civil Registry Agency (CRA) was established. The agency was registered as a legal entity of public law under the Georgian legislation (Gagnidze, 2009).

The legacy left to the newly established Civil Registry Agency (CRA) was poor. First of all the system was corrupt and heavily fragmented. The human resource management system was completely outdated and ineffective. It had meager or practically non-existing financial means, dilapidated infrastructure, only few computers and an incomplete database on citizens. With highly ineffective management and

corrupt state officials, the reputation of the system was so shattered that citizens were unwilling to directly and fairly interact with the agency. Instead they preferred to continue bribing the administration in order to receive their rightfully deserved services (Gagnidze, 2009).

In the initial, transitory period, it was difficult for the newly established agency to offer quality services and to satisfy citizens demands. There were several reasons for it. The budget of the CRA was extremely low and management could not carry out the reform rapidly. It was necessary to make major adjustments to increase salaries for employees, to offer decent working conditions, to modernise the physical and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure, to update the legislative framework, to digitize civil acts archive materials, improve Human Resources (HR) and to orient the entire agency towards a customer service approach (Gagnidze, 2009).

A mission statement in the 2007-2011 strategic plan of the CRA emphasised the "Formation of a Customer-Focused, Unified, Secure and Continuously Updated Civil Register" as an expected result of the reform process (GoG, CRA strategic plan 2007). The CRA identified several objectives to accomplish this mission. Namely, it acknowledged that it was strategically vital to

1. Create a refined legal framework;
2. Develop and implement a human resources system;
3. Establish new services and redesign existing ones;
4. Develop a new generation (biometric) database;
5. Integrate new technologies in the reform process;
6. Improve infrastructure;
7. Strengthen financial self-sustainability and a financial management system.

These aspects will be further elaborated below.

Picture 1 - Ministry of Justice of Georgia, Tbilisi



### 3.1 Refining the Legal Framework

The establishment of a new public organization requires thorough planning and legal framework development. The Civil Registry Agency was not an exception. The agency enjoyed considerable organizational independence from its foundation. However, while it made decisions independently, it still lacked a properly defined legal framework.

In particular, there was no legal act on the citizens' register to begin with. The issues related to it were only partially and indirectly regulated by the law on identification documents. Certain registry provisions were scattered in various statutory acts and regulated this field incompletely. The law on registration of civil acts and the law on identification documents contained many shortcomings from the legal point of view. Importantly, there were no legal acts in place to adequately regulate issues for personal data security. It became evident that there was a need to create an appropriate legal framework that would better serve the agency's mission and working needs.

The CRA's management elaborated a separate law on the citizens' register based on an analysis of Georgian and foreign legislation and practice. Adopted by the Parliament of Georgia, it began to sufficiently regulate the issues related to maintenance of the unified citizens' register.

In addition, the existing law on registration of civil acts contained a number of vague provisions, was deficient and outdated to electronically maintain the civil acts register. A new law on the registration of civil acts was therefore developed that met the infrastructural and technological needs of the agency.

Moreover, a law on identification documents was produced by the agency and approved by Parliament. The new law made provisions related to identification documents less ambiguous and structurally and conceptually clearer.

The agency in consultation with other state entities initiated a process to elaborate a law on personal data security. At that time, the existing legislation of Georgia did not regulate the personal data security issues thoroughly. This raised concerns for the CRA, which was an agency handling voluminous personal data in the public sector. Since the personal data security issue was and still is not limited solely to information at the CRA, let alone the public sector. However, to avoid backlashes in the reform process, the agency proposed to incorporate the important aspects of the legislation in the law on citizens' register until a separate, specific law was put in place.

The necessity to develop respective sub-legislative legal acts was evident right from the beginning of the reform. Parallel to the development of new laws to regulate the CRA's activities, sub-legislative legal acts were put in place to regulate procedural issues for the maintenance of the civil register in detail. In addition, special guidelines and instructions were developed to regulate the technical and organizational issues for the civil register maintenance. These guidelines served as a guiding principle for CRA employees in their day-to-day activities.

Finally, to ensure the robust functioning of the agency, it was important to elaborate clear regulations of organisational processes. The CRA as a newly established legal entity of public law, semi-independent from the Ministry of Justice required revisions in its charter and by-laws, development of clear rules on operations, functions and responsibilities. As a result of the implementation of these legal initiatives, the agency updated and modernized its legal framework and further strengthened the reform process within its administrative system.

## 3.2 Designing an HR System

A well-defined and clearly structured Human Resources (HR) system is the basis for any public or private organization. The management of the CRA has recognized the importance of reforming HR in its quest to reform the system and to achieve the set goals.

The agency inherited the consequences of neglect of human resources issues: the absence of a system for describing job positions, the need for improved arrangements for salary determination, bonuses, social insurance benefits, and non-monetary rewards, the difficulty in replacing resigned or dismissed employees and recruiting well-qualified new staff, only partial application of analytical tools to HR management, a need to expand the number of staff in the HR unit to meet new demands, and a low level of automation in HR management processes. Fundamental capacity building was needed to address these issues (Gagnidze, 2009).

To respond to these challenges, the CRA embarked on developing a periodic employee training system. A key characteristic of a well-structured human resources system is that the people working in the organisation have professional qualifications and training to meet the needs of their positions. Hence, the CRA's HR management system began to identify and utilize management and training tools and created the basic training program elements to support its staff in meeting their commitments (GoG, CRA strategic plan 2007).

The HR unit started reviewing employee job satisfaction levels. Increased motivation was crucial to effective staff performance, so that they could make their valuable input to the CRA's goals. The HR management has created basic system tools and processes, including such items as the creation of job descriptions, routinized collection of data on job satisfaction and development of a system of rewards.

The system of rewards encompassed monetary and non-monetary rewards. Monetary rewards took the form of granting cash or gift cards. Non-monetary rewards included letters thanking for an employee's contributions, acknowledging long, honest and loyal service or performing overtime work or work in exceptionally stressful environments. Such letters were given to those who made exceptional contributions for the agency and were hailed by their fellow colleagues and supervisors. Awards were entertained on a monthly basis. Middle level managers, heads of departments and heads of territorial bureaus were expected to submit to top management a special award form explaining the reasons for rewards to be granted to employees (Gagnidze, 2009).

The agency started implementation of an HR management system software to better manage the existing paperwork-heavy and overly time-consuming bundle of processes. The software provided a platform for the establishment and use of an electronic personnel database.

The CRA's HR developed a recruitment and selection system and established a reserve for qualified staff. This allowed the CRA to keep a systematic database of resumes or other professional information on prospective employees or individuals who have expressed interest in applying for employment. In parallel, the agency launched a program for unpaid internships, which enhanced its interface with the market of prospective new employees.

In parallel to tracking and identifying those employees who were still prone to engage in bribe taking, the management decided to organize attestation. The agency received around 4000 applications. After the selection process a set of trainings in customer service, legislation and in document workflow were conducted to prepare new employees for their tasks. Eventually, there were approximately 70 percent turnover

of personnel in the entire system nationwide (Interview with a respondent, 2014). However, it was a slow process to minimize the loss of

institutional knowledge and to ensure proper hand over of competences.

### 3.3 Establishing New Services and Refining Old Ones

Offering new and improved services to customers was considered an ongoing, basic aspect of the CRA's operations. The CRA prioritized specific areas for improvement. For instance, the management decided to delegate authority to territorial offices for carrying out particular actions, to simplify procedures and to expand services based on innovations.

Specific services to be refined included services of civil act certificates issuance. In order to improve effectiveness, to facilitate the unification process of services, to shorten processing times and to simplify the receipt of certificates by citizens at locations convenient to them, the Civil Acts Registration Division under the CRA has delegated authority for the issuance of certificates to territorial offices. A similar delegation has taken place for the review and approval of name changes. In addition, the number of forms required for some civil acts' registration was reduced, and the physical presence at a territorial office was no longer necessary for some actions. Moreover, in order to streamline the accuracy of the civil acts database the CRA digitized birth and death civil act certificates from its archives.

