

THE CZECH REPUBLIC

**PROGRAMME OF DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION
BETWEEN
THE CZECH REPUBLIC
AND GEORGIA**

**SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
OF THE AREA OF ARAGVI PROTECTED LANDSCAPE
AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITIES**

2018 – 2023

CZECH DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

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List of abbreviations

APA - Agency of Protected Areas

APL - Aragvi Protected Landscape

GALAG- Georgian Association of Local Action Groups

GNTA - Georgian National Tourism Administration

LAG - Local Action Group

LEADER - Liaison Entre Actions pour le Développement de l'EconomieRurale

(Links between activities for the development of rural economy)

R - Result

SO – Specific objective

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1. Executive summary

This Programme supports sustainable development of the envisaged Aragvi Protected Landscape (APL) composed of the regions of **Pshavi, Piraketa Khevsureti¹, Gudamakari and specified adjacent areas.**² Despite their proximity to Tbilisi, these regions have been lagging behind and their population has been abandoning them.³ On the other hand, these regions offer a major untapped development potential.

The main objective of this Programme is to contribute to the **sustainable development** of the Aragvi Protected Landscape so that the current population remains there and the former inhabitants come back - either permanently or at least for the summer season.

Since the reasons why people have been leaving this area are diverse, and since supporting multiple mutually reinforcing activities in a relatively small region is an efficient way of doing development cooperation, the envisaged Programme is composed of diverse activities. It shall address the **economic** wellbeing of the population in particular through the support of community tourism and of organic agriculture. Furthermore, the Programme shall help enhance the quality of education and of **social** services (including health care). In parallel with the above-mentioned activities, the Management plan of the Aragvi Protected Landscape shall be drafted and the administration of the APL should be established. This Management plan shall constitute a reference framework not only for the activities related to the protection of the region's unique **environment** but also for all the other activities within this Programme.⁴ Adaptation to **climate change** shall be addressed in particular through preventive measures against flash floods.

The LEADER approach shall be applied for the implementation of this Programme, duly adjusted to the specificities of this region.⁵ The cornerstone of this approach is so-

¹ Piraketa Khevsureti is the part of Khevsureti south of the Great Caucasus ridge

² The approximate territory of the envisaged APL is depicted on the following page

³ The population decreased almost by 50% between 2002 and 2014 according to the official census

⁴ The management plan will not be at the disposal at the beginning of the implementation of the Programme. It will be drafted in parallel with the implementation of the Programme, i.e. both processes need to be carefully coordinated.

⁵ LEADER stands for "Liaison Entre Actions pour le Développement de l'Economie Rurale" (Links Between Activities for the Development of Rural Economy). It is an approach that engages the energy and resources of people and bodies as development actors rather than beneficiaries, empowering them to contribute to the

called Local Action Group (LAG) that will be established within this Programme. LAG shall play an important role in the implementation of the Programme. It shall closely interact with the administration of APL.⁶ LAG shall also enable people living in this area to participate in local decision-making and thus enhance the local **governance**. In particular, the participation of persons belonging to **groups** that tend to be **under-represented** (women, persons with disabilities, youth, persons from remote communities, etc.) shall be ensured.⁷



Picture 1: Approximate boundaries of the envisaged Aragvi Protected Landscape (Source: The preparation team of this Programme)

development of their rural areas by forming area-based Local Action Group partnerships between the public, private and civil sectors.

⁶ LAG could be for instance an advisory body of the administration of APL and on the other hand the APL administration could be a member of the LAG

⁷ The LAG may be later transformed into a community council or similar institution which would ensure an appropriate participation of the local population in the local decision making

2. Programme background

The foundations for this Programme have been laid by the long **lasting cooperation between the Czech Republic and Georgia**. Social services, rural development, tourism, renewable energy, management of protected areas and disaster risk reduction have been among the key thematic areas of this cooperation. The cooperation has been carried out in the poorest regions of the country, including in mountainous regions (especially Tusheti) as well as in the Dusheti municipality of the Mtskheta-Mtianeti region (e.g. a disaster risk reduction project).

The Programme is based on the **strategy of the Bilateral Development Cooperation Programme of the Czech Republic with Georgia 2018 – 2023**, in particular on its priority II “Sustainable development of mountainous regions”.

The authors of this Programme visited all the inhabited communities of the envisaged Aragvi Protected Landscape during the Programme preparation. Comprehensive **sex-disaggregated representative data** was **collected and analysed** (respondents from different communities, of diverse age, including disadvantaged persons). The local population proved their interest in the Programme by attending numerous community meetings.

The region of the envisaged Aragvi Protected Landscape has a **major development potential** that, however, has not been made use of so far. Some of the neighbouring regions (e.g. Kazbegi region, Pirikita Khevsureti or Tusheti) have seen a dramatic development in recent years, in particular thanks to tourism.

Moreover, the current **circumstances are favourable** for the development of mountainous regions in general (e.g. the Law on the development of mountain regions) as well as for this region in particular (e.g. the rehabilitation of the access road to Pshavi and Khevsureti). These circumstances further enhance the likelihood that this Programme would be successful.

2.1. Socio-economic situation

The Programme area is composed of three regions that have numerous common characteristics but at the same time are distinct in their culture, history as well as in their socio-economic situation.

2.1.1. Pshavi

Some 3000 people consider this region their home.⁸

The territory of *temi*⁹ Magharoskari in Pshavi is accessible all-year-round since the road is being maintained also in the winter.¹⁰ There is a primary and secondary school in Magharoskari (the *temi*'s administrative centre) and a primary school in Chargali. These are the main reasons why this region is inhabited also by complete families with small children all-year-round.

The lower part of the side valley of *Bude Pshavi* (i.e. the territory of Ukanapshavi *temi*, with centre in Shuapkho), is also inhabited by a few complete families all-year-round (mainly in Tkhiliana and Shuapkho), in particular thanks to the Shuapkho school. In the upper part of the valley there are only a few elderly people living permanently (e.g. only one old man in Chisho). Families are coming back for the summer season (e.g. Muko) as well as farmers (e.g. Vakis-Sopheli/Ukanapshavi). Otherwise most of the houses are abandoned completely or at least during the winter season. There is no mobile phone signal above Shuapkho and no electrification in the upper part of the valley that, together with the local harsh climate, make a permanent settlement even more difficult.

The **employment opportunities** are limited to a few teachers, a few nurses, two *rtsmunebulis*¹¹, a few rangers of the Pshav-Khevsureti national park, owners/employees of a few small restaurants along the main road and in Chargali, and a few men maintaining the local roads. Most of the other inhabitants are subsistence farmers; those involved in the production of the local cheese *dambalkhacho* in Kalilo and Magharoskari and in fruit drying in Sharakhevi are slightly better off. Mineral water production in Chargali also provides a few employment opportunities.

⁸ The number includes also summer residents as well as people who live outside the region but consider coming back should the circumstances make it possible. It is based on the research carried out by the preparation team of this Programme. According to the official census, carried out during the winter season of 2014, there were only 722 persons living there.

⁹ "Temi" is an expression for a settlement within the former administrative division of the country

¹⁰ The road is currently being rehabilitated, the works should reach Magharoskari still in 2018

¹¹ Rtsmunebuli is an authorised representative of the Municipality

In terms of **agricultural production**, cattle breeding for both meat and milk is the principal source of living - in Magharoskari, Chargali and Shuapkho mostly all-year-round while elsewhere mostly only during the summer season. The Mtskheta-Mtianeti administration initiated a project of re-introduction of a traditional cattle race with a high fat content in milk within which a major milk-processing factory should be set up in Shuapkho. All the farmers interested in selling their milk should become members of this cooperative. At the moment of writing the construction of the factory has not started despite the alleged availability of funding. Moreover, the local farmers are hesitant as far as their membership in the cooperative is concerned. Should this project materialize, it could significantly improve the socio-economic situation in both Pshavi and Piraketa Khevsureti since milk processing and milk products marketing remain among the key problems in the milk value chain.

Bee keeping is practiced by many local farmers, e.g. in Udzilaurta or in Matura. Sheep breeding is limited to Azeri and Tush shepherds who use the local pastures. Even if the traditional religion does not allow pig raising, it has been practiced, in particular in Magharoskari and Shuapho. A trout farm in Muko has a major potential, however, it remains untapped due to the lack of mobile phone signal which is vital for satisfying an ad-hoc demand of fresh fish of (mostly Tbilisi based) restaurants.

As far as crop production is concerned, the farmers grow potatoes and vegetables, mostly for their own consumption. Wild fruits and medicinal herbs are picked up and delivered to the cooperative in Sharakhevi.

The region has a major **tourism** potential, however, for the time being it has been limited to tourists (mostly international) who only drive through the region on their way from Tbilisi to Shatili. They would sometimes pull over to one of a few restaurants along the road or to buy hand-made woollen socks, nevertheless, they would hardly ever stay overnight. This is partly due to the fact, that local guesthouses have not yet been able to deliver at least standard services to tourists for the time being, maybe with an exception of a few in Chargali (see below).

