



The European Union
for Georgia

ENPARD: Support to Agriculture
and Rural Development

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Fact Sheet

THE LEADER APPROACH



2017

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and Rural Development

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LEADER Approach and Its Role in Rural Development

LEADER represents a new approach within EU rural development. This is a method of mobilizing and delivering rural development in local rural communities. It makes difference to the everyday life of those residing in rural areas, and can play its role in encouraging response to rural challenges and finding new ways for solution. Initially it was launched in 1991 in rural communities. As the practice shows it works well, for that particular reason it became an integral part of rural development policy. It encourages local participation in drafting development strategies and action plans.

It aims to improving quality of life in remote areas through addressing local needs. It offers new forms of partnerships and cooperation activities. LEADER approach mobilize local resources, as well and help the

spheres with various support, such as cultural activities, enhancement of natural environment, rehabilitation works, rural tourism and far more.

LEADER gathers different actors to work together, set goals and provide services locally. Area-based and bottom-up approach made this method popular in rural development. It contained three main waves, such as: LEADER I during 1991-93, LEADER II – in 1994-1999 and the LEADER + (2000-2006). Due to its popularity it was spread beyond EU countries.

THE LEADER APPROACH 2017

The Main Features of LEADER Approach

Feature 1: Area-based local development strategies

Area-based approach refers to certain territory, populated with locals, common traditions. Territorial principle is important in this feature as it defines where to work and start with. It enables to define the local needs, strengths and weaknesses, as well as opportunities and challenges for further development and improvement.

Feature 2: Bottom-up approach

Bottom-up approach is extremely important as the local residents are enabled in decision-making process and development of local strategic documents. The priorities are set by themselves in local context and

taking into consideration the local needs. The policy making documents are also in line with this approach. The groups of people unite different spheres, such as: representatives of socio-economic groups, public and private sectors. This approach also contains capacity building and awareness raising activities as well.

Feature 3: Public- Private partnerships: The local action groups (LAGs)

The local action groups represent the main driving force for the entire process of implementation the LEADER approach. Its main role is to identify the local needs and implement the local development strategy and accompanied policy documents, solving financial issues.

The local action group collects all human and financial resources from every sector, such as: public, private, business, etc. Also it supports the local initiatives for further regional / local development as well. In parallel it strengthens the dialogue and cooperation between various actors through working together.

The LAG represents the local civil platform consisting of active citizens who strive to make life better in rural areas. These actors vary from these spheres: professional organizations, trade unions, residents and representatives of local organizations, local political and public actors, environmental and youth organizations, etc. They are applying for the LEADER approach in their work.





Feature 4: Facilitating innovation

Innovation and modern technologies are vital for rural development. That is why the LEADER approach contains the element of facilitating innovation locally. This might be the introduction of a new product, new technological process, new market, etc. The idea and notion of innovation is wide.

Feature 5: Integrated and multi-sector actions

The local development strategy needs to have multi sector development lines, collecting several spheres. Also the actions have to be connected and refer to specific groups of interest and spheres as well.

Feature 6: Networking

Networking is an integral part of the LEADER approach and means sharing information, gathering experience and competence among local citizens and legal entities. The rural development is largely depending on info sharing and improvement existing methods, good practice, disseminating innovation and lessons learned.

There are different networks such as: institutional, national, regional and local. Each of them is important for the entire process and plays its role in rural development as a whole.

Feature 7: Cooperation

Cooperation is wider definition as itself. Cooperation among different local action groups and any interested parties lead to better results and improvement of rural lives. It may be focused on common idea and objectives, such as: inter- territorial cooperation between rural areas and transnational – between leader groups.

The Main Features of LEADER Approach



Apart from knowing the main features of LEADER approach there are some steps to be taken for implementing this mentioned method. These are:

LEADER Approach in Practice

TERRITORY ANALYSIS – the local resources need to be assessed and analyzed accordingly, which means collecting data and digesting them.

BRINGING LOCAL ACTORS – sharing information and collecting ideas for further development among local actors is also crucial for the process. The trainings, seminars, workshops are helpful in this regard.

DRAFTING LOCAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY – after all the work is completed the process of drafting local development strategy is initiated. The document foresees the objectives, goals and the main activities as well as the strategic priorities.

Identify existing activities could be assumed as the following step of the above mentioned ones.

CAPACITY BUILDING – several actions for raising awareness of local stakeholders and interested persons, when they will be provided with the information about the approach and its implementation;

ESTABLISHING PARTNERSHIP – the main target audience is the local community and building partnership among active citizens who wish to make significant changes locally.