Also, the CRA began to offer new types of services. The CRA initiated improvement of services at Matrimonial Houses. It has updated infrastructure and constructed new matrimonial houses in regional centers. It increased the variety of ceremonies available for matrimony and expanded marriage-related services such as offering live music, photography, etc. upon request of citizens.

The CRA expanded and simplified passport and ID issuance services. In order to access citizen information and unify the registry, the CRA gained access to citizens' data from regional centers and

archived it electronically. It reduced the issuance age for ID cards to 14 to allow the state access to information on its citizens much earlier. This helped to support planning for educational, health and other issues. A package of new and improved services was initiated that simplified the issuance of identification documents for citizens. This included the possibility to take photos in all territorial offices, the mailing of passports to citizens, and the issuance of passports based on power of attorney, thus, making physical presence at a CRA office by the applicant unnecessary.

Offering new types of services to public entities became one of the CRA's priorities. With the improvement of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), the CRA was able to provide access to the renewed and integrated citizens database to various public entities in an online regime. This helped to minimize irregularities in the database and enabled the agency to monitor unauthorized access to it. The CRA also decided to offer the citizens information sharing services to the private sector. Namely to the banking sector. The rationale for this decision was to track those false identification documents that were issued by the old administration. Thinking how to speed up the process of registration and decrease the number of false identification in circulation, reformers realized that most citizens were more likely to interact with a bank than pro-actively seek out registration services. By linking the banking sector to its database, the CRA management allowed bank operators to verify the validity of identification documents in the CRA database. In case of discrepancies, operators were expected to hold customers' requests until new identification papers were provided. Thus providing important incentives for citizens to register.

Plus, the CRA charged banks certain fees for granting access to its database, thus, generating additional revenues for the agency. The funds raised from these services enabled CRA to

invest in projects of high importance, like the development of new technologies and creation of a refined personal database.

### 3.4 New Generation of Biometric Database

In order to deliver services more effectively and to further unify the civil register, the CRA management identified the creation of a new biometric database as a priority. The absence of a proper, refined database would make it impossible to establish new technologies and to offer new services to citizens and organizations, both public and private. A database with comprehensive biometric parameters would drastically minimize the possibility to forge personal ID documents and would play an important role in the simplification of the visa regime with other countries, especially with the Schengen zone states.

Given the above parameters, CRA has prioritized formation of a refined personal database in line with internationally accepted standards. It added to the database the biometric parameters such as photo, fingerprint and electronic signature. To further eliminate and bring errors in the database to permissible minimum threshold, it has developed the database monitoring system and ensured its sound functioning.

### 3.5 Integration of New Technologies

The introduction of new technologies such as an integrated electronic network, electronic ID cards and biometric passports were critical elements for the development of a functional, e-governance based on One-Stop-Shop model. They play important role to maintain a constructive relationship with customers and to raise additional revenues for the Agency's financial sustainability.

A more powerful, more efficient, more readily useful civil register as envisioned in the strategic plan was closely dependent on development

The development of a database protection system helped the CRA to secure data from potentially unauthorized access, to create a system for tracking database actions to minimize untargeted use of identification data and to avoid data damage. Plus, CRA maintained a flexible database structure to enable the agency to enter new and desirable parameters to the database without altering its existing structure, ultimately making services more versatile and readily available.

The unified database encompasses data for personal ID and registration, passport data, changes to the citizens' status, civil acts registration data and the biometric parameters corresponding to International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) standards. With this, the agency laid the foundation for further advancing the One-Stop-Shop public service delivery model and created a strong basis for public services to be offered via e-governance.

of the new technologies. Given the direct link between technological development and improvements in public service delivery, the CRA management considered the advancement of new technologies the prime objective of the agency (GoG, CRA 2007).

Initially, the agency's information technology (IT) unit developed a specialized software to work in real time. It allowed the agency to automate the registration process throughout the system and implement state-of-the-art IT-based technologies. The introduction and use of Biometric Passports

and electronic ID cards enhanced data security and helped citizens use ID cards simpler and easier.

In order to develop a customer-focused, unified, secure and continuously updated civil register, the management put emphasis on automation of operations. To maximize automation and ensure that it is adequately available across the agency, trainings were conducted on automation efforts on financial management, HR records and on document turnover in the chancellery.

To allow effective use of public services by public and private entities in real time, the agency established an integrated electronic network that allowed to provide solid infrastructural basis for developing the software modules and access protocols for the entities. This enabled CRA to grant access to government and commercial customers immediately and in usable format.

Unifying citizens' services across all its units was important to provide customer satisfaction, to automate activities within the agency, create the Virtual Private Network (VPN) connecting territorial offices and provide standardized staff trainings to deliver a unified package of services across the agency.

The unification process rationalized the system to the extent that regardless in which territorial unit a customer placed a request, the agency was able to issue a document on the spot, in the immediate vicinity of a customer. This of course streamlined information flow and ensured fast and higher-quality services delivery to citizens. In parallel, the agency established an electronic record keeping system to attain a unified, universally accessible civil register.



**Picture 2 - New Biometric Passport at Public Service Hall**



### 3.6 Infrastructure Development

The outdated and dilapidated infrastructure stood in stark contrast to the customer oriented policies of the agency. Hence, the agency identified four main directions to deal with this challenge. It decided to refurbish old territorial offices, set up new matrimonial houses in the regions, install central and backup computer servers and to launch an integrated network which would connect all CRA offices throughout Georgia. Modernizing the infrastructure, both in terms of physical site improvement and ICT system upgrades facilitated the effectiveness of the system, supported the quality and timeliness of service delivery to customers and allowed the agency to offer services in the form of One-Stop-Shop to citizens.

The refurbishment of territorial offices according to the One-Stop-Shop model required active engagement with local authorities. It was crucial to identify appropriate physical infrastructure

for rehabilitation and to ensure that the service meets local government political interest as well as being provided with uninterrupted water, heating and electricity services. Plus, it was required that the new facilities could operate matrimonial ceremony houses in regions.

The establishment and installation of central and backup servers ensured uninterrupted and online functioning of public services. This allowed the agency to operate an integrated information network and ensure up-to-date methods of information security. Moreover, the introduction of Virtual Private Network allowed the agency to connect all territorial offices to the network and helped to fully integrate its information flow throughout the country. This undoubtedly added great power and flexibility to a variety of CRA actions to further innovate and advance public services.



Picture 3 - Justice House Telavi, Eastern Georgia

### 3.7 Strengthening Financial Self-Sustainability

Strong capacity and flexibility in financial management was considered a basic ingredient for reforming the agency. Some level of financial stability was characteristic of the CRA's finances in the beginning of reform. However, it was neither enough nor sustainable for advancing a comprehensive reform. Therefore, it was necessary to strengthen financial self-sustainability and introduce a refined financial management system.

The CRA received the bulk of its funding from the state budget. Interestingly, the CRA's contribution to the GoG's overall budget considerably exceeded the budgetary funding for the CRA's activities. At the same time, critically needed reforms for building desired reliability, timeliness, security and transparency into CRA operations and services called for the optimization of existing financial flows. Financial contributions from international donors such as USAID, DFID and UNDP, very important for successfully implementing the reform were not expected to continue much, beyond the final strategy period year of 2011 (GoG, MoJ, 2007). Therefore, diversifying sources of revenue through the development of innovative services to citizens and private sector organisations was essential to the CRA's longer-term financial health.

