

Social Sustainability & Citizen Engagement

Urban Partnership Program II

Gjilan

City Synthesis Report

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Gjilan

City Synthesis Report

This Social Sustainability and Citizen Engagement Assessment was carried out by the Archis Intervention Prishtina (AIP), Co-PLAN Institute for Habitat Development (www.co-plan.org), and the Institute for International Urban Development (www.i2ud.org), as part of the World Bank - Austria Partnership Program for Strengthening Local Governments in South-Eastern-Europe countries. This assessment constitutes the second phase of the Urban Partnership Program (UPP II). For more information, please refer to the SEE Cities: Innovative Solutions for Sustainable Cities Website (<http://www.seecities.eu/>). The analysis, results, and views expressed in this paper are those of the authors alone and do not represent the position of the World Bank Group or any of its member countries.

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INTRODUCTION.....	4
1. CITY PROFILE.....	6
1.1. GENERAL CITY PROFILE.....	6
1.2. VULNERABLE GROUPS AND EXCLUSION.....	7
1.3. THE USE OF ICT VIS-À-VIS SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY AND ENGAGEMENT.....	8
1.4. LOCAL GOVERNANCE VIS-À-VIS SOCIAL INCLUSION.....	9
1.5. ACCESSIBILITY TO PUBLIC SERVICES.....	11
2. SUMMARY OF FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS AND IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS.....	13
2.1. SOCIAL INCLUSION IN PUBLIC SERVICE PROVISION.....	14
2.2. EXISTING SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY AND PARTICIPATION.....	18
2.3. OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS FOR SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY AND CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT	22
2.4. IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS.....	23
3. SCENARIO DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP OUTCOMES AND RECOMMENDATIONS .	30
3.1. THEME 1: TRIANGLE OF INFORMATION “LOCAL GOVERNMENT – CITIZENS – CIVIL SOCIETY” – RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES.	30
3.2. THEME 2: SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY – ADDRESSING THE NEEDS AND DEMANDS OF MARGINALIZED GROUPS.....	33
3.3. THEME 3: CITIZEN PARTICIPATION – THE CHALLENGE OF INVOLVING CITIZENS IN DECISION- MAKING	34
4. KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR NEXT STEPS.....	37
ANNEX 1: SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY & CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT INDEX	38
ANNEX 2: INDEX QUESTIONS AND SCORING FRAMEWORK.....	41

Introduction

As part of the World Bank Group-Austria Partnership Program for Strengthening Local Governments in South-Eastern-Europe countries, the World Bank Social Development Unit has developed a Social Sustainability and Citizen Engagement (SSCE) Initiative, which continues and expands on the successful approach of the social sustainability assessments undertaken in phase I of the Urban Partnership Program. These assessments addressed two dimensions of socially sustainable and inclusive urban development:

- *Social Accountability and Participation* to increase accountability in the delivery of services and programs and empower urban marginalized and vulnerable groups to participate in their cities' development; and
- Proactively addressing the challenges of *Marginalization* to identify the needs of socially excluded groups and associated inequalities.

The initiative aimed to increase knowledge and awareness about citizen engagement (CE) mechanisms among stakeholders, including vulnerable groups. The first phase of the project involved five pilot cities in four countries in South Eastern Europe (SEE): Banja Luka (BiH), Durres (Albania), Pristina (Kosovo), Sarajevo (BiH) and Skopje (FYR of Macedonia). The SSCE Initiative in UPP II builds upon the lessons and best practices that emerged during the first phase of the UPP, enhances the focus on the Citizen Engagement (CE) component, and expands its scope to include seven countries, and nine cities in this second cohort.

Co-PLAN Institute for Habitat Development in Tirana and the Institute for International Urban Development (I2UD) in Cambridge, Massachusetts have assembled a team of local experts to carry out research and fieldwork in this second phase in the following cities: Tuzla (Albania), Gjilan (Kosovo), Kumanovo (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), Tuzla (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Karlovac (Croatia), Ulcinj and Kolasin (Montenegro), Pancevo and Sabac (Serbia).

Phase 1 of this project resulted in detailed, analytical reports of each of the nine cities covering demographic, social, physical, economic, cultural, institutional and political issues. The results of this research are summarized in **Section 1 – City Profile**. The full reports are available upon request. During this initial stage, the city teams also identified vulnerable groups to be the focus of the second phase of the assessment. This selection was made on the basis of official information obtained from institutions responsible for the provision of various public services at a local level, findings from research studies made by international and national organizations, as well as other relevant documents (laws, provisions, local development strategies, etc.) and representatives from marginalized and vulnerable communities and NGOS consulted during the inception phase.

Phase 2 involved extensive fieldwork and consultation with community members and other stakeholders. Each city team carried out a multiple Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and In-Depth Interviews (IDIs). The FGDs were held with each vulnerable group, often with men and women separated for part of the discussion. The teams also conducted FGDs with NGO representatives. The questionnaires used to conduct these discussions are available upon request. Focus group participants were recruited through a public call advertised via mailing lists and social networks and in cooperation with local grassroots NGOs that work with the identified

vulnerable communities. In-Depth Interviews were carried out with at least two representatives of three of the following groups of stakeholders: local government representatives, the business sector, and the NGO sector. Local Government Associations were also consulted and interviewed in the process.

Section 2 provides a summary overview of the issues raised during the FGDs and IDIs. The summary is organized according to the three themes covered during the FGDs:

- Social Inclusion in Public Service Provision;
- Existing levels of social accountability and citizen engagement; and
- Opportunities and constraints for social accountability and citizen engagement.

For Phase 3, a Participatory Scenario Development (PSD) Workshop was held in Gjilan on June 22, 2016. The objectives of the PSD workshop were to:

- Raise awareness of the results of the previous two phases;
- Provide recommendations for the local government authorities, the wider civil society and intermediaries, i.e. NGOs, CBOs; and
- Map out solutions to reinforce socially sustainable city development and integrity in public services.

The workshop brought together stakeholders from multiple sectors and engaged them in identifying locally relevant pathways of autonomous and planned *change (improvements)* in the context of social accountability, sustainability and good governance.

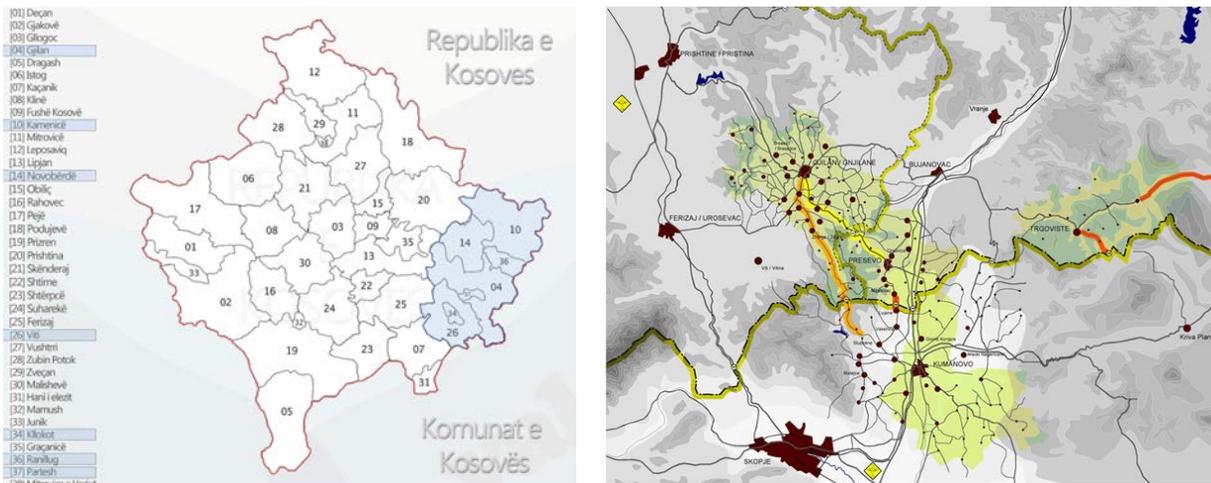
The participants were encouraged to envision a future scenario for the introduction of various social accountability and social inclusion mechanisms. As a result, stakeholders developed a 'sense of ownership' for the scenarios. Particular focus was placed on the use of ICT tools for drafting socially inclusive accountability initiatives. **Section 3** builds on the scenarios agreed on by the workshop participants, as well as their recommended detailed actions for implementation, and suggests three key interventions to set the City of Gjilan on a path towards greater accountability and citizen engagement.

Two Annexes are included in this City Report. Annex 1 presents the concept and application of the SSCE Index. Despite efforts to harmonize the Index application and disaggregate data among different respondents, each city collected data differently, resulting in findings that are not able to be read comparatively across cities. Findings nonetheless offer an evidence base for decision makers in each city analyzed. Annex 2 provides a representation of the questions that constitute the questionnaire distributed in the participating cities. Different colors represent different pillars or categories both horizontally and vertically. Horizontal scores represent the different aspects of Citizen Engagement (CE) including willingness and capacity on the demand side, willingness and capacity on the supply side, and feedback and monitoring. Read horizontally, the matrix gives a Citizen Engagement "pulse" on different sectors that correlate to other components of the Urban Partnership Program.

1. City Profile

1.1. General City Profile

Until 2010, Gjilan had an area of 515 km², with 63 settlements, and 54 cadastral zones. Decentralization has reduced its territory to 123 km² (12 cadastral zones); parts of its territory joined the new Municipality of Partesh (three cadastral zones) and expanded the Municipality of Artana (nine cadastral zones). Today the Gjilan Municipality covers a total of 392 km² and consists of 42 cadastral zones. The City of Gjilan consists of 11 neighborhoods, five squares and has 149 streets. Local self-governance in the Municipality of Gjilan functions through local community offices (*Bashkesi lokale*) (Regulation on cooperation of the municipality with villages, settlements, neighborhoods).¹ In total, there are 27 local community offices in the Municipality of Gjilan, eight of which are urban. The city adopted its current urban development plan in 2008.



According to 2011 population registration, the municipality of Gjilan has 90,178 inhabitants (54,239 urban inhabitants and 35,993 rural inhabitants). These figures (registration from 2011) do not include the Gjilan citizens living abroad.² The population density of the city is 230 inhabitants/km², which is above the Kosovar average of 159 inhabitants/ km².

According to the Socio-economic Profile of Kosovo (2015)³ almost two-thirds of Kosovo's population is of working age (15-64 years). The participation rate in Gjilan is 48.4 % (higher than the Kosovar average of 44.7 %).⁴ The unemployment rate in Gjilan is 45.6 % (somewhat higher than for Kosovo as a whole - 44.8 %).⁵ The percentage of those who are not in the labor force in the municipality of Gjilan (33%) is lower than Kosovo's average of 45%. In Gjilan,

¹ <https://kk.rks-gov.net/gjilan/getattachment/6a428e69-3046-4427-beca-307420c79e3d/Rregullorja-per-organizimin-dhe-bashkepunimin-loka.aspx>.

² Note that the Diaspora from Gjilan is among the larger ones in Kosovo. In the table "Main source of livelihood," support by other persons is more significant in Gjilan than the Kosovar average.

³ Kosovo Agency of Statistics, Results of the Kosovo 2014 Labour Force Survey. June 2015. P.9
file:///C:/Users/StarTech/Downloads/RESULTS%20OF%20THE%20KOSOVO%202014%20LABOUR%20FORCE%20SURVEY%20(1).pdf

⁴ Municipality fact sheet for Gjilan <http://www.sme-support.eu/gjilan.pdf>

⁵ ibid

those who are not in the active labor force are either unemployed and not looking for work (7%), or are studying, have a disability, or are housewives.⁶ More than half of adult women residing in this municipality (54%) are not in the labor force compared to 22% of their male counterparts. In addition, only 15% of them report to be employed compared to 36% of men.⁷

The economy of the municipality of Gjilan is mainly based on small businesses. There are over 3,400 registered private active businesses operating in the municipality employing over 8,900 people.⁸ Over 75% of registered private enterprises are engaged in commercial activities, employing more than 63% of the total number of employees in the private sector.⁹ The number of businesses per 1,000 economically active inhabitants (91) is among the highest in Kosovo (average: 76). Trade, manufacturing, personal services, business services as well as hotels and restaurants are the most important sectors. 90.6 % of businesses in Gjilan are individually owned (Kosovo: 85.2 %).