National tourists visit in their overwhelming majority Chargali with the museum and native house of an outstanding Georgian poet Vazha Pshavela. Even if the museum is often visited by school trips, the museum is not much interactive and hence not that attractive for the

youth. There are three functioning guesthouses in Chargali which profit from the high esteem that the Georgians hold for their poets in general and Vazha Pshavela in particular.

Rafting and kayaking on the Aragvi river are rather popular, in particular among international tourists. There are two rafting companies providing accommodation, a restaurant, a zip-line and other facilities for tourists on the Pshavis Aragvi river below Magharoskari. Even if the rafting route passes through Magharoskari, there is hardly any link between the rafting companies and the local economy.

The local population uses several well-preserved sacred shrines for their festivities. However, for the time being they stay away from the interest of tourists (for more details see R 1.1.3. in the chapter 5.3.).

2.1.2. Piraketa Khevsureti

Some 2000 persons consider this region their home.¹²

The region of Piraketa Khevsureti is in many ways similar to the Pshavi region, i.e. the characteristic below focuses mainly on the differences between the two.

Complete families live in the Piraketa-Khevsureti's "capital" Barisakho and its neighbouring village Korsha that are accessible by road all-year-round. There is a primary and secondary boarding school in Barisakho. Side valleys were mostly abandoned following the collapse of the Soviet Union. The village of Roshka is located on a frequently visited tourist trail from Juta in the Stepantsminda region. The tourism provides sufficient income for three functioning guesthouses in the summer and an appreciated income supplement to several people who stay there all-year-round. The villages along the main road to Piraketa Khevsureti above Korsha (Gudani, Biso and Khakhmati) are inhabited only during the summer. One complete family lives permanently in Chalissopeli in the Likoki valley. Complete families inhabit the valleys of Datvisi and Akusho in the summer season. Only a few shepherds come to the valley of Ukankhadu in the summer.

¹² The number includes also summer residents as well as people who live outside the region but consider coming back should the circumstances make it possible. It is based on the research carried out by the preparation team of this Programme. According to the official census, carried out during the winter season of 2014, there were only 354 persons living there.

Most of the permanent population remains in Piraketa Khevsureti thanks to their relatively well-paid **employment** as border guards, based in Barisakho. Nevertheless, their participation in the Programme is limited because they are not allowed to be involved in any other profit-making activities. Apart from that, there are only a few teachers, a nurse and a *rtsmunebuli* in Barisakho, a few rangers of the Pshav-Khevsureti national park and a few men maintaining the local roads who live in the region permanently. Most of the other inhabitants are subsistence farmers, some of them also run a basic guesthouse.

In terms of **agricultural production**, cattle breeding for both meat and milk is the principal source of living, in Barisakho, Korsha and Roshka mostly all-year-round while elsewhere mostly only for the summer season. The permanent inhabitants need a lot of fodder for their cattle to survive the long winter. Since the population is ageing, it is getting almost impossible for local people to cut grass and then pack and transport the hay from steep slopes down to the valley. Therefore, an appropriate mechanisation would be needed, in particular manual grass-cutters, packing machines and tractors with trailers.

Many local farmers practice bee keeping, in particular Roshka is known for its tasty good-quality honey. Sheep breeding is rare.

In terms of crop production, the farmers grow potatoes and vegetables, mostly for their own consumption while some (in particular in the Datvisi valley) manage to produce enough to sell the surplus on the market. Some local women also pick up wild fruits and medicinal herbs, which they then sell to the cooperative in Sharakhevi (Pshavi).

The region has an even better **tourism** potential than Pshavi since there exists already a tourist trail crossing Piraketa Khevsureti (Juta – Chaukhi rocks – Abudelaurei lakes – boulders above Roshka – Roshka – Pirikita Khevsureti). The owners of guesthouses in Roshka offer not only hiking but also horse riding tours that have been becoming ever more popular. Moreover, tourists can buy nicely packed honey, knitted socks and other souvenirs in Roshka.

Similarly to Pshavi, the main valley of Piraketa Khevsureti sees most tourists only drive through the region on their way from Tbilisi to Shatili. They would sometimes pull over to one of the few guesthouses and restaurants along the road in Barisakho or Korsha. The

Arabuli family guesthouse and their art museum stand out from the rest of accommodations thanks to the combination of a personal care, delicious food, decent accommodation and an offer of interesting hand-made souvenirs.

The local population have various ideas on how to foster tourism, such as an opening of a museum of popular healers (where also medicinal herbs would be sold), using curative waters in the vicinity of Chalissopeli village, etc. However, these ideas have not been realised for the time being.

Traditional summer religious festivities (organized in sacred shrines, including the main ones in Gudani¹³ and Khakhmati) are attended basically only by Khevsurs. At these occasions, they also brew a local beer.

2.1.3. Gudamakari

Some 500 persons consider this region their home.¹⁴

Compared to the other two regions, Gudamakari has even a smaller share of inhabitants living there all-year-round (mostly pensioners who are normally supported by their children living in Tbilisi). There is only one school (in Kitokhi) attended by no more than 5 pupils. While Kitokhi is the most important village located in the Gudamakari valley itself (and consequently also within the envisaged Aragvi Protected Landscape), the catchment settlement of the Pasaauri valley is clearly Gudamakari (which is, however, located already in Mtiuleti, i.e. outside the APL). Besides the main valley, most of the remaining seasonal inhabitants live in the Bakurkhevi valley.

The **employment opportunities** are limited to a few teachers, a nurse, a *rtsmunebuli* and a few men maintaining the local roads.

¹³ Gudani is an important place for the Khevsurs - the site of Gudanisjvari (Cross of Gudani) = the main object of worship for Khevsurs

¹⁴ The number includes also summer residents as well as people who live outside the region but consider coming back should the circumstances make it possible. It is based on the research carried out by the preparation team of this Programme. According to the official census, carried out during the winter season of 2014, there were only 234 persons living there.

The company constructing high voltage transmission lines that connect Pasaauri with Stepantsminda through the Gudamakari valley is obliged to pave the roads not only in the main valley but also in the side valleys. The roads should then significantly accelerate the development of the Gudamakari region.

In terms of **agricultural production**, not only cattle breeding but also **sheep breeding** is an important source of living in Gudamakari. With the collapse of the Soviet Union the Gudamakarians lost their winter pastures on the northern side of the Great Caucasus and ever since finding winter pastures for their sheep in Georgia has been a critical problem. The rent that they have to pay for these pastures significantly decreases the income from sheep breeding.

As far as crop production is concerned, the farmers grow mainly potatoes and vegetables, mostly for their own consumption.

The **tourism** is for the time being almost inexistent in the valley. Most visitors come for the summer religious festivities of Mariamoba, these are however mostly Gudamakarians living in other parts of Georgia or abroad. There are no guesthouses in the valley that would be able to provide at least basic services for tourists.

There are several ideas on how to support development of local tourism. An ethnographic museum with a memorial of local novelist Goderzi Chokheli has already been constructed. A commercial use of local mineral springs or developing agro-tourism seem to be among feasible options.

The main opportunity seems to be the revitalization of the old military road connecting Pasaauri with Stepantsminda via Bulsachiri and Karkucha, i.e. through the Gudamakari valley. The old road was rehabilitated so that the transmission line could be constructed and maintained. The transmission line may on one hand discourage tourists but on the other hand opens new opportunities for jeep riding, motorcycling, mountain biking, horse riding, ski alpinism and cross-country skiing.

2.2. Environmental situation

The Programme area comprises a very well preserved landscape with scattered human settlements. The area extends from some 850 metres above sea level at the Pshavi Aragvi riverbed to more than 3,700 metres above sea level at the Chaukhi massive. It can be characterized by a high diversity of unique habitats, mostly mountainous.

These habitats host unique flora and fauna, including highly endangered and endemic species.¹⁵ At the same time, the Programme area is adjacent to other protected areas that increases the territory for both flora and fauna. This in turn substantially increases the likelihood of surviving of various endangered species, including large carnivores.

Furthermore, the waters flowing from both regions (through Gudamakari Aragvi as well as through Pshavi Aragvi) supply the Zhinvali reservoir. This reservoir is one of the key sources of drinking water of several Georgian cities, including the capital Tbilisi. This is yet another reason why the unique fragile ecosystems of the Programme area need to be duly protected.

The state of the environment of the envisaged Aragvi Protected Landscape will be captured in detail in the management plan of the APL that is going to be drafted within this Programme (see R 3.1.1. in the chapter 5.3. for more details)

2.3. Government policy and activities of other donors

One of the key documents of the Georgian government, the **Socio-Economic Development Strategy of Georgia – Georgia 2020**”, outlines six priority thematic sectors out of which this Programme addresses five: economic growth, human resources development (education), good governance (decentralisation of public administration), sustainable use of natural resources, and social and health care.

The Georgian **Rural Development Strategy 2017-2020** provides the country’s vision in key areas of rural development – growth and diversification of local economies, improvement of social and public services, sustainable use of natural resources and local engagement in the development process. This Programme is fully in line with this strategy.