Implementation of LEADER Approach in Lagodekhi Municipality



The local development and reducing poverty in the region largely depends on the clear vision of the local needs and evaluation of the measures for further development. In this regard the community mobilization throughout Lagodekhi municipality as well as intensive dialogue with the local authorities and the business representatives is beneficial for achieving the main objectives of the Participatory Rural Development (ENPARD) project.

The local needs and major challenges on site were revealed and the workshops with the participation of the local residents organized. The local action group (LAG) was set up and the main idea of the LEADER approach was disseminated among all interested individuals.

The LAG united the representatives of the different sectors, such as: civil, business, local authorities, farmers, youth, non-governmental organizations, and it is open to any interested parties who shares the value of it and strives to contribute to development process.

Lagodekhi LAG is composed of 100 members representing public authorities, private sector and civil society. It operates as an association-like organization; that is governed by a General Assembly, a democratically elected Board of Directors and a regulatory framework defined by its by-law. CARE supported the LAG in designing a Local Development Strategy, which based on consultations with local population and integrates local players, local demands and territorial resources in order to enable effective use of competitive advantages of the territorial unit.

The LAG is a voluntary, independent, non-political, impartial and democratic association of individuals, legal entities and public organizations aiming at the mobilization of local communities in Lagodekhi Municipality in support of the cooperation and capacity building in order to facilitate to the elaboration and implementation of the local development strategy. In its performance, the Association is dissociated from any political aims and does not represent interests of any political party.

LAG operates based on the following principles:

- **Equality among representatives of public institutions, private business and NGOs**
- **Equality and mutual respect among members, regardless race, gender, religion, political affiliation, or political opinions.**



Aims, Objectives and Activity Directions of the LAG are the following:

- The Association serves for public wellbeing. The primary direction is agricultural development, in particular: support to agricultural competitiveness, environmental protection, improvement of life quality and services; through economic activities facilitate to the establishment of diversified employment opportunities in the municipal villages and economic empowerment of rural population;
- Support the development of Lagodekhi Municipality.
- Strengthen the European practices and decentralized approaches to rural development bottom-up approach;
- Promote the convergence of Georgian agricultur-



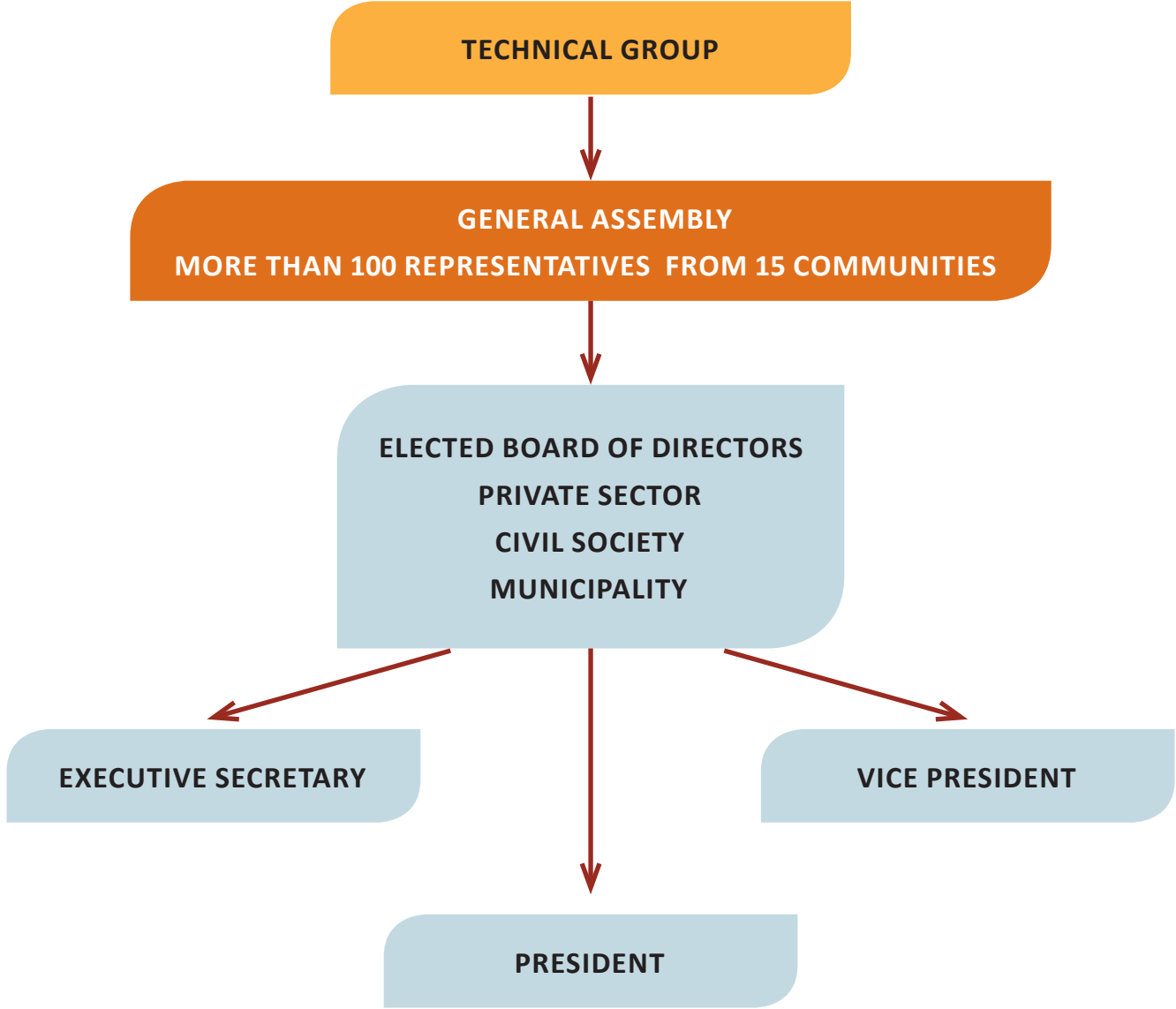
al policy with common agricultural policy, support the development of agriculture and contribute to strengthening rural communities in Lagodekhi Municipality;