Since the 2002 earthquake and almost yearly floods of the Mirusha River, Gjilan's efforts to reduce disaster risks have been notable. The Gjilan Municipality Risk Assessment Plan is given as a good example when discussing this subject (See "Forum For Security: Response to Emergencies – Preparations and Opportunities, 2013).¹⁰

1.2. Vulnerable Groups and Exclusion

In 2009, The Assembly of Republic of Kosovo released a White Paper on the challenges of social inclusion in Kosovo. The main causes of exclusion, according to the report, are as follows:¹¹

- *Poverty* is the most dominant cause of exclusion; 44% of the population is poor, and 14% qualify as extremely poor. Children, youth, women and elders face additional difficulties
- *Unemployment* is a major cause of exclusion, especially long-term unemployment. Unemployment among women and youth (15–24 years) is higher than average.
- *Ethnic and cultural factors* play an important role in relation to poverty and social exclusion. Some non-majority groups such as the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian (RAE) communities, members of the Serb community, as well as Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) are more vulnerable to poverty.
- *Access to infrastructure and public services* can also drive social exclusion. In some cases poverty vulnerability is higher in municipalities lacking road infrastructure while in other cases, it is mainly concentrated in specific urban areas representing the poorest parts of larger cities, which have no infrastructure and access to public services.

According to the same document, excluded groups include: children, youth, the elderly, persons with disabilities, Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian (RAE) communities, IDPs, refugees and

⁶ KOSOVO MOSAIC 2012 Overview of perceptions on public services and local authorities, Page 45)
http://www.ks.undp.org/content/dam/kosovo/docs/Mozaik/Kosovo_Mosaic_2012_Eng_735317.pdf

⁷ KOSOVO MOSAIC (2012) Overview of perceptions on public services and local authorities, Page 45

⁸ Municipal Directorate of Economy and Development

⁹ Komuna e Gjilanit (2013) Strategjia lokale kunder dhunes ne familje 2013-2018, Page 11

¹⁰ http://www.fiq-fci.org/repository/docs/Response_to_Emergencies-Preparations-and-opportunities.pdf

¹¹ The Assembly of Republic of Kosovo (2009), White Paper: Kosovo social Inclusion challenges. pp.12-14
<http://www.assembly-kosova.org/common/docs/kosovo-social.pdf>

returnees, diaspora communities, families with lost or missing members, veterans and war invalids, political prisoners, persons with post-traumatic stress disorder, female victims of domestic violence, women abused during the war, homeless people, homosexuals, people dependent on narcotics and people infected with HIV/AIDS.

The City Team considers using these categories as a guideline in mapping marginalized groups in Gjiilan, also taking into consideration the following narrowed classification:

According to UNDP 2011, the most vulnerable groups for social exclusion are: i) Children and youth; ii) people with disabilities; iii) the long term unemployed; and iv) Kosovo RAE-minorities.¹²

The participation of women and minorities/communities is mandated in the Municipal Assembly. This is regulated via special offices in the municipality. Out of the 35 members of the Assembly, 33 are Albanians; one is Serb and one is Turk. 13 members are female including the Assembly Chairperson.

Three different committees of the Assembly can be said to represent the interests of marginalized groups – the Committee for Communities (one of the permanent committees) representing minorities; the Committee for Culture, Youth, Sports and Gender Issues representing youth and women; and the Committee for Health and Social Welfare – partly representing the elderly, persons with disabilities and the unemployed. There is a “Guide to Services for People with Disabilities” available for the Municipality of Gjiilan online.¹³ The Municipality’s Unit for Human Rights has been active in awareness raising and other public activities in the monitoring of the implementation strategy and action plan for integration of RAE communities, the “Violence is a Crime” campaign against domestic violence; and children’s rights activities.

Marginalized groups in Kosovo are also discussed in the most recent report drafted by UNDP *Public Pulse Report No.9 (April 2015)*¹⁴. According to the report, discrimination in Kosovo, as reported by citizens, affect the following groups: women/girls (24%), the elderly (23%), persons with disabilities (16%), and youth (15%). The opinion poll also asked respondents whether they have felt discriminated against at any point / on what basis. The top reasons were: political or other opinions (24%), and other reasons which include: place of residence, refugee/IDP/migrant status.

1.3. The use of ICT vis-à-vis Social Accountability and Engagement

Kosovo is ranked 35th in the 2015 Open Knowledge Global Open Data Index, down from 31st place in last year’s measurement and marked as 43% open. The drop in ranking is due to three primary reasons. Firstly, the government did not make any advancements in open data during 2015 on the datasets that the Index covers. Secondly, there are still copyright notices that mark content on public websites as protected, when actually it is in the public domain. This is done despite the Copyright Law, which places documents that the Government produces with the purpose of informing the public in the public domain. Thirdly, Kosovo ranks particularly low in

¹² <http://www.norway-kosovo.no/ARKIV/UNDP--Kosovo-Human-Development-Report-2010-Social-Inclusion/> See the Report in: http://www.ks.undp.org/content/dam/kosovo/docs/KHDR/HDR_2010_English.pdf

¹³ (See <http://kk.rks-gov.net/gjilan/getattachment/Home/--Completed-Print---Albanian-pdf.pdf.aspx>).

¹⁴ http://www.undp.org/content/dam/kosovo/docs/PublicPulse/PPR9_Anglisht.pdf

the four new datasets that were added this year to the Index. Kosovo is completely missing two datasets related to location and weather forecasting. Some open data links are made available through “Open Data Kosovo” which channels the digital capacity of young software engineers and computer scientists in Kosovo into implementing and maintaining an online platform that collects, hosts, and distributes open data.

Key challenges for ICT services in Kosovo include developing modern telecommunications infrastructure (broadband internet); privatising the fixed line incumbent PTK (Post and Telecommunications Kosovo); and further improving the implementation and enforcement of a modern regulatory framework (including competitive safeguards such as number portability, local loop unbundling or wholesale broadband access). 3G or 4G services are not yet available in the country. Mobile penetration is also significantly below the Southeastern Europe average. Broadband penetration is still very low as well.

According to the Annual Report of the Mayor (2014): “The Information Office has prepared and edited on the website of the Municipality and distributed to the media about 820 pieces of information daily, or an average of three pieces of information for every working day, making it possible for the work of institutions and the executive to be more transparent. Seventy-one requests for access to official documents were processed through the information office. Apart from information on the daily activities of the mayor and the municipal assembly, the municipal website publishes actions and regulations of municipal assembly, committee reports to the assembly sessions, reports of debates and public hearings, transcripts and recordings of assembly sessions, municipal competitions, various work reports, the annual bulletin brochures, leaflets and other materials of interest to the public. The Information Office has updated the website to reflect the changes in governance, as a result of the elections of 2013 and changes in the statute of the municipality in November 2014.” In addition to basic information, the Information Office provides for the online reporting of corruption through KALLXO.COM¹⁵, and online application for civil documents through a link¹⁶

The “E-Transparency Approaches in Kosovo Municipalities” (Internews Kosova report) (2014) states: “Gjilan was the first to streamline document applications by integrating the civil registry with the application software, and simplifying the payment procedure.” It also states that “municipalities have accepted the top-down dynamic in development of e-services, some taking up the challenge, trying to lead the way within the given envelope in developing such services – Gjilan is acknowledged to be the leader.”

1.4. Local Governance vis-à-vis Social Inclusion

Based on the Constitution, public participation is regulated at both the central and local level of governance. There are a number of laws that ensure social participation and inclusion, equal access to all citizens to information, official documents, public hearing, etc. The challenge remains implementation of vital provisions that would ensure citizens’ sustainable involvement in decision making. The Municipality of Gjilan has its own statute that governs how the city conducts its business in a public, as well as a Regulation on participation of the public in the

¹⁵ A UNDP initiative which resulted in the launch of a web-based platform to fight corruption in April 2012 would be interesting to measure the popularity potentials of the use of social media as an auditing form in Kosovo and Prishtina in particular.

¹⁶ <http://www.apliko.org/index.php?category=1>

work of the Assembly (2014), Regulation on Transparency (2015), and an Integrity Plan for the period 2015-2017. Financial accountability is assured through auditing reports (internal and independent), annual financial plans and reports. Performance measurements are only given in annual reports. The Municipality usually indicates progress in certain fields and rarely reports failures. According to municipal legal acts, Gjilan provides governance in an open manner through communication, consultation, and collaboration. In principle, public participation in municipal budget planning and other major issues is ensured by legal acts; performance is somewhat satisfactory.

Meetings of the municipal assembly and its committees, including those of other commissions, are open to the public, media representatives, and interested parties subject to discussion, except as provided otherwise in the applicable legislation (Statute, Articles 60.1. & Article 69.1.). The venue, date, and time of these meetings are made public via the municipal web page.

According to the Report of the Work of the Mayor of Municipality of Gjilan (2014), communication with citizens and information about budget expenditures and capital investment in various fields has been a priority of the mayor. To achieve this objective, a series of activities and policies were undertaken, including: the identification of the needs and requirements of citizens and their involvement in the governance of Gjilan by holding individual and group meetings with different citizens of the municipality; and engaging civil society as a partner through participation in municipal committees and meetings with representatives of trade unions and religious communities to address the possibilities of cooperation.

According to the 2014 Report, “in all the meetings/debates, the number of citizens and stakeholders has been satisfactory and the influence of citizens in these meetings has been evident. As a result, these meetings/debates have helped municipal leaderships’ proposals, ideas and suggestions to emerge and be taken seriously, and demands of the citizens were given a timely response. In the context of increasing transparency and bringing service delivery closer to the people, Gjilan continued with the election and promotion of village councils.”

In addition, through a decision by the mayor, Gjilan Municipality established the Register of Administrative Procedures in 2015 publicizing all information on the administrative procedures for citizens in the municipality. Procedures are detailed for each legal basis with the information and documents needed to apply, fees and charges for the application and the time set for replying. With the publication of this online register, Gjilan Municipality increases transparency for citizens and businesses.¹⁷

Some specific engagement mechanisms used by citizens to communicate or participate in municipal development programs include compulsory, biannual, thematic, meetings with citizens invited by the municipality; social media; and civil society projects, which result in reports on perception (usually through surveys). In general, there are no participation requirements specific to marginalized groups, except for minority communities and women.

Gjilan (in addition to Prizren) was surveyed on the topic of youth and transparency in March 2014 by the NGO “Ec Ma Ndryshe.” The short monitoring report noted that the use of social media is steadily increasing in both cities. The most popular social media platform remains Facebook.¹⁸ The municipality has its own Facebook page, which is used to promote projects but

¹⁷ See more on the website of the register: <https://rpa.rks-gov.net/en/>

¹⁸ Facebook has gone beyond being only a communication network in Kosovo¹⁸; There are an estimated 700,000 Facebook users 700.000 in Kosovo. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economy_of_Kosovo)

also to invite citizens to different events. The page has been updated with relative frequency since its creation in 2014.

1.5. Accessibility to Public Services

According to Koha.net, Gjilan was chosen as the best municipality in Kosovo in terms of provision of public services and management of green spaces in June 2015 by the Association of Municipalities of Kosovo within the BEACON scheme (an exchange of best practices between municipalities in the area of public services) and in cooperation with GIZ.¹⁹ The city park is located in the city center and is perceived as quite attractive and used by the citizens. However, there is a general absence of outdoor spaces for sports and recreation, green areas and public parks.