As a public sector organisation, the CRA carried a responsibility to manage public funds efficiently, purposefully and responsibly. As a legal entity of public law, the Agency possessed the legal basis

for deriving its own revenues from the services delivered. Hence, the agency initiated the formation of a refined system of financial analysis and started thorough planning and expenditure monitoring. A master financial management plan was developed to improve and streamline financial unit action plans and expenditure requests. It automatized financial operation within the system and offered its personnel a continuous training in financial management (Gagnidze, 2009).

The agency has started introducing a system of continuous financial controls. Namely, it developed a systematic approach to identify articulated internal control and audit principles and began carrying out regular internal and external audits. Staff at the financial unit was offered a set of trainings to strengthen professional knowledge and skills in auditing and accounting.

In spite of enormous efforts of the Civil Registry Agency management to modernize and to reform the system, it still required thorough day-to-day management, monitoring and innovative thinking to achieve the desired outcomes. Management at the Ministry of Justice understood perfectly well that reformation of one state institution, albeit as important as the CRA, was not enough for public service delivery improvement in the country. Hence, in parallel to the CRA, attention focused on establishing a National Agency of Public Registry.

## 4. OSS Public Service Delivery Model of National Agency of Public Registry of MoJ

In 2004, a new legal entity of public law, the National Agency of Public Registry (NAPR), was established by the order of the Minister of Justice (MoJ). NAPR was created as an agency under the subordination of the ministry and was given a mandate to assume the rights and obligations to make transactions on its own behalf and defend itself vis-à-vis third parties. It was granted the right to have an independent balance, banking (including currency account), emblem and seal of the state emblem, and other attributes of a legal entity (MoJ, order 835, 2004). In essence, the agency has acquired the similar status as the Civil Registry Agency, its sister organization under the subordination of the Ministry of Justice. While establishing the agency, NAPR management engaged with the Ministry of Finance of Georgia (MoF) and convinced the ministry not to demand funds generated through services provided to be transferred to the state budget. This gave a lot of flexibility to the agency as it was allowed to maintain its funds and to start reforming the highly inefficient and corrupt system of public registry (Interview with a respondent, 2014).

The aim of NAPR, according to its statute, was to register the real-estate property and other proprietary rights, as well as to recognize and verify the agreements concluded between real-estate owners. The agency was instructed to design, develop and securely maintain a real-estate cadaster database. The rationalization and constant update of public registry data fell under its responsibility. The agency had to ensure the accessibility of the data and support the development and promotion of the market of movable and immovable property in the country. Plus, it had to initiate a substantial reform process to modernize the registry in Georgia (MoJ, order 835, 2004).

Today, the main functions of the agency as stipulated by the law include: primary and any other type of registration of immovable and movable properties subject to registration rights; registration of collaterals and encumbrance; registration of the agreements concluded between owners of apartments and their tenants; issuance and maintenance of the information of movable and immovable properties in the country; provision of land registration information to tax authorities based on the data of land cadaster; systematization, computerization and security of registry data; establishment of boundaries for administrative-territorial entities; ensuring the data accessibility between state and private as well as among state institutions; maintenance and constant update of real estate cadaster database and its software; preparation of analytical reports related to the cadaster; cooperation, development and innovation of public registry in coordination with donor agencies; elaboration of a budget for the agency as well as the development of rational fee policy for the services provided to citizens etc. (MoJ, order 835, 2004; Civil Code, amendments 4744, 2007).

Prior to creating NAPR, the functions of the state registry fell under the State Land Management Department (SLMD) established in 1997. However, the department was not able to perform its functions neither efficiently nor effectively. The main reason for the dysfunctional administration was the duplication of registry functions. Even though the department was responsible for state registry, the same functions were granted to technical bureaus under the local authorities. A lack of coordination among the department and numerous technical bureaus as well as overlap in terms of their functions and responsibilities gave corruption a solid ground to prosper. The registration of a land or a property was associated

with immensely ineffective bureaucracy, long queues and endless nerve-wracking procedures (NAPR, 2016). As a consequence, the reputation of the administration was heavily damaged in the eyes of citizens.

The establishment of NAPR paved the way for the government to abolish the State Land Management Department and technical inventory bureaus under the management of local authorities. The land registration functions and data kept in the technical bureaus were transferred to NAPR.

Even though the agency became the sole player in the field of public registry, it inherited an ineffective and corrupt system that lacked personnel to operate physical and ICT infrastructure, had an incomplete legislative base,

## 4.1 Refining Legislation

In parallel to the creation of NAPR in 2004, the Government of Georgia initiated changes in the public registry legislation. The aim was to harmonize and unify the scattered legal acts under one, more sophisticated law. As a result, the Parliament of Georgia passed the "rights to real estate registration" law. The law regulated registration procedures and simplified interaction between agency and citizens. As a follow up to the legislation, the Ministry of Justice developed a set of instruction to regulated real-estate registration practices in the agency.

The initiated legislative reform allowed citizens to monitor and track the registered data transparently and timely. The agency has lifted restrictions on access to information, thus, granting citizens the right to access the information on property registration of anyone. The public registry extract has become an open-ended document where citizens could see all properties registered under one unified format. Moreover, the agency granted a legal status to an electronically printed extract, it was not required any longer to have a stamp of a registrar or a signature for that matter

shortage of experienced and reform-minded personnel and an extremely low culture of service delivery.

It became evident for the new management that it was salient to reform the system in a way that it transforms into a customer-focused and transparent institution capable of offering citizens secure and unified public registration services. The agency identified four key areas to reform the system that are discussed in more detail below: legislative, institutional, administrative and technological. The management emphasized the development and use of modern information technologies as well as the simplification of procedures for registration as the main characteristics of the reform (NAPR, 2016).

for an extract to be a legal document. Any state, non-state or private actor could verify the validity of an extract by simply searching it in the NAPR database available for free on the agency's website.

A new standard for a land cadaster was established. It became a requirement to submit a cadaster scheme to register a right for a land parcel. Standardization allowed to create a unified electronic database of land cadaster.

In 2008, a law on "public registry" was passed by the Parliament of Georgia. The law clearly defined functions and responsibilities of the National Agency of Public Registry. This allowed the management to tackle new challenges facing the organization. It helped to create a robust framework for streamlining real-estate registration. All norms that were previously scattered in various acts were brought together under one legislation. This contributed to minimize the time necessary to register a property and helped in elaborating adequate fees for the services provided.

The legislation reform has created a solid legal framework for the technological advancement of the agency. This eventually helped to simplify

procedures for citizens seeking the registration of their properties and regulated the registration for commercial and non-commercial entities.

## 4.2 Institutional and Administrative Reforms

The Government has strengthened NAPR by broadening its functions, responsibilities and public service outreach. In the period from 2004 to 2014, NAPR expended its services by absorbing an archive that was previously kept under the technical inventory bureaus of local authorities, acquired rights to register movable and immovable properties and gained rights to register properties that were placed under the collateral obligation upon request of the tax authorities and the banking sector. In 2005, the Chamber of Notaries handed the agency the right to register restrictions on property utilization imposed by public and legal entities. In 2010, the Ministry of Finance gave up in favor of the agency the function to register commercial and non-commercial entities. 2011 was marked by granting the agency geodesy and cartography functions. In 2012, the agency became responsible for registering citizens' political unions and acquired the right to perform real-estate numeration. The same year, the agency started elaborating the addressing system nationwide and began address numeration in the capital city. In 2014, the agency became responsible to register municipal boundaries nationwide (NAPR, 2016).

Alongside the massive institutional reform, the agency management started the modernization of the administrative structure. The first, most important decision that the NAPR management took was to delineate functions and responsibilities between Back and Front Offices in the public service delivery chain. As corruption had mushroomed when immediate decision makers had direct interactions with citizens, the main purpose of the introduction of the One-Stop-Shop model with a clearly separated Back Office and Front Office was to eliminate the bad practice of corrupt business dealings.