- Promote the introduction of new methods and resources for rural development in the municipality by developing innovative and targeted policy;
- Promote the development of non-agricultural economic activities in rural areas;
- Assist, strengthen and expand trans-national cooperation by participating in the creation and development of networks;
- Promote exchange of experience between local action groups in other rural areas of the country;



- Increase the youth involvement in the municipality development process and support their initiatives;
- Motivate different sector representatives on grass root level to ensure the adoption of the bottom-up approach in the regional development;
- Implementation of the LEADER approach in the pilot program for rural development.
- Organize and conduct workshops, seminars, conferences and discussions with the participation of local self-government, business and civil sector representatives;
- Activities oriented at capacity building which includes organization and offer various forms of study and trainings;
- Preparation and holding the grant completion for funding projects relevant to the development strategy of Lagodekhi Municipality;
- Through cooperation with the central and local government, support the civil society involvement for strengthening democratic principles and ensuring transparency;
- Manage the local development strategy, information service, consultancy and involvement of the sphere specialists for effective implementation of different economic, social projects of the Lagodekhi Local Action Group.

LAG Management Structure



The General Assembly approves candidates of the LAG President, Vice-President and Executive Secretary after nomination by the Managing Board.

The General Assembly is the supreme managing body of the LAG It consists of all members of the Association.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

1. Amends the statute and approves other internal acts, which are out of the competence of the Board;
2. Elects and dismisses members of the Board, Board President, Vice-President and Executive Secretary either open or secret vote;
3. Makes final decision on accepting and excluding members, upon refusal of the Board;



4. Makes decision on either opening or closing down the representations;
5. Makes decision on behalf of the Association regarding cooperation/ partnership with other organizations;
6. Makes decision on reorganization or termination of the Association;
7. Defines principles and programs of the Association, including the local development strategy in the frame of the LEADER approach;
8. Approves the Association budget, in case of its existence;
9. Decisions of the General Assembly are obligatory for all Association members.

Implementation of LEADER Approach in Lagodekhi Municipality

MANAGING BOARD

1. The managing board represents a trusted body. It consists of 15 members from three sectors: civil society, local government and private business (each sector nominates 5 members).
2. The managing board is elected for one year period. It ensures the implementation of the decision of the General Assembly.
3. It prepares the first draft version of the budget and submits to the General Assembly for approval.
4. The Board is responsible towards the General Assembly.
5. It prepares the action plan of the Board according to the strategy approved by the General Assembly.
6. Submits expenditures of the Association to the General Assembly and spends it.
7. Nominates the President, Vice-President and Executive Secretary from the Board to the General Assembly for approval.

THE PRESIDENT

1. The President is elected by the managing Board for one year period and approved by the General Assembly.
2. The President is leading meetings of the Board, defined the meeting agenda and signs decisions of the Board.