¹⁵ Endemic species are those that occur only in a limited geographical area

The Strategy of Agriculture Development in Georgia 2015-2020 aims in particular at improving the sector's resilience by promoting climate smart agriculture practices. Besides other activities, a database capturing data on negative effects of climate change and natural disasters will be created.

The New Agenda for Sustainable Development of Mtskheta-Mtianeti outlines education for sustainable development, protection of the environment, green economy, organic agriculture, renewable energy and energy efficiency, stopping the migration process, tourism, social services and innovations among its priorities. These are at the same time the priorities of this Programme.

When comparing the objectives of the above-mentioned strategic documents with those of this Programme, we can conclude that this Programme is in line with the policy of the Government of Georgia as well as with the policy of the Mtskheta-Mtianeti region.

No other donors have been recently active on the territory of the envisaged Aragvi Protected Landscape. The Georgian government has supported some private businesses in this region through the *Atsarmoe Sakarveloshi* (Make it in Georgia) programme.

3. Problem analysis

The Government of Georgia decided to establish the Aragvi Protected Landscape. The Protected Landscape (and its management plan) shall not only provide a framework for sustainable development of this area but should also set rules for the use of local natural resources, help attract more tourists (and thus improve the local economic situation), etc. This Programme has been designed to make the best possible use of this opportunity.

The region of the envisaged Aragvi Protected Landscape is inhabited by Pshavs, Khevsurs and Gudamakarians whose livelihoods have been traditionally based on cattle (sheep) breeding and on subsistence agriculture. However, this source of living has become more difficult in particular due to inexistence of various pieces of value chain of milk and meat, inexistence of functioning cooperatives, fees for the use of winter pastures, climate change, erosion, etc. Moreover, new opportunities have emerged elsewhere (in particular in the nearby capital Tbilisi) which have attracted the youth. Besides that these three Georgian sub-ethnic groups had to face a pressure from the former communist regime, they had to abandon their homes several times and only some of them came back which has interrupted an organic development of the region as well as the historic memory of people. At the same time, none of these regions has become as attractive for tourists as the upper parts of the Great Caucasus range (Svaneti, the region of Stepantsminda, Tusheti or Pirikita Khevsureti). Furthermore, the Government of Georgia has provided only limited incentives for people to stay in these regions.¹⁶

The education in the region has been problematic also given the limited number of pupils. Students of various grades have been educated at the same classes, which has been posing high requirements on teachers. Funding devoted to education from public budgets has been limited. This has resulted in a bad state of school buildings and only basic equipment of classes. Local teachers, given the travel time and other reasons, have fewer opportunities to participate in trainings than those in Tbilisi. Obviously, if compared to a city, parents have a limited choice as to where to educate their children.

¹⁶ The Law on the development of mountain regions was adopted only in 2015 and the rehabilitation of the road to Pshavi and Khevsureti has started only recently

The availability and quality of social services in general and health care in particular are rather poor. This has been posing a serious problem not only to people who currently live in the area but it also discourages potential returnees, in particular families with young children. Women empowerment is generally low and their access to income is more limited as compared to men.

The local environment is the key asset of this region – a rich biodiversity, lovely landscapes, clean air, lot of natural resources, plenty of sources of drinking water, etc. However, there is currently no framework for a protection of this unique environment, and unclear rules for the management of natural resources (in particular forests).

Even if the region is prone to various disasters (in particular floods, landslides and avalanches), no adequate disaster risk reduction measures have been adopted.

Lastly, similarly to other regions in Georgia, the self-governance is rather non-existent on the village/community level. Therefore decisions concerning people living in these mountain regions are mostly taken down in distant administrative centres, often by people who are not sufficiently informed about the problems of this region.

Due to all the above-mentioned reasons, the local population have been leaving the region, either permanently or at least for the winter season.

4. Stakeholders analysis and target groups

4.1. Stakeholders

Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture

The Ministry is responsible, besides others, for the protection of biodiversity and for the management of (some) natural resources, including forests. It focuses mainly on policies while its subordinated bodies, the National Forest Agency, the Agency of Protected Areas (see below) and other government institutions, implement them. The current ministry is a result of an integration of the former Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources with the Ministry of Agriculture in 2017. Arguably, the current Ministry is weaker than the former one as for the enforcement of environmental protection, in particular with regard to forest management and protected areas.

Agency of Protected Areas

The Agency of Protected Areas is responsible for the management of Georgia's strict nature reserves, national parks, natural monuments, managed reserves, protected landscapes (together with the municipality), biosphere reserves, world heritage sites and wetland sites of international importance. Formerly a strong agency has been weakened besides others by frequent changes of its management staff and arguably also by the integration of the two ministries (see above). The Agency is involved in drafting, approval and implementation of management plans of protected areas. It should also raise awareness among concerned communities that protected areas offer more opportunities than restrictions.

Mtskheta-Mtianeti Region and its Regional development agency

The Mtskheta-Mtianeti region is one of the most interesting and heterogeneous parts of Georgia – it comprises some of country's most important cultural heritage (e.g. Mtskheta, Holy Trinity Church near Stepantsminda, Shatili, etc.), beautiful mountain regions (including Kazbegi mountain, Pirikita Khevsureti and the lucrative skiing resort Gudauri), one of the largest water reservoirs in the country (Zhinvali), etc. It has a

relatively strong administration and an efficient implementation body – the Regional development agency of Mtskheta-Mtianeti Region. Both the governor of the region and the director of the Agency (and their respective staff) are active and genuinely interested in the development of their region. The Agency proposed a foundation of the Aragvi Protected Landscape and has been backing the idea enthusiastically throughout the whole approval process. The Agency also initiated cooperation with the Czech Republic on this issue. At the same time, it is experienced in international cooperation and in using development assistance funds. For all these reasons, the Agency should be an important ally in the implementation of this Programme. It can also help with awareness raising and mobilization of the three communities as well as with the implementation of individual activities.

Dusheti municipality

Dusheti is one of five municipalities of the Mtskheta-Mtianeti region. It is by far the largest municipality of the region and one of the largest in the whole country. The whole territory of the Aragvi Protected Landscape is located within this municipality. The Dusheti municipality will be the key partner for this Programme since it is supposed to found the administration of the Aragvi PL and finance it. It should also co-finance the local coordinator of the Programme.

The importance of the Programme for the municipality could be demonstrated by the fact that the annual budget of this Programme exceeds several times the annual budget at the disposal of the municipality for investments.

The local authorities and local leaders

The local authorities and local leaders, both men and women, as well as religious leaders will be decisive for the attitude of the local population towards this Programme. It is important to work with them already since the preparation of this Programme (to gain their ownership) and then throughout the whole process of implementation. Besides others, they may become members of the Local Action Group and/or participate in the management of the Aragvi Protected Landscape.

Pshav-Khevsureti Protected Areas

Pshav-Khevsureti Protected Areas were established in 2014 comprising Pshav-Khevsureti National Park, Roshka Natural Monument, and Asa Managed Nature Reserve. Since these protected areas are adjacent to the envisaged Aragvi Protected Landscape, there is an unlimited room for cooperation, in particular with the administration of the Pshav-Khevsureti National Park. Once the Aragvi Protected Landscape is established, rangers from the National Park could provide an on-job training and other assistance to the new staff of the APL.

Local civil society organizations

There are only few functioning civil society organizations in the Programme area.

The “Pshav-Khevsureti Protected Areas Friends Association” is an NGO established in 2016 to help protect and develop these protected areas. A Regional Advisory Council Pshav-Khevsureti was established within this Association, composed of local and regional stakeholders. The lessons learnt from the functioning of this Council will be important for the Local Action Group that is to be established within this Programme.

“Khevsuri women for a healthy future” and “Women for social development” are two civil society organizations run by women. They help preserve the local tradition of medicinal herbs and of the local medical treatment. At the same time, they contribute to an empowerment of local women.

Georgian National Tourism Administration

The Georgian National Tourism Administration (GNTA) among other activities promotes sustainable tourism, tries to attract foreign tourists to Georgia, helps develop domestic tourism and promotes human resources development. It is important that this Programme profits from the experience of GNTA and cooperates with the GNTA in all the activities related to tourism (see the chapter 5.3.).

Other donors

This Programme has been designed to be complementary with the on-going EU financed programme on Economic and Business Development in Georgia (AAP 2017). An important component of this EU programme is a support to the sustainable development of several mountain regions in Georgia (however, the area of APL is not part of this project).

As far as the particular area of this Programme is concerned, there are no donors currently working here. KfW supported an establishment of the Pshav-Khevsureti National Park which is adjacent to the envisaged Aragvi Protected Landscape. Apart from that, USAID, World Wildlife Fund, Caucasus Nature Fund and GIZ either already support or intend to support this National Park in the future.

The Austrian Development Agency (ADA) has been supporting other mountain regions of Georgia, besides others within the above-mentioned ongoing EU-financed programme. It is interested in cooperation within this Programme, including a possible co-financing.

GIZ has a recent experience in supporting a self-governance in one of the neighbouring mountainous area (Tusheti) which may be useful for this Programme.