Based on the figures provided for 2011-2014, there is an estimated total of 289 households in need of housing solutions, which is 1.7% of all households in the Municipality of Gjilan. (Note: this figure is from the housing register – it does not necessarily provide information about the level of current need locally). 80% of requests for housing come from households living in urban area. 21 requests (7%) have been approved. Even though the number of requests is relatively small, there is a lack of capacity in the Municipality of Gjilan, both in terms of finances and resources available to assist these households.²⁰

With regards to transportation and city circulation, sidewalks are developed differently across the city and vary from 0.5 to 3 meters wide. In certain places, they also are used for car parking, which makes the free movement of pedestrians difficult. Some roads lack sidewalks altogether. Public transport in general is hampered by narrow roads, inadequate crossroads, lack of parking and urban bus stations, and a lack of bicycle paths (although bicycles are quite present in Gjilan). According to the 2014 Municipality Report, the municipality has invested a substantial part of its budget for roads, drainage and street lighting (especially in the main streets) in order to ease circulation in the city and beyond. These investments have greatly improved the lives of citizens, but the needs remain great. Roads and drainage continue to be the focus of municipal investments. One of the main achievements in this field, reported by the municipality, is the pavement (with asphalt) of all the main roads connecting major villages with the urban center.

According to the Municipal Development Plan, the sewage network has a total length of 65 km; as such, it does not fulfill the needs of population. The atmospheric water network, although very small, is in very bad condition; many citizen have connected to this network as the only choice. Furthermore, the city's main collector also drains into the river in Mulliri i Arapit. As a result, during rainfall, the city often floods due to the inability of sewage pipes to absorb the rainwater.

According to the Municipal Development Plan, the water supply network has total length of 70 km; additional pipelines were mounted during the last decade (4000m and 5100m). However the network does not fulfill the needs of population. According to the Housing Report 2014,²¹ at the municipal level, 62.8% of residential buildings are connected to the water system network from public services. Approximately 35% of residential buildings have piped water connections inside

¹⁹ <http://koha.net/?id=&l=62261>

²⁰ "Concept-document for Social Housing" http://unhabitat-kosovo.org/repository/docs/1._Profili_Komunal_i_Banimit_Shembulli_i_Komunes_se_Gjilanit_339778.pdf

²¹ http://www.kryeministri-ks.net/repository/docs/KD_Banim_Social_-_MMPH.pdf

the building but from other sources and 1.6% of residential buildings do not have any piped water connection within the building.

With respect to the services offered to persons with disabilities, the Municipality of Gjilan has some of the most successful results in Kosovo, involving noteworthy interventions in school, sanitary and cultural structures in order to improve access.

Public and private healthcare services in Gjilan are offered at three levels: primary, secondary and tertiary (healthcare). All communities have access to health care and facilities. Nonetheless, children and women are identified as most vulnerable in the domain of nutrition and health care. The elderly and persons with disabilities can also be considered vulnerable in this service domain. Free health care in public institutions is provided for the following vulnerable groups: children and youth up to age 15; pupils and students until the end of regular education; citizens over age 65; citizens, close family members of martyrs, war invalids and other invalids, close family members and beneficiaries of social assistance schemes and their family members; and persons with disabilities.

Education in Gjilan is provided in Albanian, Serbian, Turkish and Roma languages at the preschool, primary, lower secondary and upper secondary levels. Three of the city's elementary schools also accommodate classes for pupils with special needs. Gjilan has four preschools (three in the city and one in the village of Šilovo/Shillovë), with a total of 366 pupils; 29 primary schools with a total of 14,388 pupils; nine secondary schools with 5,566 students; one public university; and two private colleges.

Kindergartens are one of eight identified major challenges facing Gjilan according to the GAP Institute.²² Gjilan risks being left with only two public kindergartens given the fact that the one located near the city center was built on state property, today administered by the Kosovo Privatization Agency. The Agency has requested several times that the municipality relocate the kindergarten so that the property can be put up for sale.

²² See Report 2015: http://www.institutigap.org/documents/30010_GJILANI2013.pdf

2. Summary of Focus Group Discussions and In-Depth Interviews

During April and May 2016, the Gjilan City Team engaged in organizing focus group meetings to discuss social sustainability in the city. The aim was to address the needs and views of vulnerable groups based on the initial findings from the desk review, those being: youth, women, the elderly, and persons with disabilities. In the desk review, the team also identified the vulnerability status of children, but since this is vastly conditioned by the vulnerability status of women/mothers, the team decided to work with the four most vulnerable groups. In total, 70 people (36 men and 34 women) participated in the focus group discussions (FGDs). (Participation lists are available upon request).

Four focus groups were organized based on the following backgrounds: 1) youth, 2) elderly, 3) women and 4) persons with disabilities. In the case of FGDs around issues relevant to youth, elderly, and persons with disabilities, separate meetings were held with men and women. The FGD discussing women was held with women only.

Focus groups were divided into the following categories:

Youth. Two FGDs (men and women separately with 8 and 12 participants, respectively). Youth were mainly students of economics, law, and education, from all levels of studies. The majority of students were active in social activities through student organizations. As reported in the desk review, this group accounts for a large percentage of the population, hence, the unemployment rate affects them the most.

Elderly. Two FGDs (men and women separately with 20 and 6 participants, respectively). Both groups were consulted at the Center for Retired and Occupationally Disabled Persons in Gjilan (frequented mostly by elderly men). Men in general are more active and like to meet and socialize in large groups whereas women prefer smaller gatherings. It is noted that women do not have a place where they can meet and do not feel welcomed in the Center for Retired Persons, which has become a sort of “men only” area. In the women’s FGD, one participant was also a member of the Association of Blind Persons. They also spoke on behalf of persons with disabilities, as they share common problems with issues of access to information and services.

Women. One FGD (9 women). Targeting active women, participants were primarily NGO representatives with activities focusing on empowering women and victims of domestic violence. These women know firsthand the struggles and issues of women in Gjilan and can speak for themselves as NGO representatives, as well as women.

Persons with disabilities. Two FGDs (men and women separately with 8 and 7 participants, respectively). It is noted that in general both men and women show low interest towards engaging with the Municipality due to frustration about what they perceive as unfulfilled promises.

Note: The City Team has drafted comprehensive individual reports for each FGD, which can be made available upon request.

2.1. Social Inclusion in Public Service Provision

2.1.1. Validation of vulnerable groups

In order to structure the discussion about social inclusion in a more focused manner, the City Team introduced to the FGD participants the list of identified vulnerable groups, based on the initial findings from the desk review. The City Team ranked the first four groups as most vulnerable, but also listed six more groups, identified as marginalized in Kosovo. Participants were challenged to discuss the social inclusion of these groups, but also encouraged participants to think of categories, which they consider more vulnerable than others, and which are not necessarily listed below. This exercise was considered important for establishing a common rationale for future proposals to brainstorm in the Participatory Scenario Workshop, which helps to avoid general and ‘grand’ proposals for transparency and participation that are difficult to be implemented within the framework of SSCE/UPP II.

In general, all FGD participants validated the first four identified vulnerable groups, PWDs being highlighted as more vulnerable than others. However, each FGD identified certain subgroups as more vulnerable within these groups.

- Young identified among ‘Youth’ the subgroup ‘young ex-prisoners’. According to them, this category is not taken care of and is not integrated institutionally. Also, they identified displaced persons from the Presheva, Medvegja and Bujanoc Valley as a group that have serious problems with documents, since they cannot proceed with administrative procedures on either sides of the border.
- The elderly identified themselves and children as more vulnerable than others. They further identified the group of persons who were expelled from jobs during the previous system and have not been able to enjoy the benefits of the full pension. This problem is noted in Kosovo in general.
- Women identified sub-groups among themselves: women in rural areas (who do not have sufficient access to information and services) and women subjected to domestic violence. Women highlighted children as more vulnerable than others.
- Persons with disabilities also identified a sub-group among themselves – children with disabilities who are unable to access school, being denied their right to education and participation in other activities together with their peers.
- All regarded the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian community (RAE) as one of the groups that cannot be considered as vulnerable in Gjilan, while the diaspora is mentioned one time as a group that can be prone to discrimination in terms of issuing documents (higher fees).

2.1.2. Rating: Access to public services, main challenges and opportunities

Access to public services and institutions by vulnerable groups is generally rated “average”.

- PWDs and the elderly consider the lack of physical and direct access to municipal staff hinders them to get better services and information. They wish to overcome such physical barriers;

- Women consider that the lack of awareness (especially among women) about forms and methods of getting information on services and their rights is what makes them vulnerable. They would like to see the Municipality work harder in launching awareness raising campaigns;
- Youth consider the lack of financial support and employment opportunities as reasons for their apathy towards engagement with municipality, which in turn results in low interest for access to services and institutions. However, they are very capable of being informed via the internet but would wish that information reaches them ‘filtered’ for youth issues only. In general, they think that there is a lack of awareness among citizens to participate.

Main Challenges/Opportunities for Gjilan to being supportive to its vulnerable citizens		
	Challenges	Opportunities
FGD PWD (NGOs)	Law Enforcement / human rights for access / benefits	Municipal staff to be more responsive / accountable re: regulations / procedures for special groups of citizens
FGD Elderly	Lack of budget / subventions for pensioners / third age and for gender issues	An NGO to support their cause
FGD Women (NGOs)		Awareness rising / training of women in order to develop economically
FGD Youth	Lack of scholarship, professional training / practice and employment	Municipality to address those challenges by offering space for practice in its institutions

2.1.3. Youth – Key issues / Most prevalent problems



Youth assessed the quality of information and access to public services/utilities as “average”. When asked about the quality of municipal administration services, youth declared that they function well but have still room for improvement. They care about utilities, but they also emphasized the poor quality of the urban environment, including: the lack of public lighting, proper pavements and other physical barriers, excessive traffic loads, lack of public transportation, elements that affect the appearance of the city, which, according to them, is not

pleasant (lack of decorations, lack of a city cinema, events, etc.). The issue of ad-hoc investments in infrastructure is, according to them, designed for private benefits and political support. Key issues for youth are the lack of funds and lack of municipal scholarships; they express dissatisfaction over the lack of a campus, which is promised to be built but so far there have been no developments.

As far as public discussions, debates and citizen involvement is concerned, they declared that this should be improved, and that the greatest problem is low awareness and indifference among citizens to participate. It should be noted that through its Annual Reports, the Mayor reports on citizen participation as being satisfactory, referring only to those meetings required by law/regulations, while not expressing concerns about the low level of participation, as was sincerely stated in many in-depth interviews (IDIs) with municipal representatives.

Youth rated the municipality “average” for transparency and “below average” for accountability. Regarding the channels of information, youth use the internet (Facebook more than the official webpage), and consider ICT very important for information and communication about municipal services. Their criticism about the current means of informing citizens on municipal webpage is "strangulation with unnecessary information for political gain (publicity stunts)". They have suggested a better-structured webpage providing decentralized information (sectorial), and possibly having information come to them, and not vice-versa (social media, emails). To increase transparency, according to women, rules of procedure must be respected. Men insist upon direct meetings with the Mayor, professional staff of the Municipality and more space for youth. This would, according to them, also help to increase the engagement of youth with the city about services. In general, the openness of municipal assembly sessions to the public is satisfactory according to FGDs and the desk review.

2.1.4. Elderly – Key issues / Most prevalent problems



The elderly assessed the quality of information and access to public services/utilities as “average”. Their main concern is a lack of public transport. For them, the problem is also their low income and impossibility to travel by foot for long distances or by taxi (unaffordable). What bothers elderly people is the limited budget for investment in infrastructure but also for the support of social cases and retired persons.

As far as public discussions, debates and citizen involvement is concerned, they also declared that this should be improved. The most problematic issue for them is the fact that their specific needs/complaints are often not met. Due to their limited mobility, they would prefer direct meetings at their premises (pensions club) with municipal staff, and/or an NGO that could liaise between them and the Municipality, hence, bringing the Municipality to them and not vice versa.