Distancing back office employees from front office functions allowed NAPR to limit interaction between those employees who were immediately responsible for making decision and the citizens. Back office personnel who were experts in their respective fields started to receive citizens' requests via operators who served the agency by accepting citizens' requests in front offices. Hence, citizens no longer knew who was responsible for making a decision to process their requests and back office employees taking the decisions had no direct interface with the customer.

Moreover, the agency's IT unit developed a system that helped to randomly assign tasks between back office experts and front office operators. An operator who accepted citizens' requests did not know who in the back office would be processing this request. The development of this system would not have been possible without proper ICT infrastructure. The split between the back office and front office helped to minimize corruption in the agency and allowed the management to further advance and reform the institution (Interview with a respondent, 2014).

Prior to the establishment of Public Service Halls, NAPR had only one office in the capital city. This was a period when the agency had already elaborated the back office front office business practice. However, the workflow still remained high and the agency could not adequately cope with the citizens' demand.

In order to reduce workflow, the agency management decided to introduce a concept of "authorized customers." The authorized customers are those organizations who are given the right to access the NAPR database. By delegating the rights to third parties to access its database, in this particular case to banking sector

actors, the agency broadened its services almost without spending a penny on infrastructure development. Banks started offering customers property registration services on the spot, in their respective regional bureaus. Customers who were seeking bank loans or any other type of financial service in return of collaterals or mortgages were given the opportunity to use this service without accessing directly the agency. It reduced the large customer turnover at NAPR offices, simplified customer service and reduced time for property extract issuance drastically (Interview with a respondent, 2016). This became possible thanks to well-established back office front office business processes under the OSS public service delivery model.

By gaining access to NAPR services, banks started serving as front offices for the agency. Moreover, banks started paying certain fees for using the service, thus, contributing to the financial sustainability of the agency. Besides, NAPR requested banks to serve any customer, notwithstanding whether they were interested in receiving financial services or not from a bank (Interview with a respondent, 2016). This request served as a pre-condition for granting banks the status of “authorized customer” (GoG, MoJ order 509, 2011).

Authorized access, data exchange and integration of critical information into the IT system of a third party is regulated by an order of the Head of the Data Exchange Agency of Georgia. It requires a package of special standards in any organisation to be introduced to use services offered by state institutions. The agency which alongside NAPR falls under the subordination of the Ministry of Justice regularly monitors and observes adherence to standards and obliges commercial entities or any third party to provide information if changes occur in an already audited system (GoG, MoJ, DEA order 6, 2013).

The technological advancement of NAPR encouraged other state institutions to cooperate with the agency closely. NAPR started designing business practices for other sister agencies which

were part of the Ministry of Justice. The Chamber of Notary of Georgia which was a suspect in corruption cases required immediate attention. At that time, notarial bureaus were obliged to register notary acts in a special registration journal. They were required to assign each act a number and indicate the time of registration. If an act A was registered at, for instance 1 p.m. an act B must have been registered afterwards as required by law. However, notaries tended to leave time and number slots in the registration journal empty. The reason was to register anything with the back date if necessary, thus, opening opportunities for individual or commercial customers to pay bribes for performing this type of registration for whatever reason.

NAPR in cooperation with the chamber introduced a registration software that restricted registration of acts by hand. As of this moment, notaries were obliged to register notary acts through the software which was impossible to manipulate easily. Due to the fact that the Chamber of Notary did not have institutional capacity and expertise to do these changes alone and because both of the institutions were under the umbrella of the Ministry of Justice, NAPR decided to offer this service to the chamber so that it could reform malfunctioned business practices quickly and effectively. Alongside the Chamber of Notary, the agency assisted the State Procurement Agency to introduce an e-procurement system. In return, these organizations paid a certain amount for the services they received from NAPR. Usually, NAPR does not seek to receive financial gains from sister institutions and asks fees only to cover immediate expenses, there is no financial benefit for the agency when assisting other state institutions (Interview with a respondent, 2014).

The introduction of the One-Stop-Shop (Back Office Front Office) public service delivery model has had a tremendous impact on the further evolution of services in the state institutions. The system requires constant attention, monitoring and technological update to meet customer demands. Plus, the employees serving in either

office need to be provided with training in order to improve their skills and knowledge for the system to operate. Front office employees need to have customer service skills while back office personnel need to strengthen their subject matter

### 4.3 Technological Transformation

In tandem with legislative, administrative and institutional changes, the agency embarked on reforming the technological base of the system. The introduction of modern Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) has played a special role in the development and success of the registration system in Georgia. At the initial stage of the technological reform, the agency equipped territorial offices with computers, provided network and internet. As of 2006, the agency personnel started utilizing new software solutions actively. This allowed NAPR to offer citizens the registration services online in a faster and simplified manner.

Economic development has increased the demand on property registration in 2007. This increase was especially noticeable in those cities and regions that were economically very active. To tackle the high demand effectively and to respond to citizens' needs NAPR introduced services for "authorized customers" which was based on the One-Stop-Shop (Back Office Front Office) public service delivery model and simplified the registration procedures. This helped to reduce registration processing time and made services less expensive. This was made possible through the development of reliable technological solutions (NAPR, 2016).

ICT became the backbone and important contributor for the success of NAPR. The introduction of ICT solutions automated the internal business process in the agency. Constant innovation and searching for new ways to modernize the system made the business process more effective and helped to reduce service delivery time and cost. It provided secure and stable business operations and made reliable and

expertise for the system to function. And finally, both of them need to be capable of using rapidly changeable software and hardware technologies.

correct data available for users. The ICT Division assisted the agency to make land administration and business register systems transparent, thus, making information publicly available to stakeholders. By opening up its database to third parties upon authorization, it simplified interaction with municipalities, authorities and businesses. It has contributed to NAPR's becoming a leading e-authority in Georgia (NAPR, IT strategy 2011). Recently, NAPR in cooperation with Bitfury has started a pilot project to link the property registry to a blockchain technology. This could offer even more secure and reliable property registration system to citizens. However, it is a new and innovative approach that still needs to be tested before it is broadly introduced (Interview with a respondent, 2016).

The agency's corporate vision is to be a guarantor of business and property registration in the country. Therefore, the value discipline of ICT has been built around the following three principles: customer intimacy, operational excellence and product leadership. Each dimension has its own characteristics. Customer intimacy values the closeness to customer representatives in its organizational vision, while in terms of business processes it prioritizes short lead time and a flexible system. In consideration of technological advancement, it prioritizes the integration of best products and services. As for sourcing, it sees the potential in creating best solutions via a strong architecture and customer skills.

Operational excellence seeks to find economy of scales through the centralization of organisational structure. In terms of business processes, it advertises high availability. Adaptation of standard products falls under its technological

vision while in terms of sourcing it heavily relies on outsourcing to achieve better quality and low cost.

And finally, product leadership sees the closeness to product development as an important factor in its organizational culture. In terms of process sophistication, it advocates for research and development via IT and for technological advancement it prioritizes the design of its own unique IT solution. As for sourcing, it sees internal skills as an important factor in maintaining a unique and distinctive character (NAPR, IT strategic 2011).

The business processes and organizational structure of NAPR appears to put emphasis on operational excellence. Nonetheless, some aspects of the other two dimensions are partially integrated in the design of the system.

The reform of public service delivery in Georgia was neither an easy nor straightforward process.

All aspects of the reform have contributed to its current form. Design and evolution culminated in the form of Public Service Halls also known as Justice Houses at regional level and Community Centres at community level. Therefore, it is interesting to describe how public services are provided today through these two structurally different, but strategically similar institutions.

Public Service Hall is a semi-independent organisation, a legal entity of public law under the subordination of the Ministry of Justice. While Community Centres fall under the management of the Service Development Agency of Georgia (SDA). SDA is yet another legal entity of public law established in 2012. It inherited functions of the Civil Registry Agency of Georgia and is subordinated by the Ministry of Justice. The agency has absorbed all functions of the CRA and is given the responsibility to advance public services in the entire governance structure in the country (MoJ, SDA 2016).