4.2. Target groups

The primary target group of this Programme is the population living permanently in the region. People who spend the summer season there constitute the secondary target group (see the chapter 6.1. for details). A proactive approach will be taken within the Programme to ensure involvement of the persons belonging to the groups which tend to be under-represented or whose access to income is usually more complicated (women, persons with disabilities, youth, persons from remote communities, etc.).

Local providers of services for tourists

Apart from a few exceptions (e.g. two companies offering professional rafting/kayak tours and a few guesthouses and restaurants offering basic services) there are no services for tourists, which would meet standards expected by visitors. The service providers first need to recognize this fact and then actively seek the Programme support and all other means to upgrade their current services / establish new services. If they do so, they will become a group that would benefit the most from the Programme and later would offer jobs to their family members / other members of the community.

Local farmers

Local subsistence farmers are used to work in a traditional way, i.e. most of the work is done manually. Awareness needs to be raised and training conducted on the use of modern agricultural machinery, modern methods of cattle breeding and advantages of working within a cooperative.

Permanent vs. summer residents

Even if the permanent residents are a key target group of this Programme, the summer residents also belong among important beneficiaries since they may bring new energy, experience and skills to the region. The Programme will need to maintain a fragile balance between these two groups and ensure that when summer residents are supported, there are also some (at least indirect) benefits for permanent residents (e.g. jobs in guesthouses and restaurants owned by summer residents, etc.).

Members of the communities who live outside of the target region

These are people who used to live in the region (or their ancestors), they feel attached to it and they are genuinely interested in its development. These people may live in Dusheti / Pasanauri / Tianeti / Tbilisi / abroad and may be able to support the implementation of the Programme and indirectly also benefit from it.

5. Logical framework

5.1. Overall objective

To contribute to sustainable development of the area of Aragvi Protected Landscape and the local communities.¹⁷

5.2. Specific objectives

Specific objective 1: The economic situation of the local population is improved in particular through sustainable development of tourism and agriculture

A significant improvement of the economic situation or an interesting economic opportunity are the key preconditions for people to stay in the region or to come back there. Agriculture as a traditional source of living and tourism as an emerging one are the two livelihoods, which are most likely to bring economic prosperity to the region. While supporting these livelihoods, a particular attention shall be paid on their impact on the environment, on the community dynamics and on the integration of groups of the local population that tend to be under-represented.

Specific objective 2: The quality of education and of social services in the region is enhanced

The future of the Aragvi Protected Landscape depends to a large extent on whether young people decide to stay / come back there. A good-quality education is then a *condicio sine qua non* for young families to stay / come back to the region. An access to local health services and/or a possibility of a quick transfer to a health facility is then essential for the whole population, in particular for its youngest and eldest part.

Specific objective 3: Good local governance and sustainable management of the Aragvi Protected Landscape are ensured

¹⁷ Adjacent areas to the Aragvi Protected Landscape may be also covered by the project provided the overall logic of an intervention would require it (e.g. tourist trails connecting the target region with a neighbouring valley (which would be outside of APL))

Even if the decentralisation of state administration has not advanced much in Georgia, administrations of established protected landscapes dispose of competences, which to a certain extent replace the traditional role of local governments. This unique opportunity shall be used also in the Aragvi Protected Landscape. An establishment of the Local Action Group Aragvi and its close cooperation with the administration of the Aragvi Protected Landscape will enable inhabitants of the three regions (including groups which tend to be under-represented) to participate in the local decision-making. Furthermore, the APL administration shall constitute a safeguard for the conservation of the unique biodiversity and landscape of the region.

5.3. Expected results

R 1.1. Tourism

Tourists have not yet been visiting much the Programme area, despite the fact that it has a lot to offer:

- proximity to Tbilisi,
- ideal for short visits (weekends),
- ideal for family tourism and backpackers,
- very good (Gudamakari) / reasonable (Pshavi and Khevsureti) public transport connection,
- rich biodiversity,
- interesting cultural sites (museum of Vasha Pshavela, sacred shrines, traditional architecture...),
- possible interesting tourist trails such as the old military road from Tbilisi to Stepantsminda via the Gudamakari valley,
- many interesting tourist trails interconnecting the three regions and/or trails connecting them with neighbouring regions, etc.

This Programme will focus on community based sustainable tourism.

Whenever appropriate, the activities shall be consulted with the Georgian National Tourism Administration and with the Agency of Protected Areas.

R 1.1.1. Tourism infrastructure is enhanced

Identification of interesting tourist sites

There are numerous interesting sites in the region: sacred shrines¹⁸, ruins of former fortresses, sites of particular interest (such as the museum of Vazha Pshavela in Chargali, Art Museum in Korsha, etc.), houses built in a traditional style (e.g. in Barisakho), mineral water springs, places rich in biodiversity (alpine meadows, mountain flora and fauna...), viewpoints, etc. These sites will be identified and marked in a map. Experts in a close cooperation with local inhabitants should carry out this assignment.

Marking of tourist trails including setting up of information signs / boards

Tourist trails will be designed based on the following criteria: already existing paths (even if not often used), starting and ending at a place where public transport is available, connecting as many interesting tourist sites, guesthouses, campsites and restaurants as possible. The trails could be both circular (starting and ending at the same place) or linear (connecting interesting sites in the same valley as well as connecting different valleys / regions). The sites and trails should be agreed with local people and marked in a map.¹⁹ The Georgian standard of marking tourist trails shall be used. The information signs must show not only directions and distances but also a name of the actual place where a tourist stands. The local inhabitants shall participate in the actual marking of the trails. A creation and erection of information boards at places of particular interest shall be considered (e.g. at sacred shrines). An appropriate maintenance of tourist trails by the locals should be born in mind since the beginning of this activity, including an elaboration of a tourist-trails maintenance plan.

Construction of small tourism infrastructure (bridges, trails...)

Should it be identified that there are small bridges missing / in a bad condition across water streams, that handrails are needed at potentially dangerous places, or any other

¹⁸ The sacred shrines may be visited only by male (and some only by female) members of the community. Their territory is usually fenced. The suggested approach is to set up information boards that would enlighten the tourist about these holy places and clearly establish the rules of conduct.

¹⁹ The only existing marked trails in the region are in Piraketa Khevsureti (done within a project financed by Polish Aid). However, the marking is often difficult to follow as it faded due to a low quality of paint. Despite that, these marked trails will be used to the extent possible also within this Programme

small infrastructure is missing, it should be constructed / fixed prior to the actual marking of trails (to avoid accidents). Once again, it is very important that the local population is involved in these small construction works.

R 1.1.2. The offer of tourism services is enhanced

Setting up, upgrading, enlarging or equipping guesthouses

At the moment, there are only few guesthouses in the region providing at least basic services for tourists (bed and breakfast, hot water and flush toilet).²⁰ Standards to be met by guesthouses shall be first clearly established. Support shall be provided for a new construction as well as for an upgrade or an enlargement of a guesthouse as well as for its equipment (devices for hot water, flush toilets, etc.).²¹ There should be several rounds of calls for proposals so that more beneficiaries could be reached and the rules could be adjusted based on the lessons learnt. Environmental friendliness and innovativeness should be encouraged in the calls for proposals. LAG as well as the administration of APL shall be involved in the whole process.

The architectural design of guesthouses must be among project admission criteria and the actual construction / rehabilitation / enlargement must be supervised. A use of traditional-architecture features should be an asset in the project selection process. Local natural resources should be used in a sustainable way and in accordance with Georgian laws and with the Management Plan of the APL. The administration of APL, the Regional Development Agency of the Mtskheta-Mtianeti and LAG must be involved in this process.

The successful applicants should receive training on how to run a guesthouse, including its economics (planning, revenues prediction, cost efficiency, price setting, cash flow management, accounting, etc.) as well as how to treat a guest.

This support should be closely related with the production of traditional and organic agricultural local products (R 1.2.3.). These products could be offered to tourists who are likely to appreciate it.

²⁰ The Arabuli family guesthouse in Korsha is one of the few exceptions

²¹ Priority should be given to environment friendly and innovative solutions

Setting up campsites

There are currently no established campsites in the area.²² The campsites shall provide at least basic services (a place for tent, toilets, drinking water, possibly also showers, refreshment, etc.) The campsites shall be established on the marked trails, in particular close to their beginning or at a logical place that can be reasonably reached within one hiking day from the beginning of a trail. The campsites must be set up in accordance with Georgian laws and with the Management Plan of the APL. Once again, the administration of APL as well as LAG must be involved in this process. The landowner may charge a fee for an over-night stay.

Creating an offer of a variety of means of transport options for tourists (mountain bikes, horses, snowshoes, kayaks, rafts, etc.)

The offer of tourism activities should be as much diversified as possible. Besides the above-mentioned skills and knowledge, the guides need to be able not only to ride a horse / bike / kayak but also to help a tourist in case of a problem, including first aid. The Programme may support both a purchase of the actual mean of transport for tourists (e.g. a mountain bike) as well as equipment needed (e.g. a horse saddle).