The desk review found no NGO that deals with elderly issues, hence the City Team considers this proposal by the elderly to be a very positive one.

In general, the transparency of the Municipality and services is estimated as “average.” The elderly believe that the Municipality is doing what it can, demonstrating their understanding and recognizing the will of the Municipality and its difficulties, especially budgetary constraints.

2.1.5. Women – Key issues / Most prevalent problems



Women evaluated the quality of information and access to public services as “average”, while stating that this depends on the municipal department and staff. They emphasized the lack of inclusion of citizens’ opinions in planning services and budgets, stating that citizens are interested in this, but there is a lack of good information, especially about the budget. Citizens therefore lose the will to engage.

They use ICT for information and communication and consider it important. Like youth, they would prefer that the official web portal is decentralized for each department in order to enable better structuring of information for each department. It should be noted that while FGDs were held, the Municipal webpage was being redesigned and a large box on the starting page contained a message to citizens, asking them to contribute with their ideas on the design and a better, friendlier webpage.

As members of NGOs, they participate in the initiatives of the municipality and are usually invited as representatives of civil society. However, they do not consider participation in activities to be inclusive because the impression is made that invitations are done based on the convenience of the Municipality. NGO women consider that the participation of citizens in these initiatives is not satisfactory due to low awareness, although there have been improvements in this regard.

In general, the transparency of the Municipality is assessed to be average. Although they are aware of municipal reports, Assembly meetings, and the openness of its sessions to the public, they would wish to be informed more systematically than every three to six months. Like youth, for increased transparency and responsibility of the Municipality, they propose that the Mayor should be more on the ground in direct meetings with citizens. Like others, women highly appreciate the broadcasting of the proceedings of the assembly directly on the local Radio “Star”, but also by the Municipality through online streaming.

2.1.6. Persons with disabilities (PWDs) – Key issues / Most prevalent problems



PWDs assessed access to information as “good”, but the quality of information as “below average”. According to them, municipal administration services are functioning well but there is still room for improvement.

Their main concern, regardless of what the question is about when access is mentioned, is the existence of physical barriers in some public buildings and the fact that they feel that they are not given enough opportunities to express themselves. It should be noted that the desk review found that PWD issues are specifically and much better addressed in Gjilan than in other cities, noting that Gjilan has its own Guideline for Services for PWDs.²³

Although they do not use ICT for access to information and services to the municipality, they regard the impact of ICT on informing citizens as very good. They would prefer a web site of the Municipality that is more user friendly and provides a better layout in terms of content (e.g. sport activities section, cultural activities, etc). They also wish to be better treated by municipal staff, which according to them applies for the rest of citizens as well.

Accountability and transparency of the Municipality was assessed as “average” by PWDs. Awareness raising among citizens about their rights, the creation of physical access, full respect of the law, and being considered equal with other citizens are some of the steps towards improving municipal services and responsiveness.

2.2. Existing Social Accountability and Participation

2.2.1. Views on current state of affairs at the local level

Gjilan is identified in our Desk Review report as one of the municipalities in Kosovo that has made great progress in terms of governance, transparency, and accountability. The perception about the Mayor in Gjilan, identified from various sources, is that of a cooperative person, open to projects and initiatives, good at fundraising and investments, as well as in the overall management of the municipal administration.

The overall status of technical and social infrastructure in Gjilan is also assessed as good. However, there is a lot of room for improvement, as is the case with the rest of municipalities in Kosovo, largely conditioned by outdated supply systems (e.g. water and sewage), low municipal budgets and a lack of capital investments. This situation was validated by the participants in our FGDs. According to all of them, municipal administration services function well, but there is still

²³ <http://kk.rks-gov.net/gjilan/getattachment/a01a6bfb-de91-48c1-a968-8359b079e066/Udherrefyes-i-sherbimeve-per-personat-me-aftesi-te.aspx>

room for improvement, especially in terms of utilities (electricity, water, heating, garbage collection, urban traffic etc). One of the key points identified by elderly people is the lack of public transport. Findings from the Desk Review also suggested that this service is in bad shape due to an inadequate street system characterized by narrow roads, inadequate crossroads and sidewalks, and a lack of urban bus stops. The total lack of central heating (the majority of inhabitants use stoves for heating), on the other hand, is not mentioned by FGD participants, which reveals more about the modest expectations of citizens, who are aware of the overall economic development in the country. Also, participants did not raise the issue of insufficient kindergartens, which according to our Desk Review is identified as one of the major challenges in Gjilan. Participants did, however, qualify children among the most vulnerable groups in Gjilan, conditioned by the vulnerability and employment rate of women in general.

In terms of investments in infrastructure, one criticism came from some young men who think that the Municipality usually engages in ad-hoc capital investments in areas of the city that bring them private benefits and political support. In this respect, elderly persons also want to see more investments to support social causes and retired persons.²⁴

When asked to prioritize what should improve in terms of municipal administration services, some elderly men identified the complicated procedures for issuing personal documents for the displaced from the Presheva, Medvegja and Bujanoc Vally (Serbia)²⁵. Women pointed out that the municipal staff should be more accessible for direct meetings. Persons with disabilities (PWDs), on the other hand, indicated that what is neglected at times is the alleged benefits for persons with disabilities as a vulnerable category. In this context, it should be mentioned that free health care in public institutions is one of the indicators that defines the vulnerability scheme in Gjilan. PWDs receive this service, in addition to children, the elderly, and social assistance beneficiaries (mainly women). There is also a Guide to Services for PWDs, which provides sufficient information and, in our view, should be consulted by PWDs and updated, in order for them to become more aware of their rights to benefits.

When asked about the state of public discussions, debates and citizen involvement with public services, all FGD participants declared that this should also improve. However, many participants seemed to be inactive and not informed in this regard, primarily because of the low awareness about participation in general. Women from the NGO sector seem to be more active and more informed about public participation. They validated the fact that there is low awareness and indifference among citizens to participate. Women also said that the initiatives come usually from the NGO sector and wish to see the municipality taking the lead, especially when it comes to raising awareness about and including citizen opinions in planning services and budgets. It should be mentioned that the Desk Review also has asserted that many regulations, reports, strategies and action plans adopted by the Municipality are made in cooperation with NGOs and donors (the Action Plan for Transparency; the Regulation for Protection of Children; on engagement of youth; the Housing Report; A Guide of Services for People with Disabilities, etc.). Yet, information obtained by various sources do not address the methods used and level of citizen participation in producing such documents. When asked which category should be treated

²⁴ One of most pressing issues for the Municipality has been addressing the needs of vulnerable groups, through social welfare sector and subventions. Gjilan has invested heavily and is still active in providing social housing to those in need.

²⁵ It is worth mentioning that the Municipality has a project entitled "Microregion Gjilan-Preshevo-Kumanovo" (<https://kk.rks-gov.net/gjilan/getattachment/1f753f90-927d-4007-8f59-cb7578319c70/Bashkepunimi-Nderkufitare-dhe-Nderkomunal.aspx>) which does not address the specific issue of personal documents, but does address issues of integration.

more carefully in this respect, women identified PWDs. PWDs themselves think that public involvement is not inclusive as far as they are concerned, due to physical barriers that still exist in some administration facilities (e.g. the Mayor's office). They also feel that they are not given enough opportunities to express themselves.

2.2.2. *Methods for obtaining information about public services*

According to the Desk Review, there are various sources that provide information about public services in Gjilan. The Municipality itself takes pride in being transparent through its Information Office, the online Registry of Administrative Procedures established in 2015, its web page (redesigned in 2016), social media (Facebook), official reports, calendar of activities, openness to online reporting of corruption, two local news portals, and most importantly, the online streaming of municipal assembly meetings.

The quality of information was generally assessed from “good” to “average” by FGD participants. “Good” goes for access to information, while “the quality of information is described as more “average”. Youth are more demanding in this respect. They are mainly informed via the internet, and prefer the municipal Facebook page to the official web page. According to them: “with Facebook, information comes to the citizen, while when using the web page, the citizen goes to the information”. Youth acknowledge the low interest of citizens to be informed about municipal services. They think that the municipality should work more on finding alternative ways to send information to citizens quicker and easier. Women also use the internet to be informed, but they consider that in order to get better information about activities/annual plans, the municipality should send emails. They also think that the Calendar of Activities should be sent to citizens via email. Although the Calendar of Activities is made public on the municipal web page, it is not consulted by youth at all (they care only about youth activities), or by PWDs. It is not consulted by the elderly because they don't use the internet, and is rarely consulted by women. One problem identified in this respect by PWDs is the lack of training provided by the municipality to PWDs on how to get informed, due to their specific constraints.

In general, everyone gets information through TV (national TV, but more from a local TV “Vali”), radio and printed media. Elderly keep themselves informed through family members, meetings with neighbors and friends, through brochures or at the supermarket (talking to the cashier). They say it is fairly easy to access information and that they are visible in the institutions. However, all FGD participants think that information regarding public campaigns should be improved and have more variety to attract the interest of more citizens. Live streaming of Municipal Assembly sessions is very much welcomed by all FGD participants.

When asked about citizen-municipality interaction, most FGD participants prefer direct meetings with municipal officials. Most are aware of the option for interaction via the webpage and Facebook, but do not favor them as channels for communication. Youth were critical, stating that those are more used for the publication of activities that suit the officials. Another concern raised by young men was the “strangulation with unnecessary information for political gain (publicity stunt)”. In their view, citizens get information that always has to do with the Mayor's activities, which are not necessarily relevant to the citizens. At the same time, they identified the lack of interest on behalf of citizens, which damages the citizen-city relationship.

When asked about the impact of ICT, all were in favor, because it gives citizens easier access to information, especially for the youngsters. At the same time, all were quite self-critical; emphasizing that the citizens should be more concerned and more active with regard to information and the means of obtaining information.

2.2.3. *Methods for filing questions or complaints about public services / participating in city affairs*

When asked about methods of filing complaints, youth have mentioned almost all forms. They prefer group initiatives (through youth associations) and complaints in written form, which according to them is more efficient. Formal complaints by e-mail, however, have a tendency to be neglected. The signing of petitions has also proved to be fruitful for youth. They exercise verbal complaints whenever there are public appearances or meetings with the municipal staff.

The elderly also prefer formal written complaints, usually through the union (group complaints), but do not exclude meetings and verbal complaints to officials. On the other hand, women from the NGO sector prefer direct meetings with the Office for Gender Issues in the Municipality, and do not file complaints in writing, nor do they participate in public discussions. They are used to this form of communication when dealing with women's activities/issues. According to women active in the NGO sector, the main obstacle with the complaints mechanism is a neglect of the deadline for responses and a neglect of online complaints; this was also identified by elderly men. In fact, what both groups consider as a response to their questions/complaints (usually dealt with within the formal 30 day deadline) are only positive replies – negative replies are not considered a response.

Elderly women in general do not complain at all because, as stated, they rely on men: “men from the neighborhood take care of complaints.” The same goes for PWDs. In general, according to the FGD participants, PWDs are very inactive; complaints on their behalf are usually made by NGOs (mainly through “HandiKos”). There are PWDs however that utilize their right to appeal, especially through written complaints and direct meetings, but rarely through the use of the box for complaints, which is located on the premises of the Municipality and which, according to them, is not managed in a correct manner. PWDs declared that their complaints and demands are not taken into account because most of them are rejected.

It should be noted that the Municipal webpage contains the link “Forum” where citizens can directly and publicly upload their concerns/demands, but no activity is noted from citizens. This method was likewise not mentioned at all in the FGDs.

When asked about participation in community initiatives, all FGD participants declared that they participate, with younger people being more active than other groups. They usually take part through group representations, organizations (Student Council) or through petitions within their neighborhoods for different interventions in infrastructure, which is considered quite effective. Volunteer activities were also mentioned (e.g. blood donations through the Red Cross). These initiatives are considered effective but the problem, in the eyes of youth, is that not all citizens express a willingness to be part of and support these activities. They also noted that the interest of citizens is low when it comes to decision making about development projects and the municipal budget due to, as alleged, previously neglected requests, which has resulted in a frustrated citizenry.

