

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**

CZECH DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

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CZECH REPUBLIC
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**Austrian
Development
Cooperation**



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Partner institutions: The Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia The Dusheti Municipality		

¹The contribution from the Austrian Development Agency is subject to conclusion of a corresponding agreement on delegated cooperation between the Czech Development Agency and ADA.

List of abbreviations

ADA	Austrian Development Agency, the operational unit of the Austrian Development Cooperation
ADC	Austrian Development Cooperation
APA	Agency of Protected Areas
APL	Aragvi Protected Landscape
CzDA	Czech Development Agency
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'Economie Rurale
SO	Specific Objective
SAIDC	Slovak Agency for International Development Cooperation

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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 Khevsureti², Gudamakari and specified adjacent areas.**³ Despite their proximity to Tbilisi, these regions have been lagging behind and their population has been abandoning them.⁴ 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 through the support of community tourism and of organic agriculture. Furthermore, the Programme shall help enhance the quality of education and **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.⁵ **Climate change** (in particular adaptation) is mainstreamed across the entire Programme.

Different modalities, such as grants for NGOs, international public procurement, provision of special services and small-scale local projects will be used to implement the Programme and reach its target.

² Piraketa Khevsureti is the part of Khevsureti south of the Great Caucasus ridge

³ The approximate territory of the envisaged APL is depicted on the following page

⁴ The population decreased almost by 50% between 2002 and 2014 according to the official census

⁵ 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.

The LEADER approach shall be applied for the implementation of this Programme, duly adjusted to the specificities of this region.⁶ The cornerstone of this approach is the so-called Local Action Group (LAG), which has been established within the inception period of this Programme.



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

⁶ LEADER stands for “Liaison Entre Actions pour le Développement de l’Economie Rurale” (Links Between Activities for the Development of Rural Economy). See the Methodology chapter 5.1. for more details.

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**, on its priority II “Sustainable development of mountainous regions”. Furthermore, the Programme reflects priorities of the Georgia Country Strategy of the Austrian Development Cooperation 2012 - 2020.

The authors of this Programme document visited all the inhabited communities of the envisaged Aragvi Protected Landscape during the Programme preparation. Comprehensive **sex-disaggregated representative data** were **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 positive development in recent years, 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 3,000 people consider this region their home.⁷

The territory of *temi*⁸ Magharoskari in Pshavi is accessible all-year-round since the road is being maintained also in the winter.⁹ 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 *BudePshavi* (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 Chicho). 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 official **employment opportunities** are limited to a few teachers, a few nurses, two *rtsmunebulis*¹⁰, 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. Mineral water production in Chargali also provides a few employment opportunities. Most of the other inhabitants are subsistence farmers, they are mostly part of the grey economy. Those involved in the production of the local cheese *dambalkhacho* in Kalilo and Magharoskari and in fruit drying in Sharakhevi are slightly better off.

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

⁷ 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.

⁸ "Temi" is an expression for a settlement within the former administrative division of the country

⁹ The road is currently being rehabilitated, the works reached Magharoskari in 2019

¹⁰ Rtsmunebuli is an authorised representative of the Municipality

should be set up in Shuapkho. All the farmers interested in selling their milk should become members of this cooperative. Now 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. If the milk-processing factory is constructed within the timespan of this Programme, the NGO implementing SO1 (economic support) component will look for synergies with the activities of the project, while factoring in resource efficient and cleaner production for a circular economy.

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 Magharoskari and Shuapkho. 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, 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 R1.1.3. in the chapter 5.4.).

2.1.2. Piraketa Khevsureti

Some 2,000 persons consider this region their home.¹¹

The region of Piraketa Khevsureti is in many ways like 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 Pirikita 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.

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

¹¹ 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.

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, manual grass-cutters, packing machines and tractors with trailers.

Many local farmers practice bee keeping, Roshkais 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 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 Kvemo 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 – Abudelaury lakes – boulders above Roshka– Roshka – Pirikita Khevsureti). The owners of guesthouses in Roshka offer not only hiking but also horse-riding tours that have become 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 has 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 Gudani¹² and Khakhmati) are attended basically only by Khevsurs. At these occasions, they also brew a local beer.

¹² Gudani is an important place for the Khevsurs - the site of Gudanisjvari (Cross of Gudani) - the main object of worship for Khevsurs

2.1.3. Gudamakari

Some 500 persons consider this region their home.¹³

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 Pasanauri 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.

The company constructing high voltage transmission lines that connect Pasanauri 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 must 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

¹³ 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.