Producing and selling of traditional souvenirs

Hand-made souvenirs, produced of local materials (mostly wool and wood) are an attractive article for tourists and a potential source of income for the locals. The project may support the purchase of equipment or material, training, marketing of these products as well as anything else that would help meet this objective. The beneficiaries should be requested to teach children some of these skills.

R 1.1.3 More tourists visit the region

Providing courses for local guides to acquire appropriate knowledge and skills

The guides should be from the local communities. They should learn basic skills of how to treat a tourist, including safety, trip planning, time estimation, etc. Most importantly, the local guides should acquire knowledge about the history and culture of their region.

²² A first campsite is currently being established in the vicinity of Korsha

They should be able to tell stories from history and connect them to concrete sites which would visit with tourists. They should be able to explain what makes their region special. The Programme shall support courses for local guides, in particular those aiming at the knowledge about their local history and culture.

Enhancing the presentation and publicity of the Aragvi Protected Landscape

All the means of communication shall be used to inform both Georgian and international tourists about the Aragvi Protected Landscape, its places of interest and possible activities for tourists. All the existing means of communication shall be used as much as possible (e.g. the website <http://experiencecaucasus.com/en/>). An emphasis in the marketing strategy should be put on an easy access to the region and its authenticity.

Furthermore, a comprehensive APL tourist guide coupled with good-quality maps shall be both printed as well as made available on-line.

Strengthening of the local culture and traditions and presenting them to national and international tourists

Generally speaking, there are currently two types of events organized in rural regions of Georgia. The first ones are celebrated in honour of one of the shrines (typically celebrated in each village on a different day, organized in the vicinity of a sacred shrine and devoted to one of the deities/saints, religious festivities, normally involving a sacrifice of a sheep/lamb, etc.). They are normally not attended by many people from outside the community, however, they serve as a meeting point of locals with the people who belong to the community but live currently elsewhere. Hence, these events may serve as means of (re)integration of these people back to the community. For this purpose a support from the Programme may be considered.

The second type of events is organized and financed by the administration of the region / municipality and is usually not religious, enabling local people to present their culture, sports, sell their products, etc. The Programme may also support these events, which

shall serve in particular to present the region (culture, traditional food products, tourism services...) both to national and international tourists.²³

R 1.2. Agriculture

The Programme shall focus on organic agriculture, use of modern agricultural methods and equipment and on the adaptation to climate change (climate smart agriculture).

R 1.2.1. Cattle/sheep breeding and bee keeping practice is more efficient

Cattle breeding and bee keeping are common in all the three regions while sheep breeding is limited mostly to Gudamakari. All the sheep herds spend the winter down in the valley. In terms of cattle, some owners opt for keeping it in the Programme mountain region, while some take it down to the valley. For both these groups (and in particular for the first one) it is of an utmost importance to secure enough fodder for the cattle for winter (please see R 1.2.2. for details). Future beneficiaries are interested in buying more calves to realize economies of scale and since it is very advantageous (a calf can be bought for ca 600GEL while it can be sold for ca 1500GEL to traders who come directly to the valleys and pay cash).²⁴ Unless the situation on the market changes, it is not recommended to support purchasing extra pieces of cattle within this Programme. On the other hand, projects of re-introduction of traditional cattle races, up-to-date methods of cattle crossbreeding or purchase of modern equipment for cattle/sheep breeding and bee keeping are among the activities that may be supported by this Programme.

R 1.2.2. Grass cutting, packing and transport are more efficient

The quality and quantity of fodder for winter is essential for the cattle, which in turn enables a significant part of the permanent population to remain in the region throughout the winter season. Most of the current permanent population are elderly

²³ The issue with these events is their irregular timing and the fact that the date is usually decided only days before the event. A support from the Project may be conditioned by a date to be established firmly (e.g. the first Sunday in July each year) or at least well in advance.

²⁴ The information from the community meeting in Kitokhi, Gudamakari on 18/7/2018

people who are not any more able to cut and pack the grass manually and then transport it to their houses using bulls or horses. The Programme may support machinery for grass cutting, packing and transport that is suitable for steep slopes. Given a high price of this equipment, cooperatives or other types of associations of farmers should be principal beneficiaries of this support. Moreover, since woods and bushes are overgrowing the grass of formerly biodiversity-rich alpine meadows (which are not any more regularly cut), this activity would significantly contribute to the conservation of these valuable ecosystems.

R 1.2.3. Production of traditional and organic agricultural local products is enhanced

Pshavi's cheese Dambalkhacho is one of the representatives of traditional local products that do not exist anywhere else. In addition to that, local honey, dried medicinal herbs / fruits or milk with high fat content are some of the products, which could benefit from a regional trademark. The trademark could be used not only for marketing of local food products but also to advertise the region as such. Supporting an introduction of a common Aragvi trade mark within the Programme would be the preferred option (preferred to individual trademarks of the three regions).

A significant part of the Programme area is situated in mountain regions where climatic conditions are not favourable for the production of vegetable / fruit. Therefore, a support for the construction of cost-effective greenhouses may be considered, especially if linked to guesthouses where organic products could be offered to tourists.

Furthermore, drying of herbs, fruits and berries is a traditional livelihood in the region which may be supported for instance through purchasing of drying machines or other measures.

R 1.2.4. Cooperation among farmers in production and marketing is enhanced

Despite all the efforts of the government and donors, cooperatives have not yet become that popular in Georgia. This is due to numerous reasons, including mistrust among farmers, limited production surpluses that may be sold on the market, a relatively recent dark history of kolkhozes, etc. Nevertheless, there are an ever-growing number of

cooperatives in Georgia, including in this region (e.g. the cooperative drying wild fruits and medicinal herbs in Sharakhevi or the envisaged milk-processing cooperative in Shuapkho). This Programme shall aim at supporting cooperatives to increase the efficiency of agricultural production (shared machinery...) as well as marketing of products. Furthermore, cooperatives are likely to be the only potential type of some interventions of this Programme that would not be accessible to individual farmers due to co-funding (e.g. the machinery envisaged under R 1.2.2.)

R 1.2.5. Knowledge and skills of local farmers are improved

Activities aiming at achieving this result shall start prior to those related to other agriculture-related results.

This Programme shall support training, besides others on:

- new trends in agriculture
- how to set up and run a cooperative
- organic farming
- sustainable management of meadows (avoiding overgrazing, erosion, etc.)
- reintroduction of traditional crops
- how to adapt to climate change
- phytosanitary issues
- use modern equipment (which could be purchased within the Programme)

Moreover, the Programme may support provision of veterinary services.

R 2.1. Education

R 2.1.1. The knowledge of local population about their region is deepened

All the three regions have a very rich history, unknown to the rest of the world and often, unfortunately, also to local people themselves. Proud freedom-loving warriors who have never hesitated to fight for the justice, people who were several times in history expelled from their homes by the rulers who wanted to control them down in the

valley but some of them always came back, excellent poets, musicians and dancers (wearing traditional dresses), mystical mountain people who keep pre-Christian traditions and mythology alive, not only when they gather at their holy shrines, etc.

The regions of high mountains, steep valleys, alpine meadows and home to an extremely rich biodiversity. The traditional architecture, flat roofs which need to be renovated each year... Even if famous historical moments are not captured in writing in local chronicles and exist only in oral form which is handed over from generation to generation, there are other historical documents that talk about the history of Khevsureti, Pshavi and Gudamakari and their people.

This history, culture, traditions and nature uniqueness should be exposed to local children at schools, to the future tourist guides as well as to local adults. It should be done in a practical entertaining form – visiting the sites which have seen historical moments, teaching local music and dances, weaving traditional dresses, etc. There are people who still remember it and despite being rather old by now, are keen to hand this wisdom and skills over. Teaching local history and spiritual culture would not only help enlighten the local people who can then raise awareness of the tourists but also help deepen the relation of the locals to their region. At-the-school and/or after-school courses for both children and adults shall be supported within this Programme as well as a research of historical documents that may shed more light on the history of the three regions.

R 2.1.2. The local teachers are trained, the curricula are enlarged and the equipment of schools is upgraded

The working conditions of local teachers are difficult – school buildings are in a bad condition and not adapted to the current needs, it gets cold at classes in the winter, there is hardly any equipment in classrooms, no modern technologies are available, children of a wide age spread gather in one class, etc. Furthermore, teachers have limited access to trainings within the Georgian educational system in general, and teachers from remote regions are further disadvantaged. Providing a decent quality education under these conditions is almost impossible.

Since good schools are an important precondition for young families to stay / come back to the three regions, particular needs of each school should be identified and addressed to the extent possible within the Programme. The local teachers will be also encouraged to participate in the courses focusing on their regions (see R 2.1.1.). Moreover, supporting a study visit of local teachers to a Czech school and/or a short-term stay of a Czech teacher at local schools could be considered.

R 2.1.3. The knowledge of the local people about the women empowerment and prevention of gender-based violence is enhanced

Women in the Programme area shall be empowered in many ways. Besides others, the attention will be paid on their equal treatment regarding their income. Trainings with a particular focus on women empowerment, gender equality and prevention of a gender-based violence will be provided at selected schools.