Elderly men also declared to be active participants in community initiatives; they take part in rallies and protests and by signing petitions. According to the majority of FGD participants, in fact the most active people are elderly men. Their everyday life being generally inactive allows them to engage more frequently. Elderly women on the other hand, are only interested in participating in cultural activities such as theater and music, and leave the rest to the men. Younger women from the NGO sector are more active and participate, thanks to invitations made by the Municipality, as representatives of civil society. The same goes for PWDs. However, women expressed their concern about such activities not being inclusive because their impression is that invitations are done based on the convenience of the municipality. Generally, NGO women consider that participation of citizens in community initiatives is not satisfactory due to low awareness, although there are improvements in this regard.

2.3. Opportunities and Constraints for Social Accountability and Citizen Engagement

2.3.1. *Perception/Awareness/Participation in City activities related to Accountability and Citizen Engagement*

All FGD participants have rated transparency and accountability of municipal services as “average”. The official municipal webpage and public debates are considered transparent but there are services that have are perceived as irresponsible. The elderly declared that the Municipality is doing what it can, thus, demonstrate understanding and recognize the will of the Municipality and difficulties, especially budgetary constraints. Women are more demanding with respect to transparency and accountability; they wish that, in addition to the Municipal Assembly meetings and reports (which take place than every three to six months), the Municipality would engage in providing more frequent and systematic information, and that the Mayor would be on the ground more in direct meetings with citizens. According to all, awareness raising among citizens about their rights, the creation of physical access to municipal spaces, full respect of the law, and being considered equal with other citizens, are some of the steps towards improving municipal services and responsiveness.

2.3.2. *Perceived obstacles to participation in decision making*

The main identified obstacles to information and participation in decision making, according to FGD participants, are the lack of knowledge about citizens’ rights and responsibilities and the lack of trust and interest to participate and be represented.

When asked whether citizens are aware of their rights and relevant mechanisms of citizen participation and social accountability, all FGD participants, except for young men, declared that the majority of citizens are not aware. Young men think that citizens are aware of their rights but disregard them as a result of apathy and disappointment. Women and the elderly pointed out the general lack of trust in institutions due to the frequent neglect of citizens’ demands, which in turn results in lack of interest among citizens and prevents the interaction of citizens with the city in terms of planning and municipal administration. The elderly also see this problem being affected by the central government, especially in the allocation and management of the national budget. The lack of interest to know more about rights was noted among PWDs; there were a few men

who were not aware of their benefits and exemptions from charges for municipal procedures and who received information in the FGD.

2.3.3. *Suggestions to improve Social Accountability*

To improve citizen participation, FGD participants identified better information and awareness raising on citizens' rights to participate and have their demands addressed. This, according to them, will make it possible to reach a productive cooperation between citizens and institutions.

Also, participants think that the Mayor should be closer to citizens and listen more to their demands (weekly meetings with the Mayor, which were greatly appreciated, have stopped being organized). The elderly wish that the Municipality would contact them directly because they are vulnerable; they prefer to have direct, informative meetings between the Mayor and pensioners. They also wish to have an NGO, which could act as a liaison between them and the Municipality, hence, to try to bring the Municipality to them and not vice versa.

Some of the possibilities for improving this situation include: the creation of new jobs and increasing the opportunities for internships for students of the University of Gjilan, giving more space to the youth. In terms of administration, youth think that in order to increase transparency, the Municipality should consider restructuring employees in its various institutions and identify "unfit staff in positions". Also, prioritizing investment is another large issue that would help transparency. Although participants acknowledge that many projects in infrastructure are being implemented, they think that public debate and consideration of complaints in this regard would shift the focus from the leaders' political agenda to the needs of the city.

Cooperation of the Municipality with NGOs is regarded "good". According to all FGD participants, this interaction is quite good in terms of exchange of information, but lacks results due to a limited budget. This results in the partial fulfillment of promises by the Municipality. Youth think that sometimes recommendations from other parties are not considered; therefore, this cooperation should be deepened further.

According to women, the Municipality should better fulfill the requirements of citizens, which will in turn impact trust and could restore confidence in institutions, increasing the active participation of citizens. Youth brought up a concern about children. According to them, the Municipality should cooperate with NGOs to establish a center for children where they could organize various activities for children; this would help in engaging them and discovering new talents.

2.4. In-Depth Interviews

Ten interviews were conducted with three representatives from the private sector, three NGO representatives and four key representatives from the local government to discuss social sustainability in Gjilan.

Local Government Representatives

Rexhep Kadriu, Deputy Mayor of Gjilan

Naser Korça, Director of the Directorate of Public Services

Mursel Zymberi, Director of Center for Social Work

Shqipe Avdiu Kryeziu, Director of Public Preschool Institution

NGO Representatives

Fatmir Shurdhani, Manager of “HandiKos”

Nazife Jonuzi, Founder and leader of “Liria” Center

Valdrin Halimi, Head of LYAC

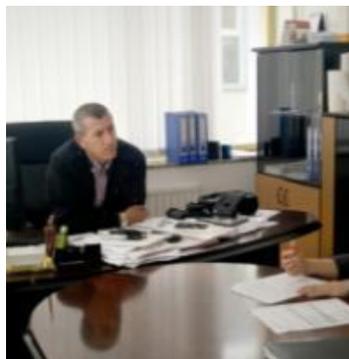
Sazan Ibrahim, Head of the Association of Municipalities of Kosovo

Private Sector

Xhevat Aliu, Manager of the Employment Office

Haxhije Avdiu, Owner/Head of “Haxhija”

Mensur Morina, Head of “MOR & CUR”



Naser Korça, Director of Directorate of public services, Municipality of Gjilan.

Length of service at this role: 8 months (a 2 year mandate)



Shqipe Avdiu Kryeziu, Director, Public Preschool Institution “Ardhmeria 1”

Length of service at this role: 4 years



Xhevat Aliu
Manager of the Employment Office, Gjilan

Length of service at this role: Over 12 years

Note: The City Team has drafted comprehensive individual report for each IDI, which can be made available upon request.

Regarding the access of citizens to information and services, local government representatives stated that the Municipality provides sufficient access to information (especially via the internet) for all citizens and that the municipality is continually making efforts to include everyone. This was also validated by the private sector and NGO representatives; according to them, access to the relevant information and services has progressed greatly. Like with FGDs, room for improvement was acknowledged, especially with regards to infrastructure. Some noted that citizens have sufficient access to services and information, but it always depends on their interest to engage, which, in general, is very low. Only Mr. Shurdhani from “HandiKos” (an NGO representative of persons with disabilities) stated that the Municipality does not provide adequate access to information for all citizens and in particular to persons with disabilities (“adequate” should be understood as special forms of communication with PWDs). Mr. Morina from the business sector specifically identified public hearings and local communities as a way to get better information. It should be noted that the work on strengthening local community offices is in progress, as was noted in the desk review, and is based on the Regulation for the Organization of Local Communities (*bashkesi lokale*), adopted in July 2010.

All consider that public services (including water, electric power, public transportation, social services, and waste management) are unaffordable for citizens, especially vulnerable groups due to their weak financial situation and unemployment. According to Mr. Shurdhani, PWDs' monthly income is only 75 euros and according to Ms. Jonuzi, Founder and leader of the "Liria" Center the unemployment rate in Gjilan is 46-47%. Certain social welfare beneficiaries and PWDs are supported however in terms of release from payments for services and procedures (a fact also validated in FGDs). Some services, according to Ms. Avdiu Kryeziu, Director of the Public Preschool Institution, are inexpensive (e.g. personal documents). Both she and the Deputy Mayor noted that citizens have never filed complaints about this.

A main obstacle in the city-citizen interaction, according to the private sector representatives and Mr. Halimi from the youth network "Local Youth Action Council in Gjilan," is irresponsible municipal staff, (ignoring/neglecting of citizens), which results in frustration. One opportunity identified to improve this interaction was the training/education of staff on their responsibilities towards citizens, as well as the use of technology and the strengthening of local community representatives. Mr. Halimi also proposes more awareness campaigns on procurement and neighborhood projects. Other NGO representatives, on the other hand, mentioned more basic facts, such as the disregard of law and harsh living conditions, as well as a lack of awareness and low participation of citizens. None from those two sectors referred to the lack of interest by citizens when asked about obstacles in city-citizen interaction, although this was acknowledged by all of them when discussing public involvement. The lack of interest by citizens is the main concern of the Municipality. According to Mr. Korça, Director of the Directorate of Public Services, this is the main obstacle to ensuring access of information on public services. He is concerned about finding ways to improve citizen participation.

In this context, Mr. Kadriu, the Deputy Mayor, confessed that the Municipality does not have any program which would foster/stimulate citizens to participate in city planning and administration, for which, Mr. Korça considers that the budget is not a problem. However, there are other channels that are used to stimulate the general interest, namely through supporting NGOs that represent and engage citizens. Ms. Avdiu Kryeziu made note of the fact that the Municipality has applied incentives in the form of subventions, but only in other sectors (e.g. agriculture). Both private sector and NGO representatives validated that there are no incentives from the Municipality in order to increase citizen participation in the planning and administration of the city. Some of them think that this is due to budget constraints. The small size of the budget was also mentioned by Mr. Kadriu when discussing "access for all." According to him, the Municipality has a very limited budget especially for social cases. He sees an opportunity to improve their accessibility by encouraging larger participation of citizens in public debates and budget planning, in order to prioritize projects.

Municipality representatives made note that Gjilan is a leader with respect to accountability, inclusion, and participation.²⁶ Mr. Zymberi noted that the work with citizens is carried out in a transparent manner and by respecting deadlines. He also said that they offer assistance to those who request to access online services. Ms. Kryeziu mentioned the fact that the Municipality has recently engaged in employing persons with disabilities and persons from other communities; the

²⁶ Gjilan has a performance of 98.38%, and this has affected the growth and efficiency at work, timely treatment of cases received, sound resource management and activation of the online application system for certain services within the Department of General Administration. (Mayor's Report 2014)

same applies for her institution, where children with special needs are enrolled with priority and are provided with additional staff. In general, private sector representatives and the youth network NGO acknowledged that there have been improvements in accountability, inclusion, and participation, especially for marginalized groups. Mr. Halimi saluted the e- kiosks as a tool that provides citizens with easier, faster and non-discriminatory access to documents. Mr. Aliu, Manager of the Employment Office, stated that there is visible improvement in this regard through the decentralization of services, which unloads central administration and consequently offers better service to citizens at the level of local communities. He believes that decentralization should continue further so to achieve full coverage. Only PWDs and women NGO representatives consider accountability and citizen inclusion and participation not to be satisfactory. According to Mr. Shurdhani from HandiKos, public debates are organized according to municipal preferences and the floor is not given to everyone. Ms. Jonuzi also noted a lack of budget for gender issues and lack of women participating in public debates.

Municipality representatives made note of all forms of social accountability at their disposal, including: municipal quarterly reporting on Municipal Assembly, public debates with citizens, official website of the Municipality, bimonthly reports of each department through press conferences, online streaming of Assembly meetings being broadcasted on the radio and TV, as well as the Municipal Board meetings being uploaded online. Private sector and NGO representatives acknowledged that municipal assembly sessions are being streamed online on the municipal webpage and broadcasted on the local radio, and TV. According to Ms. Avdiu, public debates and meetings with citizens are not so successful due to low interest and the very small number of citizens who participate. However, she noted that citizens are not entirely disinterested, especially when displaying personal issues of interest such as neighborhood issues. For that matter, Mr. Morina considers that information reported by the municipality should be more basic for citizens.