## 5. Public Service Halls also known as Justice Houses of MoJ

Public Service Hall (PSH) was established in 2012 by the order of the Minister of Justice. In 2015, the Ministry of Justice made certain revisions in its statute and today, the agency has rights to represent its interest vis-à-vis third parties, has its own state balance, identification code, account in commercial banks and in the state treasury, has a symbol, a stamp as well as other characteristics necessary for a legal entity of public law. PSH has the right to issue any document either in manual or in electronic format (MoJ, order 85, 2015).

The main purpose of PSH as stipulated by the law is to provide services offered by public as well as by private agencies through One-Stop-Shop (Back Office Front Office) model of service delivery. It is instructed to support government service delivery and is expected to design and to offer public services through innovation and diversity. The agency is expected to provide consultation

to other state or non-state institutions to sophisticate services and to enter into agreement with institutions with the purpose of offering services to citizens as well as organizations (MoJ, order 85, 2015).

The Minister of Justice has a right to appoint and dismiss the executive director of PSH. The executive director has four deputy-directors with their respective field of responsibility. The appointment and dismissal of a deputy-director must be agreed with the Minister of Justice. In case of absence of the executive director, one of the deputies takes the responsibility to run the agency (MoJ, order 85, 2015).

The management structure and interaction between the PSH central office and regional bureaus are highly centralized. Each regional bureau has a manager responsible to ensure the



daily operation of an office. The executive director of PSH in consultation with the Minister of Justice appoints or dismisses a manager. A manager can have deputy managers who are appointed by the executive director of PSH (MoJ, order 85, 2015). Regional bureaus are expected to actively engage in the service development of the agency. They provide advice on product development and procedures improvement, however, the final decision rests with the head office.

Public Service Hall is a space where the state provides more than 200 public services to citizens or any other interested parties in a timely, effective and customer friendly manner. Most of the services offered via PSH fall under the exclusive responsibility of the state. Documents such as birth and marriage registration or ID card and passport issuance are produced in the hall in a simplified and satisfactory form for citizens. Public Service Hall even offers public services in a JUSTcafe. This is a comfortable cafe located inside Tbilisi Public Service Hall where customers have the possibility to receive the necessary public services while also enjoying coffee or local cuisine (Annex I, PSH, MoJ, 2014).

At the initial stage of public administration reform, the Government mandated CRA and NAPR to establish a One-Stop-Shop model of public service delivery. These were two semi-independent agencies managed to transform the service delivery culture in the country. However, both were under the management of the Ministry of Justice, with two independent One-Stop-Shop models. Interest to replicate



their model was high from other state agencies. They wanted to either establish a similar model of service delivery or use either CRA or NAPR to better reach out to the population. Therefore, an idea to establish one public space where citizens could have had the possibility to receive all public services offered by the state was entertained. The unification of substantially diverse services was a challenging task. On the one hand, it required the development of a proper business logic to bring services together in order to effectively and timely provide them to citizens. On the other hand, it was important not to jeopardize the already existing model which functioned reliably. The transition should have been as less painful as possible.

The new organizational structure needed to satisfy several criteria. It should be able to offer a large number of services, should be easily accessible to citizens geographically, should offer services in a timely manner and should reduce service waiting time for citizens. Based on these criteria the Ministry of Justice elaborated the concept of PSH as a front office for the ministry to provide services to citizens. Any action or activities related to services must be channeled through PSH. Thus, PSH became the public service sales and intensive communication body of the ministry.

## 5.1 Functional Management of PSH

PSH as a front office of the Ministry of Justice and major service provider has an obligation to be actively engaged in service design, elaboration and implementation. PSH directly interacts with citizens and is well aware of needs and necessities customers may have. Therefore, the agency is in the best position to formulate new public services, redesign old ones as well as provide consultation to other service providers to streamline procedures and processes.

Moreover, PSH has a function to communicate with customers. It plays a major role in shaping the opinion among customers about the nature and value of the administration. Transparency, openness and constant communication with citizens are the guiding value of the agency. To maintain and strengthen the image of the administration, PSH must ensure that it has properly set management standards and functions.

Interaction between PSH as a front office and other agencies in the back office during the service design, development and implementation process has a circular character and consists of:

- Situation analysis and data gathering - this function is performed by PSH and includes studying the issues affecting existing services, gathering information to elaborate new services, defining indicators to detect irregularities in service provision, evaluating effectiveness of services and assessing the quality of services provided;
- Analysing and producing recommendations – PSH constantly observes and evaluates the quality of the service chain and develops recommendations in case of irregularities and ineffectiveness;
- Discussions, consultation, making decisions on new products and process elaboration and development – PSH in cooperation with a respective agency in the back office

discusses produced recommendations, sums up decisions and agrees on the quality of a product and on changes in the product production chain;

- Creating and redesigning services and procedures – a respective agency in the back office is responsible for creating new products, optimizing processes for service delivery, rewriting procedures and developing instructions, testing and adapting a service to be offered via PSH;
- Technical and administrative support – a respective agency in the back office ensures that a software solution is designed for a service to be provided, provides trainings for personnel to use a software, familiarizes them with procedures, concepts and the service delivery chain and performs any other task necessary to implement the service;
- Launching new products/services into the service delivery line – PSH is responsible for ensuring that services reach their customer in a timely and customer friendly manner;
- Communication support – PSH and a respective agency in the back office are responsible for effective communication for services provided through the agency (MoJ, PSH marketing strategy, 2010).

It is important for the agencies engaged in the service design, elaboration and implementation to have functions adequately distributed. There should be a well-thought service delivery chain elaborated in order not to hinder cooperation between front and back office agencies.

In the case of Georgia, back office agencies remain major players in the service production chain. Even though, they do not have direct interaction with customers any longer, they have all functions to operate effectively, have their own management and organizational structure. They have everything necessary for an organisation

to operate, except direct communication with customers (Interview with a respondent, 2016).

Back office agencies deliberately handed the representative function to PSH which serves as a front office for them. PSH analyzes products, gathers information that it acquires from customers and provides recommendations to back office agencies to design new products

or to streamline service provision processes. A respective agency in the back office studies the request, organizes a consultation meeting with the front office in case of necessity and develops an optimal solution for the request. Afterwards, it designs a new product/service or redesigns an old one. In essence, it provides PSH with administrative and organizational support in order for a service to be launched.

## 5.2 Classification and Nature of Public Services

Citizens receive various public services either by personally approaching Public Service Hall or via e-governance in an online regime. There are several agencies that provide services through PSH. Citizens or any other third party can receive a myriad of services at PSH, including real-estate, land, individual or commercial enterprise registration provided by NAPR; passport and ID issuance, civil acts registration and immigration

related services are powered by Service Development Agency; power of attorney is offered by the Notary Chamber; National Bureau of Enforcement offers services to execute the decisions made by court order; Training Center of Justice offers judicial consultation and trainings for customers and Minister of Education uses PSH to provide school attestation certificates to citizens.



Picture 5 - Self-Service Area at Public Service Hall in Tbilisi

Picture 6 - Quick Service Area at Public Service Hall in Tbilisi



The complexity of public service provision requires thorough planning. Services are dichotomized into two broad, procedural and conceptual product groups. The procedural group includes services triggered by the demand from customers. Notably, these are the services that are mostly used and are highly requested by citizens, including civil and public registration services, services offered by notary bureaus, documents from national archive, cadaster maps etc. The second, conceptual group of services covers products that play an important role in strengthening the brand image of PSH. Services such as judicial consultation, trainings and seminars for customers fall under this category. Even though, all services taken together ensure that the PSH brand is strongly and positively positioned in the administrative service delivery structure, the first group does this via services that are process oriented while the second group contributes by emphasizing the importance of emotional value in service provision (MoJ, PSH marketing strategy, 2010).