R 2.2.Social services

Significant parts of the people who currently live in the three regions are pensioners who need regular and accessible social services, in particular health care. At the same time the revitalisation of the area depends to a large extent on young families whose children also need a good-quality health care. However, for the time being medical points exist only in the bigger settlements of the three regions – Magharoskari, Shuapkho and Chargali (Pshavi), Barisakho (Piraketa Khevsureti) and Kitokhi (Gudamakari). The practitioners at these medical points are not able to provide appropriate health care (besides others for the below-mentioned reasons). Many medical cases are therefore treated outside the region. Elderly people cannot benefit from any regular social care services.

R 2.2.1.The education and skills of medical personnel are improved

The local medical doctors / nurses, once they finalize their education, have limited access to training and hands-on practice within the Georgian medical system. This is the key factor which prevents them from providing more complex medical care. Supporting a study visit of the local medical staff to a Czech practical doctor's office and/or a short-

term stay of a Czech medical doctor / nurse in the local medical point could be considered.

R 2.2.2. The availability of essential means for providing medical care is enhanced

The equipment of existing medical centres is rather basic and outdated, and the availability of pharmaceutical products is limited. Furthermore, medical doctors/nurses have no vehicle at their disposal to visit the immobile patients at their homes; some use their own car. Therefore, only basic health care can be provided to the local population. Any slightly more complicated health problem needs to be taken care of down in the valley. The ambulance, however, is only available in the municipality's capital Dusheti. For example, in case of Barisakho (Piraketa Khevsureti) it takes an ambulance at least 2 hours to get there and 2 hours back to Dusheti (provided that the ambulance is available which is not always the case). Following a careful needs analysis, a provision of modern medical equipment accompanied by training on how to use it (which could be combined with activities under R 2.2.1.), a set-up of a local mini-pharmacy, and a co-financing of means of transport for medical purposes may be supported within this Programme. Moreover, a support to the provision of traditional local medicinal herbs could be considered.

R 2.2.3. A basic social care is provided

Elderly people constitute a significant part of the permanent population. In order to stay in the mountains, they need a regular social care. There are also handicapped people living in the region. This Programme may also support a regular good-quality social care.

R 3.1. Sustainable management of the Aragvi Protected Landscape and good local governance

R 3.1.1. Proposal of a management plan of the Aragvi Protected Landscape is drafted

A management plan is an essential document for any protected area in the world. It provides a framework and serves as a reference for any activities that are to be carried out in the protected area. The process of drafting should be as participatory as possible. It should take into account not only the environmental protection but also the needs and concerns of the local population.

In order to ensure a participative process of drafting of the management plan an Advisory group composed of local stakeholders will be set up.²⁵ Once the experts working on this assignment gather information and opinions of local population, analyse all the relevant documents, and carry out an inventory of the area, they will propose a zoning of the Aragvi Protected Landscape. The zoning will be based both on the protection of the environment and of the services of local ecosystems but it will also take into account the current and future economic activities of the local population (especially in agriculture and tourism).

The draft management plan is going to be thoroughly discussed with the relevant authorities at all the levels: central (esp. Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, Agency of Protected Areas, Georgian National Tourism Administration, etc.), regional (Mtskheta-Mtianeti Region and especially the Dusheti municipality)²⁶ and local (farmers, providers of tourism services, etc.).

The management plan shall also take into account requirements of disaster risk reduction as well as a sustainable management of forests, meadows and natural resources, such as sand or gravel.

R 3.1.2. Methodological materials are created

A methodological material on how to prepare a management plan will be prepared within this Programme. It shall then help Georgian authorities in preparing management plans for other protected areas in the country.

Furthermore, this Programme will support a foundation of the APL's administration. The team of experts will elaborate a practical set of recommendations on how to set up a protected

²⁵ As soon as the LAG is established, it shall also become a part of the drafting / consultation process.

²⁶ Dusheti municipality will be the authority responsible for the functioning of the Aragvi Protected Landscape

landscape administration and how to make it function efficiently, both for the Aragvi Protected Landscape specifically as well as for any protected areas to be set up in Georgia in the future.

Finally, the experts will provide a methodological support on the inventory and monitoring of species and on an enlargement of a database of species.

R 3.1.3. Nature and landscape conservation capacities in protected areas are strengthened

Representatives of key institutions as well as other stakeholders contributing to the functioning of the Aragvi Protected Landscape will have an opportunity to visit the Czech Republic. They will get acquainted with modern ways of protecting the nature and landscape.

Environmental education will be an important component of this Programme. It is important that the children (and the local population in general) understand the value of the environment, services provided by fragile ecosystems, the importance of waste and wastewater management, and especially the immense value of the Aragvi Protected Landscape. This activity may be coordinated with the Pshav-Khevsureti Protected Areas Friends Association that has already started providing environmental education courses.

Finally, the Czech experts will transmit their knowledge and experience in nature and landscape protection to their Georgian counterparts through workshops and trainings adjusted to the local needs.

R 3.1.4. A Local Action Group is established and functioning

There are seven core principles of the LEADER approach. This is how they are going to be adapted and reflected by this Programme, especially vis-à-vis the Local Action Group:

1. Area-based: the LAG will be established on the territory of the envisaged Aragvi Protected Landscape that is small and socially cohesive. The heterogeneity of this area stemming from the existence of three different regions may be mitigated by creating three regional subgroups within the LAG.

2. Bottom-up: the local actors (members of the „LAG“) shall design their Local Development Strategy and choose their priority actions – besides others in order to create the sense of ownership. Since this Programme is largely based on the information received at community meetings, during visits of local households, etc., the LAG’s development strategy is likely to be similar to this Programme. Nevertheless, it could help prioritize among the individual specific objectives in terms of both time (the extent of urgency of an action to be carried out) and money (the share of the Programme’s budget to be allocated for the given purpose).
3. Public-private partnership: the LAG shall be composed of individual persons, business representatives, NGOs, public sector representatives and all the other interested stakeholders. Public actors will not constitute more than 49% of the LAG members.
4. Innovation: the LAG will have the flexibility to introduce new ideas and methods, innovations that are based on local conditions and enable meeting most efficiently and cost-effectively the desired objective
5. Integration: the LAG shall seek synergies among economic, social, cultural and environmental actions rather than applying a sectoral approach
6. Networking: the LAG shall be a platform for people from private sector, public sector and public society to meet and learn from each other. A particular attention shall be paid on the involvement of groups of population, which tend to be under-represented (see above).
7. Co-operation: there are already several LAGs functioning in Georgia and a Georgian Association of LAGs about to be established which are keen to provide assistance and share their experience with the newly established LAG²⁷

LAG Aragvi shall be established as a non-commercial organisation according to the Georgian legislation. It shall also serve as an advisory body to the administration of APL.

The foundation and functioning of the LAG Aragvi will depend on the activity of local people who would be interested and capable of drafting the Local development strategy

²⁷ LAG Kazbegi is not only located in the proximity of the APL but also one of the best performing among the Georgian LAGs. Moreover, the LAG Kazbegi leadership expressed their interest to help the envisaged LAG Aragvi

and progressively taking up more responsibilities (see the chapter 6.2. for details). Given the emigration of the young pro-active people from the three regions, it will be important to carry out an extensive community mobilisation and a search for suitable candidates and encourage them to participate in founding the LAG. The members of the LAG could be also Pshavs, Khevsurs and Gudamakarians who currently live outside the region. The incentive could be the possibility to participate in the local decision-making and to be involved in the project selection process within this Programme. An appropriate participation of women and other usually under-represented groups shall be ensured.

The members of the Board of the LAG have to be transparently elected by the General Assembly of the LAG which is comprised by all its members. Consequently, the community will accept decisions taken by these people (who would be elected because they were trusted).

The LAG shall be involved in drafting calls for proposals, in evaluating and selecting individual projects as well as in their monitoring. Conflict of interest (of applicants who at the same time evaluate and select projects) must be avoided (see the chapter 6.2.1 for details). The whole process must be led and later only supervised by the Implementing agency. The experience of already existing LAGs (in particular LAG Kazbegi) and a support of GALAG shall be used as much as possible.

A smooth cooperation between the future administration of the APL and the LAG is of a vital importance. It could be achieved for instance by: (i) making the LAG an advisory body of the administration of APL and (ii) encouraging the staff of the Aragvi PL to become members of the LAG.

For the sustainability of the LAG Aragvi see the chapter 7.

6. Implementation

A clear definition of eligible beneficiaries, appropriate implementation modalities, coordination mechanisms as well as of an indicative timetable is essential for a smooth implementation of the Programme.

6.1. Eligible beneficiaries

Eligible beneficiaries will be the people who are registered in one of the three regions and/or own a property there. Consequently, both people who do not belong to any of the three communities as well as people who do not live permanently / seasonally in any of the three communities can still benefit from the support within this Programme. A particular attention shall be paid on the involvement of groups of population, which tend to be under-represented (women, persons with disabilities, youth, persons from remote communities, etc.).

6.2. Implementation modalities

Given the heterogeneous character of activities to be carried out within this Programme, different implementation modalities are to be used.