As it is right now, all interviewees declared that NGOs are the key actors (external factor) who actively engage in representing the interests of citizens and vulnerable groups. Mr. Kadriu noted that NGOs, as well as other external stakeholders, are more involved in representing the interests of citizens and that the Municipality constantly considers their reports. NGOs attend Assembly/Board meetings but also the Municipality participates in almost all civil society initiatives. As an actor of great importance mentioned by Ms. Avdiu Kryeziu it is the Ombudspersons Office that directly influences the Municipality to be more transparent. Also, according to the private sector and NGO representatives, NGOs must be constantly insistent for better transparency by the Municipality, but also to increase the awareness of citizens about services and institutions. Youth representatives mentioned some good cooperation between NGOs and the Municipality but at the same time, he considers that citizens now prefer to engage themselves in issues that are important for them, because, according to him, they have somewhat lost faith in NGOs. In this context, Mr. Korça from the Directorate of Public Services made note that NGOs' interventions that address accountability are unfortunately not always correct, given the fact that sometimes they abuse for personal gains, and sometimes reports are not independent but are fueled by a political background. According to the Deputy Mayor, obeying the law provides a good internal collaboration but also ensures that external interventions have the right impact with the right response from outside, providing that relevant issues are properly addressed. In this context, Mr. Korça raised a concern about "passive citizens." According to him, when it comes to individual initiatives, citizens are regarded as passive actors and are generally uninterested. This issue was brought up several times and agreed upon in FGDs as

well. Mr. Korça noted that they are not even aware that they have access to these processes, which may be due to a lack of proper information on their rights and responsibilities. He said that citizens are considered as actors from afar through criticism and not through more productive contributions such as providing alternatives and solving problems.

When asked about principles for acceptance of social responsibility, Mr. Korça was very critical. He insisted on law enforcement, firstly by the staff (that is, respect of legal bases highlighting the city-citizen responsibilities), in order to strengthen trust in institutions, which in turn will push forward law enforcement by residents. Municipal staff, according to him, should serve as an example for citizens. In addition, Ms. Avdiu Kryeziu, emphasized the need to guarantee human rights by establishing independent commissions for complaints. It is noted by all municipality representatives that all these exist but there remains room for progress. NGOs are also for the full respect of the law by both parties (citizens, municipalities) as a precondition to increase trust between them. Private sector representatives identified the need for more professional and honest communication with citizens in order to raise awareness so that all parties involved know and understand their responsibilities to address relevant issues. Mr. Aliu from the Employment Office stated that the state of social welfare (low income) is a serious factor that directly affects their level of engagement with Municipality, often resulting in dissatisfaction due to misinformation. To increase citizen satisfaction, Ms. Avdiu from the private business sector insists that promises made by the Municipality should be realized. Mr. Morina also proposed tax relief for businesses and enforcement of development policies for business sector.

ICT is considered to be very positive by all. Municipality representatives highlighted e-kiosks used to by citizens to obtain their documents 24 hours a day, including the SMS notification. The Deputy Major mentioned the possibility given to citizens to use ICT not only as a tool for encouraging direct access to information about municipal services, but also as a tool for complaining about municipal issues. According to Mr. Aliu, institutions are willing to use ICT and this is very important, especially when dealing with transparency. All representatives in fact agree that access to data has improved lately and is considered very good. Internet is being used by citizens, especially young people as a tool for direct and fast access to information. SMS notification by the Municipality is also regarded very positively.

According to Municipality representatives, the further strengthening of technology and the provision of online archives will strengthen the organizational system, which will automatically lead to growing social sustainability, inclusion, and accountability. Also, the empowerment of some departments such as Geodesy and Cadaster, as well as services sensitive to social welfare, including employment, would provide better opportunities for access. Municipality representatives also identified improved access to information through ICT within the Municipality and training of staff as important steps. Mr. Shurdhani from HandiKos and Ms. Jonuzi from the Womens NGO think that, in addition to the training of municipal staff in ICT, there is a need to strengthen the organizational system of the local government by fostering the relationship with civil society organizations, especially the Department of Public Services, Department of Health, and Department of Education. Youth representatives, on the other hand, believes that all institutions should be brought in one place because the current distribution of institutions prevents citizens from accessing the right department/office to perform a particular service. Connecting all institutions virtually via ICT can help with disseminating proper information. In addition, he believes that Department of Inspection should be strengthened in order to create better access for citizens in the Municipality. Mr. Morina from the private sector

also mentioned as a positive side the fact that the Municipality has employed people from vulnerable groups.

However, when asked about social inclusion of vulnerable groups in the private sector, both Mr. Morina and Mr. Aliu stated that there is no strategy that supports the inclusion of vulnerable groups in businesses, which should be dealt with at a higher level of planning and governance. Ms. Avdiu proposed that the Municipality support private businesses that provide employment to vulnerable groups by promoting/introducing annual rewards in the form of tax exemption for one year, or as subventions to invest in business expansion. A business incubator was mentioned by Mr. Morina.

The main challenges of urban governance according to the Municipality representatives are: the rapid development of the city, outdated/old infrastructure, the increasing population, lack of public transportation, low levels of awareness and education of citizens on participatory planning, and limited budget. They see the recent progress of regulatory plans as an opportunity. In addition, Mr. Zymberi, Director of Center for Social Work, thinks that a real opportunity is adequate employment of persons in certain positions in institutions. Private sector and NGO representatives declared that they should be involved in developing urban policies, however, as Mr. Morina from the business sector noted, people are usually not interested in this and get more involved only when development affects their private properties. As far as donations are concerned, businesses mainly donate for sports. NGO representatives stressed here too the need to respect the law and improve communication with municipal staff. Mr. Shurdhani suggested that the Municipality work harder to involve youth (being the largest portion of the society) in urban governance issues if the Municipality wishes to improve civic participation in general. This was validated by Ms. Avdiu Kryeziu who also mentioned as an opportunity the engagement of NGOs. A major challenge for better urban governance in Gjilan is the issue of the small budget, as the requirements of the inhabitants exceed that budget. In addition, the existing infrastructure is very old and needs repair. According to Mr. Korça, as a consequence of the small budget, the Municipality cannot properly realize promises made to citizens and, as a result, it negatively affects citizens' trust in institutions. He also noted the problem of announced but unfulfilled investments by donors. The youth representative, Mr. Halimi made the remark that Gjilan is a Regional Center, located in the border area, and that it is deficient in providing the appropriate attention and equal treatment for each neighborhood. The solution to this problem according to him is to divide the city into zones, where each zone would have its representative/board to deal specifically with problems of that zone. Neighborhood councils (Local councils – *bashkesi lokale*) would present projects for those neighborhoods to the citizens and, by giving them more detailed information, they would become more active and more contributing. This is how he envisions improved urban governance in Gjilan, which would thus influence an increase of transparency and social accountability.

When asked how ICT can improve the situation, representatives from the Municipality listed the need for better internet network access in deep rural areas but also in the city (currently preventing certain groups to access information), the need for training of their staff, upgrading of technological equipment and an increase in the number of ICT tools such as e-kiosks. In addition to training staff, Mr. Morina from the private sector added as an opportunity the need to update publications of all reports and decisions made by the Municipality. This was also acknowledged by Municipality representatives, who wish to have better and more direct information, especially in switching to electronic public procurement. Mr Aliu from the Employment Office gave a

concrete proposal to create a regional portal for sharing more detailed information of the city of Gjilan and its surroundings in the interest of the citizens, which, according to him, might be a good opportunity for better communication and for finding jobs. The women's NGO representative identified the lack of internet access and IT tools, which still remains a problem for certain parts of the society due to difficult financial situations. The youth representative on the other hand is more demanding in terms of equipment. According to him, a roadblock to developing ICT-based tools is the outdated operation systems, which slows the way of getting information. This obstacle was confirmed by municipality representatives who regard slow access to the internet as a problem. The interviewee representing the youth NGO also pointed out the unattractive design of the Municipality's webpage and the large number of portals with different reliability of information as obstacles. As an opportunity to improve this situation, according to him, is the creation of a more credible system (portal).

The Association of Municipalities of Kosovo, stated that the local government in Kosovo aims to keep accountability at satisfactory levels, including the social aspect. For this purpose, the majority of municipalities have the Department of Social Welfare, which is held responsible for accountability towards citizens and the development in the social aspect. Citizen engagement through technology is made possible mainly through the official web pages within municipalities, which have different links included in their web pages related to services for citizens of various aspects, for which citizens can seek services in the municipality. Recent social networks are also used for direct communication with citizens, for i.e. Facebook, Twitter. In most municipalities there are different projects supported by various donors who have a focus on increasing the transparency on municipal decision-making. Even though the municipalities - through self-initiative but also as a legal obligation –do organize public discussions in order to increase transparency in their strategic planning. These projects are also aimed in many cases at actualization of issues affecting marginalized groups such as minority communities, women or children.

3. Scenario Development Workshop Outcomes and Recommendations

The Participatory Scenario Development Workshop for the City of Gjilan, was conceptualized and organized as a joint event between AI Prishtina and the Municipality of Gjilan.

The event, which was held on June 22, 2016 in the Municipal Assembly Hall of Gjilan, gathered about 35 participants, representing local government institutions including the municipality, citizens of various professions and interests, and civil society representatives, including NGOs and CBOs.

Through the opening speech, the Mayor, Mr. Lutfi Haziri, highlighted the municipality's willingness and commitment to matters pertaining to social accountability, while the deputy-mayor Mr. Rexhep Kadriu touched on a number of ICT incentives adopted and implemented by the city to this end, which were described in the City Profile Report.

The workshop agenda included a number of presentations covering emerging findings of the social sustainability assessment for Gjilan, related social accountability aspects and the use of ICT; these were further elaborated through a number of examples offered from international best practices. The presentations were delivered by Archis Interventions Prishtina experts, who were directly involved in the desk research, and focus groups discussions.

A substantial part of the event was dedicated to participatory scenario development that addressed the major topics of the workshop: Information Asymmetry, Social Accountability Practices and Citizen Participation. The dynamics of the scenario development process resulted in a very interactive and fruitful session.

All proposals brought forward during the workshop manifested *inter-related features of accountability*, which explains how and why a particular proposal, for instance the first proposal, drives participation, yet also results in increased transparency, interaction, etc. Therefore, although workshop findings were numerous, they have been organized into three main categories for optimal representation of the interests of the involved parties, optimal ownership when it comes to its implementation, and optimal harmonization of all interventions, as part of a major endeavor to increase social accountability and citizen participation in the city.

The following summary outlines the proposals that were considered the strongest and most realistic initiatives that could catalyze a wider push for greater social accountability in the city of Gjilan.

3.1. Theme 1: Triangle of Information “Local Government – Citizens – Civil Society” – Rights and Responsibilities.

The discussion on this theme resulted in a number of problems, and corresponding solutions, as presented below:

3.1.1. Existing problems and corresponding potential solutions

- i. Poor knowledge of citizens – especially vulnerable groups –on the rights, responsibilities of citizens, and the functions of local government institutions. A specific problem identified by

participants was unclear procedures and difficulties in defining certain (specific) categories and their status, and thus, the rights and assistance/support those categories are entitled to. Example: unclear procedure for transfer of social assistance in a case where the custody of a child whose family is entitled to social status is transferred to relatives.

Solution: Both the Municipality of Gjilan and civil society must systematically promote human rights and civic responsibilities (in print, on municipal/NGO websites, TV, etc.)

- ii. Insufficient information of citizens – especially vulnerable groups – on municipal/public services, provided by local institutions and civil society. Information provided by the municipality is plentiful, yet the problem identified is the lack of their classification for the needs of citizens.

Solution: Information and communication should be more structured, and with greater territorial reach, by all three actors: municipality, civil society and the media.

- iii. There is a general loss of trust among citizens that, upon obtaining information/ achieving communication, significant rapid action for a solution will follow. One problem identified by the municipality, and validated by focus groups and workshop participants, is that often, a negative response to claims/requests is viewed as a "non response".