PSH recognizes the importance of delineating areas in terms of the character of the services

provided. There is a common services area and an area for corporate customers. Corporate customers include organisations that have intensive communication and are active users of services provided by the agency. Generally, they are not only customers but also are considered to be partners of the agency. These could be any large scale commercial or non-commercial entities (MoJ, PSH marketing strategy, 2010).

The common services area is used by customers who do not have corporate status. These are citizens, small organizations or any other third party. This is an open and transparent space where customers are treated equally, in a timely and customer friendly manner. This space is divided into self-service, quick and long service areas.

In the self-service area, customers can use automated services, such as take a photo for a passport or pay fees for services etc. The quick service area covers services that do not take a long time to produce. This can include the receipt for an already produced documents.

The long service area provides services that take longer to produce and may require additional

Picture 6 - Long Service Area at Public Service Hall



documentation to be supplied by a customer (PSH, 2016).

A structure of PSH from a customer perspective in diagram 1 looks as follow (Diagram 1).

There are currently 17 regional Public Service Halls in Georgia. Each of them is connected to the central office, is engaged in service design and is providing more than 200 public services to citizens. Their service outreach is further strengthened by Community Centres which will be further described in the study.

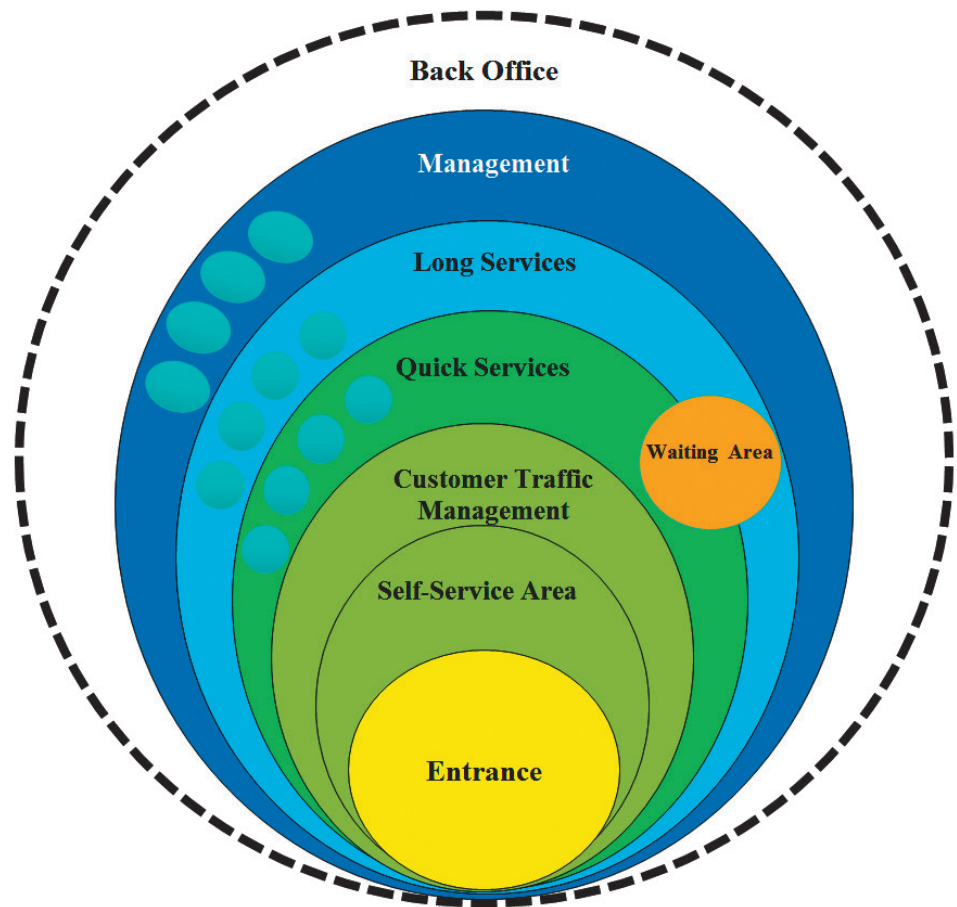


Diagram 1 – structure of Public Service Hall as seen by customers (PSH, 2014).

## 6. Community Centres of the Service Development Agency of Georgia

The Service Development Agency of Georgia (SDA) was established in 2012 as a legal entity of public law by the order of the Minister of Justice. SDA has absorbed the functions and organisational structure of the Civil Registry Agency. Hence, by the time of its creation, the agency had already inherited a rather well advanced structure and qualified personnel. Apart of civil registration tasks, SDA was instructed to design innovations and generate new ideas for public service modernization and development. The Ministry of Justice empowered the agency to create instruments for the development of strategically important projects and to initiate reforms in the public sector. Plus, it became responsible for making decision on immigration issues as well as providing document legalization and apostil services (MoJ, SDA order 117, 2012).

The idea for developing Community Centres first appeared in 2011. The Government of Georgia supported and approved an "Introduction of E-governance in Local Governments" project (GoG, order 2250, 2011). The project proposed by CRA and the European Union (EU) Mission in Georgia aimed at optimizing management at municipality centres, improving communication between municipal centres and trustee offices, providing better services to local population, producing easily usable software solutions for service delivery, designing a legal framework for the introduction of e-governance and developing appropriate infrastructure necessary for the operation of e-governance (SDA, project annex, 2011). As the CRA successor, SDA has taken responsibility to support and to further develop the Community Centres nationwide.

At the inception stage of the Community Centres, SDA opened 6 pilot centres to observe and analyze its operation and impact on the community. The success of the initiative became evident rather soon. Communities started utilizing the public services offered in the centres. The reasons were multifold: Citizens could receive services faster and easier in the immediate vicinity of their communities. Moreover, local municipalities realized that the centres positively impacted the image of municipalities. A customer satisfaction survey conducted in 2013 by ACT, a local research and consulting company, showed that 61 % of residents had heard about the existence of the community centre in their village. 85 % of citizens had received the information about the centre from their neighbours and friends. ACT also asked citizens where they acquire public services generally. 58 % of local residents responded that generally they receive public services in the village. More than 80 % of those who received public services said that they acquired them via community centres. The top ten public services that citizens frequently request in the community centres are: payment of communal utilities, bank services, state pension, telecommunication services, social aid, passport and ID services, registration of land, receipt of special support vouchers, computer and internet services and registration of an immovable property. 90 % of those residents who received public services in the centres expressed interest in using the Community Centres services repeatedly (ACT, survey 2013). Today, there are 43 Community Centres operating nationwide and 11 centres are expected to be opened in 2017 (Interview with a respondent, 2016; MoJ, 2016).

Picture 7 - Community Centre in Georgia



## 6.1 Nature and Functional Capacity of Community Centres

Community Centre (CC) is a multi-functional infrastructure, based on the One-Stop-Shop (Back Office Front Office) public service delivery model. It is equipped with the latest technology and well trained local personnel. The staff which is locally hired ensures provision of the central government's, municipal and private sector services through e-governance tools. The centres host the Trustee's office, the municipality representative on a village level and offers communities a public space to meet and to discuss issues of local importance. Local population has an opportunity to access free internet, computers, video conference equipment, ATM and Pay Box machines in the centres. Some CCs are in municipal ownership while others are on the balance of SDA. Income generated from the private sector, mostly through lease payments as well as funding from the state ensure their financial sustainability (SDA, development strategy and action plan, 2013). To establish a Community Centre in a community

or village, SDA enters into an agreement with a municipality. The agreement has a conditional character and sets out specific roles and expectation for the parties engaged. The local municipality is obliged to grant SDA unrestricted access to monitor quality control and dismiss, upon request any personnel who violates standards and jeopardizes the operation of the centre. For its part, SDA takes the obligation to provide consultations in order to operate the centre, grants the municipality access to its database to operate the centre, ensures the quality functioning of software packages and in case of malfunctioning of it takes appropriate measures to remedy the problem. SDA also provides trainings to municipality personnel and the necessary equipment to operate the centre. The municipality does not have the right to introduce additional fees for services and it does not request financial resources from SDA to operate the centres (SDA, agreement 2014).