The Czech Development Agency will use all available modalities that were accredited for the indirect management: grants for the Czech NGOs that can sub-grant local NGOs, provision of specialized services and public procurement. The Czech Embassy can support the Programme through Small Scale Local Projects. The specific modality will depend on the type of needy intervention.

6.2.1. Grants to local subjects

Most of the activities aimed at enhancing the economic situation of the local population shall be implemented through grants. The minimum size of grants should be rather low, e.g. around

3,000 GEL, so that also the poorest beneficiaries can benefit from the Programme.²⁸ The maximum size of grants should be rather elevated, e.g. around 100.000 GEL to allow also cooperatives (which may like to purchase for instance machinery for grass cutting, packaging and transport suitable for steep slopes) benefit from the Programme.

The proportion of co-financing requested from the applicant is a sensitive issue. It may differ depending on the applicant (a physical person / a cooperative...) as well as on the size of the grant (higher the grant, higher the percentage of co-financing). Tentatively the average co-financing should be around 20% as in the *Atsarmoe Sakarveloshi* (Make it in Georgia) programme.

Clear project selection criteria will have to be determined. Applicants from remote villages should get an advantage over those from the “capitals” of the three regions. Farmers or small cooperatives, entrepreneurs who are running small businesses (including tourism services and manufacturing enterprises) will be given a preference over larger businesses. Businesses run by women, persons with disabilities, youth, persons from remote communities and those who are interested in employing local people should get an advantage in the selection process. Preference should be given to environment-friendly and innovative projects (renewable energy, low energy/water consumption, recovery of waste, sustainable use of construction materials, etc.).

The LAG shall be progressively more and more involved and later responsible for calls for proposals, selection of projects to be financed, their monitoring, etc.

Inevitably, a conflict of interest will arise since there are not so many active people living in the region who will be at the same time members of the project-evaluation committee and applicants. It should be prevented by: (i) setting very clear and transparent project selection criteria, (ii) setting up clear rules that would not allow the author of the project to participate in its evaluation, and (iii) establishing a complaint response mechanism.

²⁸ The co-financing increases in absolute terms with the increasing amount of a sub-grant

The provision of grants may be managed by a civil society organization which would be selected through a competitive procedure, the grants have to be managed in a close cooperation with the Local action group.

6.2.2. Public procurement

Public procurement is carried out when goods, services or works are requested. With regard to this Programme, it may be used for the implementation of activities aimed at achieving the results 2.1.2. and 2.2.2. In case of small contracts, direct awards may be considered.

6.2.3. Provision of specialized services

This modality may be used in the situation when only one specialized organization can provide the requested service within the requested time and in an appropriate quality.

6.2.4. Small Scale Local Projects

The modality of Small Local Projects is designed for a support of relatively small, precisely targeted development projects that are managed by the Embassy of the Czech Republic to the particular country.

6.3. Coordination of the implementation of the Programme

6.3.1. A Programme coordinator

An option of a Programme coordinator may be selected to ensure a smooth implementation process including solving problems directly in the field. The Programme coordinator would be based in Tbilisi and would travel to the Programme area frequently. Another person who would support the work of the Programme Coordinator could be hired directly in the Programme area if needed. The Programme coordinator would need to have a proven experience in project implementation as well as in assignments implemented in protected areas. A Programme coordinator would be contracted and managed directly by the Czech Development Agency and would cooperate closely with the Czech Embassy. (S)he would

have to cooperate with all potential donors, Georgian authorities at all levels, the administration of the Aragvi Protected Landscape, LAG, Programme beneficiaries and others. S(he) would be also responsible for supporting the Czech Development Agency in ensuring gender mainstreaming and other cross-cutting issues throughout the Programme activities.

6.4. Implementation matrix

Results	Suggested Modality	Note
R 1.1.1. Tourism infrastructure is enhanced ²⁹	Provision of specialized services + grant	Administration of APL, LAG, local experts, Georgian National Tourism Administration, Krkonoše n.p. experts and local volunteers should be involved in all the activities aiming at achieving these three results. The activities must be coordinated with the preparation of the management plan of Aragvi Protected Landscape
R 1.1.2. The offer of tourism services is enhanced R 1.2.1. Cattle/sheep breeding and bee keeping practice is more efficient R 1.2.2. Grass cutting, packing and transport are more efficient R 1.2.3. Production of traditional and organic agricultural local products is enhanced R 1.2.4. Cooperation among farmers in production and marketing is enhanced R 1.2.5. Agricultural training and services R 3.1.4. A Local Action Group is established and functioning	Grant	LAG must be involved
R 1.1.3 More tourists visit the region	Grant / provision of specialized services	Mtskheta-Mtianeti Administration, Dusheti Administration, APA, Krkonoše n.p. experts, GNTA and local experts should be involved
R 2.1.1. The knowledge of the local population about their region is	Small Local Project	

²⁹ This result constitutes one of the key preconditions for the development of tourism (and consequently also for economic development) in the region and should be therefore implemented as soon as possible, in parallel with the development of the management plan of APL

deepened R 2.1.3. The knowledge of the local people about the women empowerment and prevention of gender-based violence is enhanced		
R 2.1.2. The local teachers are trained, the curricula are enlarged and the equipment of schools is upgraded	Public Procurement	To be closely coordinated with Georgian authorities at all levels to find synergies and to avoid duplicities
R 2.2.1. The education and skills of medical personnel are improved	Small Local Project	
R 2.2.2. The availability of essential means for providing medical care is enhanced	Public Procurement	To be closely coordinated with Georgian authorities at all levels to find synergies and to avoid duplicities
R 2.2.3. A basic social care is provided	Small Local Project	To be closely coordinated with Georgian authorities at all levels to find synergies and to avoid duplications
R 3.1.1. Proposal of a management plan of the Aragvi Protected Landscape is drafted R 3.1.2. Methodological materials are created R 3.1.3. Nature and landscape conservation capacities in strictly protected areas are strengthened	Provision of specialized services	APA, Ministry of Environment Protection and Agraculture, LAG and Krkonoše n.p. experts should be involved

7. Sustainability

This Programme has been designed with a sustainability being the key criterion. The key elements of sustainability incorporated in the Programme are as follows:

- All the activities supported within this project enhance the living standard in a different way – their synergies will multiply the effects of individual activities and generate new activities which will further foster sustainable development of this region
- The administration of the Aragvi Protected Landscape shall take care of the conservation of nature that is likely to be the main attraction of the region in the future and consequently one of main sources of living for the local population.
- The Local Action Group³⁰ shall keep participating in the local decision making which shall be a safeguard for the continuation of the region's development path
- The LAG shall start fund raising already as of 2020 to have a certain source of financing once this project is over

³⁰ The LAG may be later transformed to a different entity, e.g. a Community Council

8. Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring will take place in accordance with the project cycle methodology of the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Mid-term assessment will take place before the end of 2020. The evaluation report shall give clear recommendations on issues to be adjusted and measures to be taken in the second half of the implementation of the Programme.

9. Risks and mitigation measures

Risks	Mitigation measures
Aragvi Protected Landscape is not established	To advocate for the establishment of the Aragvi Protected Landscape If it is not established in time, to adjust the Programme adequately and continue in its implementation
Local beneficiaries are not interested in the Programme	The local authorities and local opinion makers will be decisive for the attitude of the local population towards the Programme. It is important to work with them already since the preparation of the Programme to gain their ownership and then throughout the whole process of implementation.
Funding is disproportionately used by active summer residents at the expense of permanent residents	In such a case, a balance of funding for both these groups would have to be established. It needs to be ensured that when summer residents are being supported, there are also some (at least indirect) benefits for permanent residents in it
Tourists are not interested in the region	A major promotion campaign will be carried out within the Programme using modern media including social networks. The Programme will target individual types of tourists with specific messages (families, weekend tourists, tourists who have limited resources and do not want to travel to renowned / expensive tourist regions...)
Insufficient interest in local agricultural products	Interventions along the whole value chain will be supported, including the marketing of local products, regional trademark, etc.
The construction of the road through Pshavi and Piraketa Khevsureti is delayed	A part of the funding (e.g. related to tourism) may be conditioned by the completion of the road construction
The local population is not interested in participating in the LAG	A major community mobilization has to be carried out and awareness should be raised while emphasising that getting involved in the LAG means: (i) participating in the local decision-making in general and (ii) participating in the selection of projects to be financed within this Programme in particular
Unsustainable tourism prevails	Grants from this Programme shall be given only to providers of sustainable community

	<p>based tourism services. Regulations regarding sustainable building standards (local architecture, size of buildings, etc.) shall be made part of the selection criteria for the grants.</p>
<p>A low interest and motivation of women, persons with disabilities, youth, persons from remote communities and other usually under-represented groups to participate in the Programme implementation.</p>	<p>The Programme implementers will take a proactive approach to ensure their involvement in the Programme</p>

10. Budget – indicative allocations

Specific objective	Percentage
SO 1. The economic situation of the local population is improved in particular through sustainable development of tourism and agriculture	50%
SO 2. The quality of education and of social services in the region is enhanced	20%
SO 3. Good local governance and sustainable management of the Aragvi Protected Landscape are ensured	30%

Should other donors decide to co-finance this Programme, the funding should be primarily used for improving the economic situation of the local population, i.e. the specific objective 1.