Solution: Increased understanding on and more efficient operation of existing sources and new sources; using information obtained from these sources regularly and for all practices.

- iv. There is insufficient promotion of existing sources of information and communication by the municipality and civil society.

Solution: Existing information/communication resources are to be promoted by the municipality and all public service providers; the municipality should use more of the right of public benefit advertisements in public media (a prime source for getting information by all categories of citizens).

3.1.2. Vision: a “City Information and Communication Strategy” tailored for all target groups

Given the current priorities at the municipal level, and in order to ensure ownership and a commitment to a more accountable Gjilan, the creation of a City Information and Communication Strategy was proposed and agreed as a starting point. With this scenario, the Municipality of Gjilan, in cooperation with all actors (civil society, private sector, media, and citizens in general), would have a chance to agree on the structuring of forms/tools of communication of information according to the needs of citizens and vulnerable groups in particular. This will enable the channeling of information into filtered categories, which, in turn, will stimulate the growth of civic participation.

Specific Proposal: Increased city-citizen interaction through development of a “City Information and Communication Strategy” for Gjilan 2017-2020

This year, the Municipality of Gjilan has launched a “smart city” program and is working actively to enhance tools and methods for providing information and services to citizens. It is in this context, according to participants in the workshop, that Gjilan will have to formulate a strategy for

the city in order to: make it clear for the public the process of information and communication in the municipality of Gjilan; enhance access to information/communication; and make information/communication more structured and easier to navigate in terms of browsing by type and themes of interest.

- WHAT** City Information and Communication Strategy (CICS) 2017-2020.
- According to the European Commission: “In Smart Cities, digital technologies translate into better public services for citizens, better use of resources and less impact on the environment.”²⁷ The “smart city” approach is acknowledged by the Municipality of Gjilan, and should be enhanced further through a joint reflection and alignment of the citizens, NGOs, and municipality in a strategy for the city.
- WHY** By taking a comprehensive approach, this proposal combines current local government priorities, namely the implementation of a Smart City approach, with an integrated Information and Communication component and increased participation, both during the process through consultative meetings, as well as in the long term, through increased channels/methods of communication.
- HOW** Similar to the approach of this *Social Sustainability Assessment*, the municipality ought to also identify its target groups and match the most suitable channels, methods and messages of information and communication with citizen groups. Depending on the consultation processes and the evaluation of current resources, the municipality can shape the CICS document in collaboration with experienced NGOs in the field and citizens in general.
- WHO** The Municipality of Gjilan, University of Gjilan “Kadri Zeka”, NGOs, expert groups, and local neighborhood consultative groups.
- WHEN** 1-2 years
- INDICATORS** The CICS document itself increases exposure and visibility, the number of consultative meetings, and the number of actors involved; the rate of accomplishment is measured on a yearly basis; the number of communication channels used increases; etc.
- HOW MUCH** The cost estimate includes expertise required for preparing the Strategy, cost of developing templates for a newsletter; cost of technical intervention for website adjustment, maintenance and regular updating of the site, promotional costs, etc. Tentative estimate: 10,000 – 15,000 €

²⁷ <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/smart-cities>

3.2. Theme 2: Social Accountability – Addressing the Needs and Demands of Marginalized Groups

3.2.1. Existing problems and corresponding potential solutions

- i. Increase accountability by empowering marginalized groups in the process of participatory budgeting by all groups of society. The elderly and persons with disabilities in particular feel that they are not fully included in the process - from addressing needs, to prioritizing projects that address their needs, to information, and monitoring of implementation.

Solution: A disaggregated financial reporting mechanism for marginalized groups. Municipalities and civil society are to create new forms of participatory budgeting and information/communication according to the needs of marginalized groups. Dissemination should equally reach: a) persons who have access to the internet; b) persons who have no internet knowledge/access.

- ii. Inadequate information of marginalized groups on municipal/public services and activities by local institutions and civil society.

Solution: The municipality, together with stakeholders (NGO representatives, private sector, local services, university), should identify the most appropriate channels and forms of information for marginalized groups. (e.g. Stakeholder webpages should have the option of listening to voiced information, zooming fonts, etc.). One proposal is to make the Calendar of Activities (published on the official website of the municipality) more usable, interactive and browsable by themes. Within this calendar, the calendar (dates and contents) of meetings with citizens, municipal assembly meetings, etc. should be included to highlight those activities that are specifically related to marginalized groups.

- iii. There is a lack of promotion of the services provided by NGOs, as well as a lack of coordination between such NGOs and the municipality.

Solution: Promote forms of information distribution for marginalized groups in official sites of local institutions (municipality, public utility providers). A concrete proposal is the creation of a link or inclusion of the existing web page as a link in the official website of the municipality. In this specific page, the municipality (with the site operator) should systemize public service providers active in Gjilan. Also, it would provide a platform for interactive participation of marginalized groups in forums and public meetings (also would include video-conferencing as Skype, etc.).

- iv. Physical barriers prevent marginalized groups from accessing services and information.

Solution: Urban development incorporates design standards in public facilities for people with disabilities (e.g. sidewalks, ramps, public transport stops/lines, etc.); elements to be reflected in interactive maps on the municipality website (or at www.gjilani.im)

3.2.2. Vision: Citizen feedback becomes and integral part of local governance through a highly interactive municipal website.

The municipality increases the number and efficiency of communication channels with the community, including all vulnerable groups, based on the particular needs and specifics of each

group. The municipality makes *feedback* an inseparable part of their work practice, particularly concerning service provision and communication with the citizens/intermediaries through a new, functional, and highly interactive city website.

Specific Proposal: Transforming the City website into an “interactive forum” for citizen

The municipality increases the number and efficiency of communication channels with the community, including all vulnerable groups, based on the particular needs and specificities of each group. The municipality makes *monitoring* an inseparable part of their work practice, particularly concerning service provision and communication with the citizens/intermediaries through a new, functional, and highly interactive city website.

WHAT	An interactive municipal website, with a focus on: a) enhancing communication/feedback options in the Calendar of Activities, b) integrating major information web-sources.
WHY	This scenario aims to transform the official municipal website into an “interactive forum” for citizens. The transformed site should act not only as a source of (timely, accurate, relevant) information, but also as a medium for interaction between all stakeholders.
HOW	ICT features to add to the existing website include: Interactive Calendar of Activities to enable browsing by themes, citizen feedback-related information to be made public, enable options for online confirmation of participation in, and evaluation of meetings/activities. Municipal/public service providers in Gjilan should also have dedicated websites visibly linked to the main municipal site or via www.gjilani.im . The website should support survey platforms to collect citizen input and publish results.
WHO	Municipality, Local Government Institutions, IT experts, Consultation Groups, NGOs.
WHEN	Period to set up and become functional: 1-2 years
INDICATORS	Active site and content online; online user survey evaluates response by citizens to the site and its efficiency advantages, etc.
HOW MUCH	Municipal website adjustment, links to relevant web-source(s) and local institutions - technical intervention for adjustment, maintenance and regular updating of the site, promotional costs. Tentative estimate: 10,000 €

3.3. Theme 3: Citizen Participation – the Challenge of Involving Citizens in Decision-Making

3.3.1. Existing problems and corresponding potential solutions

- i. The city-citizen relationship is unsatisfactory. Citizens are already informed about the process of making functional Neighborhood Councils (NC) in the Municipality of Gjilan and have based their hopes for improvement of city-citizen relationship at this unit of administration.

Solution: Municipality engages in designing the mandate, function, space and activities of NCs in such way that it responds effectively to the specific needs of the respective neighborhoods.

- ii. There is a need for a more transparent processing of complaints and requests from citizens on behalf of the municipality.

Solution: Municipal officials (particularly NC officials) should prioritize the processing of complaints/requests of citizens, and this process should be made public. The municipality should find ways to stimulate the employment of experts and the voluntary engagement/employment of youngsters/students from the University of Gjilan (especially in ICT).

- iii. Low participation highlights the vital need to increase the participation of citizens in the decision-making processes

Solution: Municipality (particularly the NCs) and NGOs should find ways to inform/ raise citizen-awareness about the importance of active participation in budgeting and prioritization of projects among citizens in general, and marginalized groups in particular (direct invitations, meetings at neighborhood, etc.).

- iv. There is a need to introduce greater transparency in internal and external monitoring procedures.

Solution: Publication of internal/external monitoring reports; Monitoring to include qualitative/quantitative analysis of processing claims and complaints of citizens in a special section and under relevant neighborhoods.

3.3.2. *Vision: Functional Neighborhood Councils is the key to citizen involvement in decision-making.*

The municipality of Gjilan has fully engaged in making Neighborhood Councils functional throughout the municipality and in the city in particular. Also, Gjilan recognizes the value of transparency in the way decisions are made, and the way funds are allocated, which is why it has introduced and it applies the practice of participatory budget formulation at the level of the Neighborhood Councils. Nonetheless, information obtained through FGDs/IDIs and the PSD workshop acknowledged the fact that there is a very low level of civic engagement (none had taken part in any participatory activity led by the Municipality), while highlighting the need (and the hope) for an improved situation at the Neighborhood Council level. Improved participatory budget formulation at the level of Neighborhood Councils (which is ongoing) shall offer opportunities for citizen groups to engage with Municipality and reflect more concisely citizen priorities in planning and budgeting.

Specific Proposal: Strengthen citizen participation through the strengthening and modernization of Neighborhood Councils

WHAT Neighborhood Councils (NC) should be tailored as points of communication and information, by investing in ICT and in the creation/design of a “corner/space” for online applications, complaints and appeals, as well as assisted access for vulnerable groups.

WHY	The delegation of the mandate for communication and information reporting and processing complaints and requests from the municipality to the neighborhood unit (NC) is a process that has already begun in the Municipality of Gjilan. Moving closer to the citizens affects the encouragement of citizens to associate themselves with the NC and to foster a sense of belonging with the neighborhood, that is, the city, which will in turn lead to building of mutual trust.
HOW	Modernization of NC space (offices) by incorporating ICT and assisted access to online services / follow-up actions is a necessity of the time. Creation/design of a “corner/space” for online application, complaints and appeals, as well as assisted access for vulnerable groups, including the “common space” for citizens (especially the vulnerable groups) where they can share views with NC representatives, NGOs, media, private sector. Such an NC would function more as a Public Community Center (very needed in Kosovo) rather than as a conventional local community (former “ <i>bashkesia lokale</i> ”/” <i>mjesna zajednica</i> ”).
WHO	Municipality, Donor Community, University of Gjilan, NGOs, public sector
WHEN	2-3 years
INDICATORS	The concept of modern NCs becomes functional and active; consultations move from the municipality to NCs, number of activities / issues addressed, etc.
HOW MUCH	Difficult to calculate given it is a comprehensive intervention; as this is an institutional process being supported by the donor community, the Municipality could implement this project as planned, and seek assistance for the ICT “corner/space” and the “common space”, as suggested in this proposal. Tentative estimate for one “model NC” to be fully functional: minimally 20,000 €

4. Key Considerations for Next Steps

In June 22, 2016, the city local team together with the Municipality of Gjilan organized a participatory workshop entitled “Local Government, Citizens and Civil Society in Gjilan: how to improve communication, participation and transparency through the use of information and communication technology”.

The workshop gathered about 35 participants, representing local government institutions including the municipality, citizens of various professions and interests, and *civil society representatives including NGOs and CBOs*.

Discussions in the workshop developed towards three participatory scenarios aiming at raising the quality of service delivery in the city, increasing the level of citizen participation in decision-making as well as transparency, through more effective use of information and communication technology (ICT).

The result of these participatory scenarios is the proposal of three potential project proposals, which could be developed in Gjilan, with the purpose to improve communication, participation and transparency in the municipality:

- Increased city-citizen interaction through development of a “City Information and Communication Strategy” for Gjilan 2017-2020;
- Transforming the Municipal website into an ‘interactive forum’ for citizen;
- Strengthening of citizen participation and feedback through strengthening and modernization of Neighborhood Councils.