Picture 8 - Operators at Community Centre in Georgia



There are at least two operators working in each centre and one of them serves as an operations manager. Operators undergo a set of trainings prior to appointment. Trainings and continuous education is offered by the Trainings Centre of Justice and consists of a theoretical training, an internship and case studies. Initially, operators get familiarity with the legal and administrative base of the system. Then they are sent to a territorial office to receive practical, hands-on knowledge of service provision and acquire experience through practicing service provisions via specially designed case studies. In the end, an operator must pass a test to verify his/her knowledge. Moreover, SDA provides continuous planned and refreshment trainings to make them familiar with legal and administrative changes, to practice customer friendliness, software utilization etc. Operators must be able to master approximately five software solutions to provide services in a satisfactory manner (Interview with a respondent, 2016).

The Community Centre model uses a business structure which is similar to the business logic of Public Service Hall, i.e. it serves as a front office for those state agencies which design and produce services in back offices. Apart from the services offered by the Ministry of Justice, it provides some other additional services requested by communities. The list of services at CCs looks as follow (refer to the annex II to see a non-exhaustive list of services):

- Civil registry services: e-ID, passport, birth registration, secondary education attestation, residence permit, repeated issuance of any civil acts, divorce registration, etc.
- Public registry services: property right registration, extract on real-estate, registration of a right to build an estate on a land parcel, debtor pledge registration, etc.
- National archive services: a letter from archive about divorce, death, birth, award, evacuation, information on registration of physical and judicial entities, etc.





**Picture 9 - Justice House in Borjomi, Southern Georgia**

- Social services: a letter confirming that a family is registered in a social assistance database, accepting citizens' request for the need of an auxiliary technical assistance, etc.
- Agriculture services: paving and cleaning of water canals, land mulching, excavation work, vineyard care and protection, mowing, pressing of hay, support during harvest, etc.

The list of services shows the complex nature of public service delivery in the Community Centres. There are diverse in terms of number and character. In addition to the services provided by Public Service Halls, Community Centres provide services that are in demand in local, rural communities. More specifically, public and civil registry services are provided in parallel to social and agriculture type of public services.

If for civil and public registry services the responsibility is carried by the Service Development Agency and National Agency of Public Registry respectively, the responsibility for social and agriculture services rests with the Social Service Agency under the Ministry of Labor, Health and Social Affairs and Mechanisator, a limited liability enterprise which is under the subordination of the Ministry of Agriculture (SDA, CC website 2016). Each agency has an agreement with Service Development Agency to delegate their services to CCs. Some services require fees to be paid by customers and others are provided for free. Services of the Social Service Agency (SSA), for instance, are free for citizens to receive (Interview with a respondent, 2016).

## 7. Conclusion and Recommendations

During the last twelve years, the Government of Georgia has implemented a number of significant public sector reforms that succeeded in eliminating petty corruption in public service delivery and improved government outreach to citizens. However, the modernization of its administrative structure and the implementation of a new One-Stop-Shop model of public service delivery has been a major challenge for the government.

The existing model is a result of the thorough and continuous planning of those managers and administrators who initiated the reform in the first place. Timely and thoughtful utilization of Information and Communication Technologies has opened up new opportunities and laid the foundation for the introduction of network governance. However, its potential still needs to be fully explored and realized by the state.

Moving public services into the internet space and increasing their accessibility enabled a profound transformation of public services that were traditionally associated with bureaucracy and rigid procedures. However, despite this major transformation, there remains room to improve for the system. For instance, in rural communities the level of service delivery is still considerably lower, and the rural population cannot fully benefit from the improvements brought by the recent reforms in the country. One of the main reasons for this is lack of awareness and the fact that citizens residing in rural areas tend to have little or no knowledge and skills to use modern information and communication technologies. Surveys conducted by independent organizations show that citizens are not sufficiently aware about the possibility for using public spaces at the Community Centres, and therefore their utilization is very low in those communities (ACT, customer survey, 2013). This shows the importance of ensuring genuine engagement of citizens in the reform process.

Another challenge is the constant monitoring of

services to meet the high standards of customer friendliness and timeliness. The agencies must develop robust and yet humanistic monitoring mechanisms to balance between high standards of public service delivery and simultaneously, minimize the pressure on personnel in this highly intensive public service delivery system.

Even though the government considerably rationalized the administrative structure, there must be more thoughtful inter-agency coordination to improve horizontal interaction between administrative units. Robust and genuine horizontal inter-agency communication will further strengthen cooperation within the administrative structure and improve knowledge and information flow. That, eventually, will allow state agencies to design follow up monitoring to determine whether administrative activities actually achieve the intended outcomes and strategic goals.

There are more specific and important lessons to be learnt while reforming a public administration system in any country. In the case of Georgia, it is salient to highlight the following lessons learnt:

- Predictable strategic horizon and vision of the leadership on how to reform public administration played a crucial role in the transformation of the sector;
- Reducing the size of the traditional bureaucracy by establishing more flexible and adjustable state structures/agencies and by simplifying administrative procedures helped the government advance reform faster;
- Creating smaller agencies that are responsible for their own actions allowed the administration to better coordinate the reform between political appointees and administrators;
- Reducing bureaucracy and simplifying administrative procedures helped the government to better tackle corruption in the system;
- Continuous training, salary increases and education of employees brought the necessary confidence in personnel;

- Introduction of the One-Stop-Shop ecosystem, including software and hardware infrastructure, renovation of the old physical infrastructure, elaboration of a legal framework, modernization of HR structure, improvement of organisational capacity to rapidly respond to financial and administrative transformation, digitization of archive materials such as civil acts to strengthen citizens database and a well-planned public awareness campaign to deliver information to citizens all played vital role in the development of OSS in Georgia;
- Support from the donor community has had a deep positive impact on the reform. Namely, the direct or indirect assistance provided by USAID helped GoG stay focused on the reform and continuously monitor progress. It helped to upgrade the ICT infrastructure in order to establish massive primary and secondary data centers capable of processing huge data faster and more efficiently;
- Recruitment of IT personnel to develop quality software packages to deliver passport, ID, civil acts etc. in online uninterrupted regime as well as the creation of a Virtual Private Network was possible thanks to donor assistance;
- Even though donor support is important, it is not enough to reform a system. Governments must make a financial commitment to sustain the reforms;
- Reliable citizens database helped state agencies generate more income by establishing partnerships with private actors, especially in the banking sector;
- The most important lesson to be learnt by any government is to begin the development of a One-Stop-Shop public service delivery model by strengthening back office agencies and only afterwards focusing on the front office architecture. A clear separation of functions and responsibilities between back and front office agencies is the main ingredient for the success of the existing One-Stop-Shop model in Georgia.

In spite of the challenges, today, the Ministry of Justice with its subordinated agencies is undoubtedly in a leading position in terms of knowledge and experience. It has acquired strong expertise while designing and making the Public Service Halls and Community Centres public service delivery structures a reality. Generally, customers seem to be satisfied with the quality and effectiveness of the services delivered. However, it will require more time, research and resources to observe the long term impact of this model on the trust between administration and citizens.

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## Annex I – illustrative price list of public services also known as public service menu in “Just Cafe” at Public Service Hall in Tbilisi (PSH, MoJ, 2014).