3. The President represents the Association towards third parties on national and international levels.
4. Ensures the coordination and connection between Association's bodies.
5. Along with the Board, prepares the association performance report and submits to the General Assembly.
6. Submits certain projects to the Board.
7. Along with the Board organizes and plans of the Association's activities and is responsible for conducting necessary activities for common benefit.
8. Concludes legal contracts.
9. On Board meetings, makes decision on those activities of the Association, which fall out of the competence of the Board and General Assembly.
10. Signs the financial documents, manages the association expenditures and other material property according to law and is responsible for proper use of financial resources.
11. Appoints and dismisses heads of the Association's structural units and other responsible persons, recruits staff for current activities and concludes labour contracts.

THE VICE-PRESIDENT

1. Vice-President is elected for one year term by the managing Board and approved by the General Assembly
2. Along with the President, he/she ensures the implementation of the decisions of the General Assembly and the Board.
3. In case of President's absence replaces him/her.

THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

1. Executive Secretary is elected for one year term by the managing Board and approved by the General Assembly
2. Along with other members of the managing Board, he/she ensures the implementation of the General Assembly decisions.
3. Prepares minutes of the Board and General Assembly meetings.
4. Organizes the meetings of the managing Board.

TECHNICAL COORDINATORS

Technical Coordinators are representatives of the Participatory Rural Development Project (ENPARD). They will facilitate to and actively participate in the Association activities, and provide technical and organizational support to association members and managing bodies.

The location of the LAG is Lagodekhi City and its activities cover the entire Lagodekhi Municipality. It operates for indefinite term.

Lagodekhi Municipality Local Development Strategy (LDS) delivers a strategic vision for social and economic development of this territorial unit. The document has been prepared in the frames of the Participatory Rural Development in Georgia (PRD) project on the basis of a wide range of consultations with local communities, civil society, business sector and local authorities, and approved by Lagodekhi Local Action Group (LAG).

The Participatory Rural Development in Georgia is implemented with support of European Neighborhood Program for Agriculture and Rural Development. The project is based on the EU-developed LEADER approach, which provides rural communities with a method for engaging local partners in steering territorial development.

Implementation of
LEADER Approach in
Lagodekhi Municipality

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SUPPORTING LOCAL SOCIO-ECONOMIC INITIATIVES

The grant component represents one of the most important parts of the entire project. It supports the initiatives from several sectors such as: commercial agricultural, commercial non-agricultural, social, social infrastructure, tourism and culture. All these are in line with the local development action plan which was elaborated and disseminated previously.

The Local Action Group defines the main criteria, conditions and requirements for applicants. The projects supporting process is following:

1. Preparing Grant Manual by LAG members for applicants to define criteria for grants
2. Information campaign meetings in the communities
3. Call for ideas
4. Grant commission meetings and selection of the ideas by LAG board members.
5. Call for proposals.
6. Selection of the successful projects by experts and LAG board members.
7. Funding of selected projects
8. Monitoring of project implementation by LAG board members.

As mentioned above, the application submission process is divided into two phases:

- Submission of ideas
- Submission of full proposal

Information related to the grant competitions is distributed through information campaigns.

Documents related with grant component are published on LAG Facebook page and also available on other relevant web-sites.

The grant component and announced grant competitions enabled the local inhabitants to revise the local needs and consider them in order to seek the ways for solution. Accordingly the first cycle of the grant competition counted 107 project ideas in total and 51 out of them were successful for the second stage of the selection procedure. As a result totally 8 project proposals were selected and funded. They covered commercial agricultural and non-agricultural, social and social infrastructural spheres of activities in Lagodekhi municipality.

As the practice shows the interest was rapidly increasing towards the grant component of the project. Consequently the next stage of the grant competition followed. The same amount of the



SUPPORTING LOCAL SOCIO-ECONOMIC INITIATIVES

Contact Points for Further Information

For further information please feel free to contact the Rural Development Project (EN-PARD) in Lagodekhi city at the following address:

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project ideas were received which demonstrated the interest and readiness from the participants. In total 23 project ideas were announced as the winners and some of them were given recommendations for further improvement of technical issues to be successful.

In parallel with all ongoing process the local action group members continue their meetings and reporting about the LAG activities throughout Kakheti region. Accordingly the LAG presentations were made in Kakheti municipalities and the concept of local action groups and LEADER approach taken to other interested individuals and stakeholders.

The idea of a Friend of Lagodekhi is becoming more popular among those who wish to contribute to promoting the Lagodekhi municipality and the Lagodekhi Action Group. Friends of Lagodekhi unite all those active citizens and foreigners who expressed their willingness to cooperate with the project.

The LEADER approach is an idea widely spread locally and more and more people are aware of it, as the tool for regional / municipality development. The idea greatly supported by the local inhabitants as a sense of responsibility and ownership to develop and improve rural life-style. Sharing information and practice from European countries encourages local active citizens.