From three abovementioned proposals, the second one entitled “Transforming the Municipal website into an ‘interactive forum’ for citizen” was selected together with the Municipality of Gjilan as a potential project to be implemented in the coming two years, and developed into a City Action Plan. The plan, was developed with the full cooperation of the Municipality, with the ultimate objective that it will be applied during 2017.

During the Socially Inclusive Cities regional conference held in Zagreb at the end of March 2017, a representative speaking on behalf of Gjilan discussed challenges in terms of next steps of changing the functionalities and being creative with the municipal website due to the mandates of the Ministry of Local Government. To overcome this, they have decided to develop an application that can be used on mobile devices for citizens to submit requests and become virtual inspectors and auditors. Participants took away from the conference the importance of meeting the business sector’s needs and partnering with them in ways that increase social inclusion.

ANNEX 1: SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY & CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT INDEX

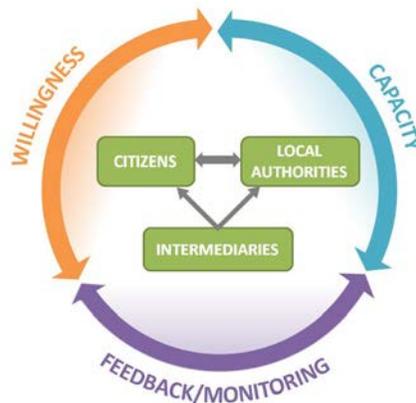
Concept Note

The objective of the SSCE Index is to assist municipalities, civic groups and NGOs to develop a set of indicators that gauge progress towards increasing social accountability and citizen engagement, particularly among marginalized communities or vulnerable groups.

The Index originally emerged from the Social Sustainability Audit of UPP I (2012-2013), which functioned as a tool used by City Teams to assess the supply and demand of information and participation in a given municipality and the state of feedback/monitoring mechanisms based on the three data gathering phases – Municipal Profile, FGDs and IDIs, and Participatory Scenario Development Workshops. This index has been revised in content and application to demonstrate greater conceptual linkages with the other three UPP II initiatives and alignment with the World Bank’s Citizen Engagement Framework.

The consortium built upon the Index developed during UPP I and tried to preserve as much of its content as was relevant to the new conceptual organization of the new Index. While the Social Sustainability Index assessed the supply and demand side factors of Transparency and Participation and the feedback mechanisms that create a continuous process, the SSCE Index assesses the supply and demand sides of willingness and capacity for citizen engagement, as well as the feedback mechanisms that create a continuous process and the use of ICT to broaden the reach of CE initiatives and streamline CE processes.

Conceptual Framework of the SSCE Index

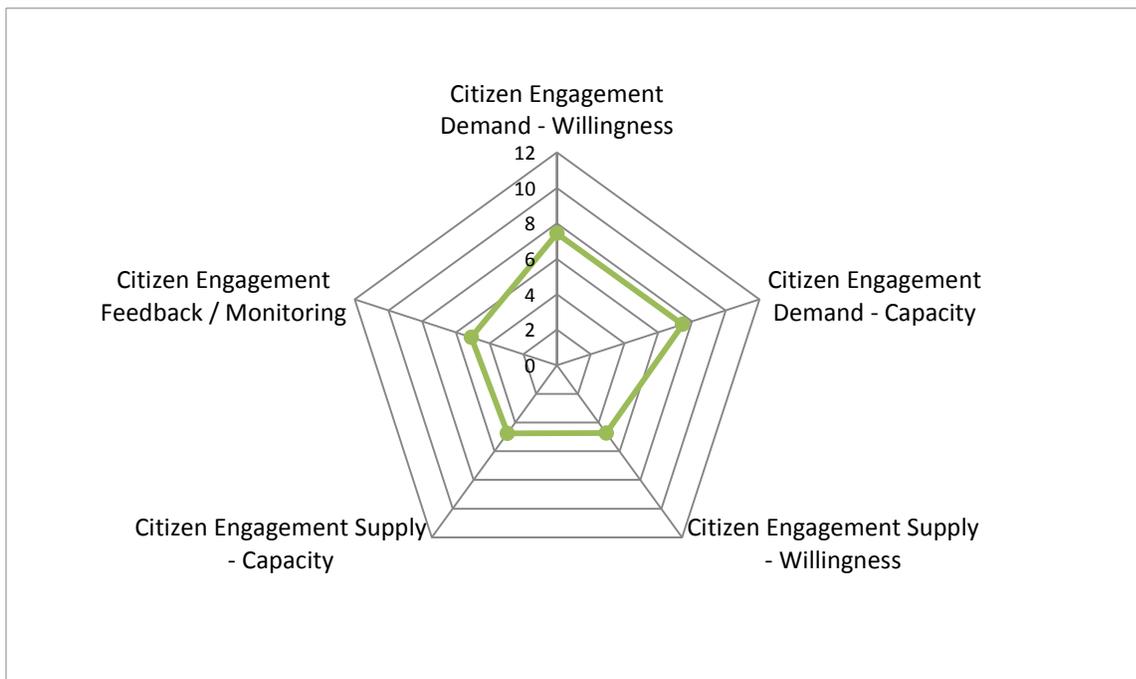


The SSCE Index is structured as a series of six questions for each of the five pillars of citizen engagement being investigated throughout this project cycle based on the three concepts of Willingness (demand and supply); Capacity (demand and supply); and the Feedback/Monitoring that serves as the connective tissue. In addition, the same six questions can be read in a way that gives an additional reading of the thematic strengths and weaknesses of social accountability and citizen engagement initiatives in each municipality (a “pulse” on perceptions of citizen engagement in areas related to other components of the UPP).

The SSCE Index questionnaire was conducted with a total of 63 respondents. Forty-three respondents were participants from FGD and IDIs, and 20 respondents were citizens from Gjilan

that did not attend the FGDs or IDIs. The answers to the questions were given in numbers, as follows: Yes (2), Maybe (1), and No (0). The results given in the table below reflect the average score of all respondents for each of the six questions, divided by Citizen Engagement category. Hypothetically, the best case scenario for each question is the answer 2, and the best result for each category would be 12.

Index Results for Gjilan



Note: An Excel file showing calculations can be provided by the City Team upon request.

As the chart above shows, scores for the demand for citizen engagement in terms of willingness and capacity were consistently higher than the scores for these same two aspects on the supply side of citizen engagement. Feedback mechanisms were scored slightly higher than supply side factors but were still below the median scoring value. The following visualization of the scores illustrates the above average demand scores and below average supply scores.

Category of questions	MAX	GJILAN	Average
Citizen Engagement Demand - Willingness	12	7.429	Above average [62%]
Citizen Engagement Demand - Capacity	12	7.444	Above average [62%]
Citizen Engagement Supply - Willingness	12	4.730	Below average [39%]
Citizen Engagement Supply - Capacity	12	4.762	Below average [40%]
Citizen Engagement Feedback / Monitoring	12	5.079	Below average [42%]
AVERAGE	12	5.888	AVERAGE [49%]

Supply - Willingness and Capacity. The lower supply side scores is coherent with findings from previous phases that highlight a lack of advancements in open data measures (despite ranking higher than any other Western Balkan country in the Global Open Data Index) and barriers to full implementation of legal participation provisions. At the same time, the municipality’s communication and information provision to citizen has been a priority of the

mayor. Despite the existence of a municipal website, several FGDs and IDIs revealed citizens' demands that the website be structured in a more user-friendly way, possibly contributing to discrepancy between supply side and demand side engagement. Because the index respondents were largely citizens, the results say more about how informed citizens are about the ambitions and initiatives of the municipality and how they perceive the municipality's work towards increasing citizen engagement.

Demand – Willingness and Capacity. High demand scores also reflects and confirms earlier findings of citizen influence in public meetings and debates, perceptions of citizen proactivity in obtaining information, a high rate of involvement among respondents in community initiatives, and demands for more direct communication with municipal staff and the Mayor and greater inclusion in participation. On the other hand, many FGD groups, such as youth and women, noted that a lack of awareness, willingness and general indifference to engagement is a main problem in citizen participation. While seemingly contradictory, these findings could also reflect a citizen-centered bias and higher expectations of the municipality than index questions currently reflect, as the majority of respondents could be described as being on the “demand side” of citizen engagement.

In order to see how social accountability and citizen engagement initiatives at the municipal level relate with themes such as anti-corruption, municipal finance, and urban planning and in order to find synergies between the SSCE program and other components of UPP II, responses of the participants in FGDs, IDIs and PSD workshop can also be analyzed by topic. These “pulse” scores for Gjilan are currently unavailable and available upon request of the Excel file mentioned above.

ANNEX 2: INDEX QUESTIONS AND SCORING FRAMEWORK

	Participatory Governance (0,1,2)	Transparency & Anti-Corruption (0,1,2)	Municipal Finance (0,1,2)	Service Provision, Planning & Policy (0,1,2)	Inclusion of Vulnerable Groups (0,1,2)	Use of ICT (0,1,2)	
CE Demand – Willingness	1. Do citizens attend and actively participate in city council meetings?	2. Is there an anonymous way to report municipal fraud or corruption?	3. Is there demand for participatory budgeting processes from citizens or CSOs?	4. Do platforms exist through which civil society discusses municipal service / planning / policy?	5. Are minority or vulnerable communities represented in the current city council?	6. Do citizens and CSOs engage with the municipality online?	Total CE Demand Willingness Score (out of 12)
CE Demand – Capacity	1. Are there elected neighborhood councils or equivalent structures?	2. Are citizens given sufficient notice about upcoming city council meetings or public forums?	3. Are citizens aware of how the city's budget is spent?	4. Do citizens know where to go to report a municipal issue or grievance?	5. Do NGOs exist that actively engage in representing the interests of vulnerable groups?	6. Are citizens able to reliably access municipal information online?	Total CE Demand Capacity Score (out of 12)
CE Supply – Willingness	1. Is the municipality accountable to other institutions in terms of implementing mechanisms of citizen engagement?	2. Is there a document (charter) outlining the responsibilities of both government and citizens that is publicly accessible?	3. Does the city administration present municipal budgets to neighborhoods as part of the formal fiscal preparation cycle?	4. Is there an active information desk available to citizens?	5. Are vulnerable groups consulted in preparing strategic policy documents, budgets, etc.?	6. Does the municipality have an open data policy?	Total CE Supply Willingness Score (out of 12)
CE Supply - Capacity	1. Does the city hold meetings/ consultations with the public to gain information on issues that are important to citizens?	2. Is citizen-accessible information updated regularly through various platforms?	3. Does the municipality have financial resources for investment in citizen engagement or a participatory budget?	4. Is there an annual citizen service satisfaction survey?	5. Does the city have a program to engage with vulnerable groups or CSOs that represent them?	6. Are there municipal staff with ICT training or the opportunity for such training?	Total CE Supply Capacity Score (out of 12)
CE Feedback / Monitoring	1. Are neighborhood councils (or similar structures) effectively linking the citizens to the city (or municipality)?	2. Are citizen grievances responded to or addressed in a timely and transparent manner by the relevant departments / service providers?	3. Are citizen or civil society inputs incorporated into municipal budgets?	4. Are time limits for responses to citizen grievances / reports abided by?	5. Has the municipality addressed key issues of concern to vulnerable groups based on their inputs?	6. Do grievance/ complaint systems use multiple types of technology?	Total CE Feedback Loop Score (out of 12)
	Total Participatory Governance Score (out of 10)	Total Transparency & Anti-Corruption Score (out of 10)	Total Municipal Finance Score (out of 10)	Total Service Provision, Planning, and Policy (out of 10)	Total Inclusion Score (out of 10)	Total ICT Score (out of 10)	SSCE SCORE (out of 60)
	↑ Cities without Corruption (CE Pulse)	↑ Cities without Corruption (CE Pulse)	↑ MFSA (CE Pulse)	↑ UPSA (CE Pulse)			