MENU		
Person		
ID card (electronic identity card)	10 days	30 Lari
	5 days	40 Lari
	3 days	50 Lari
	1 day	60 Lari
	On the same day	65 Lari
Passport (issuance of passport to citizens of Georgia)	10 days	100 Lari
	5 days	120 Lari
	3 days	150 Lari
	1 day	190 Lari
	On the same day	205 Lari
Birth Certificate (first registration of birth)	1 day	Free of charge
Marriage certificate (first registration of marriage)	1 day	Free of charge
Recurrent Certificates (birth, marriage, divorce, establishing of paternity, child adoption, change name/surname, death recurrent certificates)	5 days	2 Lari
	3 days	7 Lari
	1 day	17 Lari
	On the same day	27 Lari
Single Entry Visa (issuance of single entry visa)	7 days	50 Lari
Multi-Entry Visa (issuance of multi-entry visa)	7 days	360 Lari
Recognition of Number of Heads	10 days	35 Lari
Information Card (issuance of information card to applicant/issuance of information card through power of attorney)	10 days	Free of charge
	5 days	2 Lari
	2 days	5 Lari
	On the same day	10 Lari
Change of Permanent Residence Certificate (change of lost permanent resident certificate/change of permanent residence certificate because of registration on new address)	10 days	30 Lari
	5 days	40 Lari
	3 days	50 Lari
	1 day	60 Lari
	On the same day	65 Lari
Change of Temporary Residence Certificate (change of lost temporary permanent resident certificate/change of temporary permanent residence certificate because of registration on new address)	10 days	Free of charge
Real Property		
Registration of Flat (registration of right of property on flat/unit)	4 days	50 Lari
	1 day	150 Lari
	On the same day	200 Lari

Sale-Purchase of Real Property (registration of right of property based on contract of purchase)	4 days	50 Lari
	1 day	150 Lari
	On the same day	200 Lari
Extract (extract on real estate)	1 day	15 Lari
	On the same day	50 Lari
Rent (registration of raise/change/termination of right to rent on real property)	4 days	50 Lari
	1 day	150 Lari
	On the same day	200 Lari
Raise/Change of Lease (registration of raise/change lease on real estate)	4 days	50 Lari
	1 day	150 Lari
	On the same day	200 Lari
Termination of Lease (registration of termination of right to lease on real estate)	4 days	Free of charge
	1 day	150 Lari
	On the same day	200 Lari
Technical Office (inventory plan, certificate-description)	4 days	5 Lari
	1 day	15 Lari
	On the same day	20 Lari
Seizure (certificate on public-legal restriction)	On the same day	7 Lari
<b>Business</b>		
Extract (extract on a subject of business)	1 day	15 Lari
	On the same day	50 Lari
Individual Entrepreneur (registration of individual entrepreneur)	1 day	20 Lari
	On the same day	50 Lari
Establishment of a company (registration of entrepreneurial and non-entrepreneurial legal entity)	1 day	100 Lari
	On the same day	200 Lari
<b>Certificate of Archives</b>		
Composition of Household (recognition of composition of household)	10 days	9 Lari
	5 days	12 Lari
	3 days	14 Lari
	1 day	16 Lari
	On the same day	18 Lari
Property of Household (certificate on accrued property of household)	10 days	42 Lari
	5 days	58 Lari
	3 days	67 Lari
	1 day	75 Lari
	On the same day	84 Lari
Property of Household (certificate on accrued property of household)	3 days	67 Lari
	1 day	75 Lari
	On the same day	84 Lari

## Annex II - non-exhaustive list of services offered in the Community Centres

- **Civil registry services:** e-ID, passport, birth registration, secondary education attestation, residence permit, repeated issuance of any civil acts, divorce registration, death registration, travel document for refugees or for a person with humanitarian status, fatherhood determination, permanent residence document, neutral ID and neutral travel document, a document proving information of identity, abandoning citizenship, termination or loss of citizenship, granting citizenship, de-registration of a person from a residence address or registration at a residence address, registration of changes in name or surname, a letter confirming the number of person living at an address, marriage registration;
- **Public registry services:** property right registration, extract on real-estate, registration of a right to build an estate on a land parcel, debtor pledge registration, registration of a commitment for a property, lending right registration, a document confirming rights on a real-estate, a document confirming a real-estate seizure, mortgage registration, rent registration, heritage registration, registering a change in land status, amendment in already registered data, rural land ownership (acquired via land reform in 90s) registration, demand of a document copy from an archive, cadaster plan, registration of servitudes right, demand of a letter confirming legal status of ownership right from technical inventory bureau, usufruct registration, registering separation of a real-estate, registering property sub-rent, rent registration, extract confirming a legal status of a commercial entity, identification of discrepancies in the registration of a commercial entity, termination of insolvency proceedings of a commercial entity, registering start and termination of liquidation procedures of a commercial entity, granting access to a commercial entity to use public registry portal independently, correcting of technical discrepancies in the data of an already registered commercial entity, registering amendments in the data of already registered commercial entity, registering initiation of reorganization procedures of a commercial entity, registering commercial or non-commercial entities involved in food production as operators, registering or terminating a status of individual-entrepreneur, demanding an information on the legal status of a commercial entity, demanding certificate of origin for commercial or non-commercial entities, requesting a document copy from archive, request to register changes in foreign non-commercial or commercial entity's certificate of origin;
- **National archive services:** a letter from archive about divorce, death, birth, award, evacuation, information on registration of physical and judicial entities, a letter on composition of commune, archive letter on registration and de-registration on a specific address, archive letter confirming membership in a cooperative, archive letter confirming land parcel borders/red lines, archive letter related to professional experience or education status, archive letter related to street or rayon name change, letter confirming the rehabilitation of citizens after the soviet repression in 1937, archive letter confirming status of a repressed citizen by the soviet government in the period of 1922 – 33, archive letter confirming the extraction of properties by the soviet administration in rural areas in the period of 1924-35, archive letter related to work experience, extract from archive containing information related to history of a property (property passport),



archive letter proving secondary education, archive letter related to name, surname or nationality status changes, a letter confirming that the archive does not process a requested document, a letter related to various types of requests, a letter proving rights for a property, a letter proving marriage status and a letter proving the entrance of a building into exploitation;

- **Social services:** a letter confirming that a family is registered in a social assistance database, accepting citizens request for the need of an auxiliary technical assistance, providing information on the availability of auxiliary technical assistance (for citizens who require wheelchair, hearing equipment etc.), accepting requests from employers or enterprises to pay compensation in case of maternity, pregnancy, childcare or a new-born adoption, accepting requests to make amendments about registered family status in the social protection assistance database, providing information on the availability of

household subsidy/allowance, accepting demands to approve or make amendments in state pension, allowance or in social package assistance, providing information on state compensation and state pension packages, accepting requests to perform family registration or de-registration in the state social assistance database, providing information about social assistance package and providing a letter confirming that a citizen receives compensation/payment due to maternity, pregnancy, childcare or a new-born adoption;

- **Agriculture services:** paving and cleaning of water canals, land mulching, excavation work, vineyard care and protection, mowing, pressing of hay, support during harvest, tractor services, processing crops by herbicides, soil treatment, soil watering, soil plowing, pit excavation, sowing in the period of autumn and spring, waste cleaning services and processing of furrows.





The Regional Hub of Civil Service in Astana (ACSH), an initiative of the Government of Kazakhstan and the United Nations Development Programme, was established in March 2013 by 25 countries and 5 international organisations. It receives financial and institutional support from the Government of Kazakhstan and it relishes the backing of UNDP as the key implementing partner.

The ACSH is a multilateral institutional platform for the continuous exchange of knowledge and experience in the field of civil service development, aiming at supporting governments in the region through fostering partnerships, capacity building and peer-to-peer learning development activities; and evidence-based solutions, informed by a comprehensive research agenda. The geographical range of participants stretches from the North America and Europe, through the CIS, the Caucasus and Central Asia to ASEAN countries, demonstrating that partnership for civil service excellence is a constant and universal need for all nations.

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