Annex: Logical framework

Annex: Logical Framework Matrix

	Results chain	Indicators	Baseline (2018)	Target (2023)	Sources and means of verification	Notes / Assumptions
Overall objective	To contribute to sustainable development of the area of Aragvi Protected Landscape and the local communities	Number of people living in the region permanently or seasonally	2000 ³¹	2500	Source: Base line assessment carried out by the preparation team of this Programme Means of verification: end line assessment	The local population is interested to stay in / come back to the region provided they have reasonable living conditions there (economic opportunities, decent social services, clean environment, good governance, etc.) Apart from this Programme there will be no other major interventions financed by other donors
Specific objectives	SO 1. The economic situation of the local population is improved in particular through sustainable development of tourism and agriculture	Percentage of entrepreneurs managing permanent and/or temporary farms or other enterprises which provide for a sustainable livelihood ³² Percentage of	15% ³³	25 %	Source: base line assessment Means of verification: end line assessment	Tourism and agriculture have the highest potential for improving the economic situation of local population

³¹ The numbers are based on the census of 2014 combined with the findings of the base line assessment carried out by the preparation team of this Programme. In terms of gender, there were some 52% women and 48% men living in the region according to the census

³² A sustainable livelihood, in this context, means a business providing a sufficient income to sustain a household and generate savings (as compared to a subsistence self-employment activity)

³³ A percentage of all the households whose source of income is a self-employment activity

	Results chain	Indicators	Baseline (2018)	Target (2023)	Sources and means of verification	Notes / Assumptions
		entrepreneurs, running a business providing for a sustainable livelihood, who are women, persons with disabilities, youth or persons from remote communities	20%	30%		It is a percentage of all the entrepreneurs running a business providing for a sustainable livelihood in the Programme area
	SO 2: The quality of education and of social services in the region is enhanced	Percentage of households with children at school age who are enrolled at local schools Percentage of medical cases treated locally Percentage of people in need of social services who actually benefit from them	10% 30% 0	20% 50% 50% ³⁴	Source: base line assessment Means of verification: end line assessment / Georgia 's statistics	The quality of schools and social services is among the key criteria for people when they decide whether or not to remain /come back to the region (in particular young families) Nowadays most medical problems are treated in a city; local medical doctors should be capable of dealing with more medical problems on spot
	SO3: Good local governance and sustainable management of the Aragvi Protected Landscape are ensured	Percentage of local people who feel involved in the local decision making Percentage of local people belonging to the groups which tend to be under-represented (women, persons with disabilities, youth, persons from remote communities) involved in the local	0 15%	20% 30%	Source: base line assessment Means of verification: end line assessment	People, including persons belonging to the groups which tend to be under-represented, are interested and motivated in participating in decision-making on issues which influence their lives

³⁴ The percentage is rather high since the Programme is focused on the most vulnerable population

	Results chain	Indicators	Baseline (2018)	Target (2023)	Sources and means of verification	Notes / Assumptions
		decision making A well-drafted management plan of the Aragvi Protected Landscape prepared and discussed with the local population	Not existing	Good-quality management plan (to which the local population feels ownership)		Well-drafted and consulted management plan is a pre-condition for a successful functioning of the protected area
R 1.1. Tourism						
R Expected results³⁵	R 1.1.1. Tourism infrastructure is enhanced	Km of tourist trails marked ³⁶		Small tourist infrastructure is put in place / fixed	Source: base line assessment Means of verification: end line assessment	The result is to be achieved through some of the following activities: - identification of interesting tourist sites - marking of tourist trails including setting up of information signs / boards - construction of small tourism infrastructure (bridges, trails...)
	R 1.1.2. The offer of tourism services is enhanced	Number of guesthouses and campsites providing at least basic services for tourists ³⁷ Number of different means			Source: base line assessment Means of verification: end line assessment	The result is to be achieved through some of the following activities: - setting up, upgrading, enlarging or equipping guesthouses

³⁵ Indicators on the level of expected results should be understood only as suggestions (examples) which is why no baseline/target data are mentioned

³⁶ Both in the field and in a map

³⁷ Bed and breakfast, hot water, flush toilet in case of a guesthouse. Toilets, water and waste management in case of a campsite.

	Results chain	Indicators	Baseline (2018)	Target (2023)	Sources and means of verification	Notes / Assumptions
		of transport offered to tourists Income from sales of traditional souvenirs				- setting up campsites - creating an offer of a variety of means of transport options for tourists (mountain bikes, horses, snowshoes, kayaks, rafts, etc.) - producing and selling of traditional souvenirs
	R 1.1.3 More tourists visit the region	Number of tourists visiting the region Number of local guides who speak English ³⁸ , acquired comprehensive knowledge about the region and adopted key skills on how to treat a tourist			Source: base line assessment Means of verification: end line assessment	The result is to be achieved through some of the following activities: - providing courses for local guides to acquire appropriate knowledge and skills - enhancing the presentation and publicity of the Aragvi Protected Landscape is - strengthening of the local culture and traditions and presenting them to national and international tourists
	R 1.2. Agriculture					
	R 1.2.1. Cattle/sheep breeding and bee keeping practice is more efficient	Income from cattle/sheep breeding and bee keeping			Source: base line assessment Means of verification: end line assessment	
	R 1.2.2. Grass cutting, packing and transport are more efficient	Hectares of regularly cut meadows			Source: base line assessment	Grass cutting is important for both a fodder for the cattle (which may enable people to stay in the region also during

³⁸ At least level B1 equivalent

	Results chain	Indicators	Baseline (2018)	Target (2023)	Sources and means of verification	Notes / Assumptions
					Means of verification: end line assessment	the winter) as well as for biodiversity (e.g. endemic plants on mountain meadows)
	R 1.2.3. Production of traditional and organic agricultural local products is enhanced	Number of local products with a regional brand certificate			Source: base line assessment Means of verification: end line assessment	People are interested in having their traditional products (e.g. Dambalkhacho) certificated...
	R 1.2.4. Cooperation among farmers in production and marketing is enhanced	Number of functioning cooperatives			Source: base line assessment Means of verification: end line assessment	
	R 1.2.5. Knowledge and skills of local farmers are improved	Percentage of correct answers in quizzes filled in by participants before and after a training			Source: A quiz Means of verification: Results of a quiz	
	R 2.1. Education					
	R 2.1.1. The knowledge of the local population about their region is deepened ³⁹	Percentage of correct answers in quizzes concerning the region before and after a training Number of children participating in courses of local dances / songs / arts			Source: base line assessment Means of verification: end line assessment	

³⁹ The knowledge of local history / traditions / culture / art ...

	Results chain	Indicators	Baseline (2018)	Target (2023)	Sources and means of verification	Notes / Assumptions
	R 2.1.2. The local teachers are trained, the curricula are enlarged and the equipment of schools is upgraded	Schools are equipped with audiovisual aid, computers and access to internet Number of trainings in which local teachers participated			Source: base line assessment Means of verification: end line assessment	
	R 2.1.3. The knowledge of the local people about the women empowerment and prevention of gender-based violence is enhanced	Number of trainings in which local children and other persons participated			Source: base line assessment Means of verification: end line assessment	
	R 2.2. Social services					
	R 2.2.1. The education and skills of medical personnel are improved	Number of trainings in which local medical doctors participated			Source: base line assessment Means of verification: end line assessment	
	R 2.2.2. The availability of essential means for providing medical care is enhanced	Percentage of beneficiaries reporting to be satisfied with the provided assistance			Source: base line assessment Means of verification: end line assessment	
	R. 2.2.3. A basic social care is provided	Percentage of people in need of social services who actually benefit from them			Source: base line assessment Means of verification: end line assessment	
	R 3 Sustainable management of the Aragvi Protected Landscape and good local governance					
	R 3.1.1. Management plan of the Aragvi Protected	Draft management plan is agreed and submitted for				The management plan shall also take into account requirements of disaster risk

	Results chain	Indicators	Baseline (2018)	Target (2023)	Sources and means of verification	Notes / Assumptions
	Landscape is drafted	approval				reduction as well as a sustainable management of forests, meadows and natural resources, such as sand or gravel.
	R 3.1.2. Methodological materials are created	Methodical guidelines for: 1) establishment of Protected Landscape Administration, and 2) elaboration of Management Plan for Protected Landscape; ... handed over to the Ministry of Environment Protection and Agriculture of Georgia			On-the-spot verification at the Ministry of Environment Protection and Agriculture of Georgia	
	R 3.1.3. Nature and landscape conservation capacities in protected areas are strengthened	Employees of Aragvi Protected Landscape Administration periodically update Species Inventory Database			On-the-spot verification at the Administration in Dusheti	
	R 3.1.4. A Local Action Group is established and functioning	The local action group is set up and functioning Participation of persons belonging to the groups which tend to be under-represented (women, persons with disabilities, youth and persons from remote communities) will be ensured			On-the-spot verification	