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 of local government and of local inhabitants on how to support development of local tourism; a commercial use of local mineral springs for a spa or developing agro-tourism seem to be among feasible options. An ethnographic museum with a memorial of local novelist Goderdzi Chokheli has already been constructed.

The main opportunity seems to be the revitalization of the old military road connecting Pasanauri 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.¹⁴ 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 Management plan of the Aragvi Protected Landscape will define the activities, which will be allowed to be carried out within the APL. The potential negative impacts to the environment, including ecosystem and natural resources (water, soil, biodiversity ...) of any kind of activity of Zhinvali reservoir will be duly examined as part of the

¹⁴ Endemic species are those that occur only in a limited geographical area

EGSIA. The analysis shall at the same time explore positive synergies and opportunities between the project and the environment to drive an amelioration of the base situation.

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 5.4. for more details)¹⁵.

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 **Strategy on Development of High Mountain Regions of Georgia 2019-2023**¹⁶ aims at improving infrastructure and living conditions in these regions. The Strategy shall foster sustainable development of Georgia's highlands by supporting small and medium sized business there, farming and cooperative development, production and promotion of agricultural products, etc. New roads will be built, and old ones repaired which will enable the highland regions to use their economic and tourism potential. 4-season tourism infrastructure and services shall be developed, and cultural monuments shall be renovated in mountainous areas. The Strategy builds on the 'Mountain Law'¹⁷ which defined besides others 1,730 villages as high-mountainous settlements in Georgia (with a population of more than 300,000 residents or almost 10% of Georgia's population").¹⁸ Moreover, it is also foreseen that a 'Mountain Week' will be celebrated symbolically around the day of issuance of the Mountain Law (16 July). This Programme will use this opportunity each year to organize its tourism promotion activities.

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 Source: Feasibility Study carried out within the preparation of the Programme in 2018; Background Study for Project within Preparation of the Management Plan for Protected Landscape Aragvi in Georgia, 2015

¹⁶ The Strategy was published in December 2018

¹⁷ The Law came into force in July 2015.

¹⁸ The Strategy shall address the same settlements.

The Strategy of Agriculture Development in Georgia 2015-2020 aims 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.

The programme also reflects "The State Concept on the Gender Equality" and mainstreamed gender equality issues in governmental strategies.

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 recently been active on the territory of the envisaged Aragvi Protected Landscape. The Georgian government has supported some private businesses in this region through the *Atsarmoe Sakartveloshi* (Make it in Georgia) programme.

3. Problem analysis

The Government of Georgia decided to establish the Aragvi Protected Landscape. The government decision is firm, negotiations are currently being held about technical details before proposing it to the Parliament. 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 mainly on cattle and/or sheep breeding and on subsistence agriculture, and, to a limited extent, also on forestry and wood production. However, this source of living has become more difficult 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 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.¹⁹ 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 Piraketa Khevsureti). Furthermore, the Government of Georgia has provided only limited incentives for people to stay in these regions.²⁰

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 other trainings than those provided in Tbilisi. Obviously, if compared to a city, parents have a limited choice as to where to educate their children.

¹⁹ Central Caucasian Religious Systems and social ideology in the post-Soviet period: K. Tuite, P. Bukhrashvili, 2002

²⁰ 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 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, families with young children. Women empowerment is generally low and their access to income is more limited as compared to men.

In line with the strategy of the Bilateral Development Cooperation Programme of the Czech Republic with Georgia 2018 – 2023 and in order to contribute to achievement of the SDG 5 (gender equality), it is necessary to continuously and consistently take steps to ensure that women and girls have access to all opportunities and benefits generated by the country's development. Therefore, the Programme seeks to introduce mechanisms to ensure involvement of women and other groups which tend to be under-represented (persons with disabilities, youth, and persons from remote communities) into the programme activities on all levels. This endeavour is also reflected in the choice of indicators to measure the Programme's results and impact on the level of specific objectives as well as results.

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 though the region is prone to various disasters (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 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 has 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. The Ministry welcomes the assistance in the enforcement of environmental protection, regarding forest management and protected areas.

Agency of Protected Areas

The Agency of Protected Areas (APA) 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. The APA has been affected by frequent changes of management staff. 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, Piraketa 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 fund 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 local 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, 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-the-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 under the framework of the “Support Programme for Protected Areas in the Caucasus – Georgia”, co-funded by the German Cooperation in the Caucasus through the KFW Development Bank. Its main aim is to contribute to the protection and development of 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”²¹ and “Women for social development”²² 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 by setting a good practice of women run organisations and businesses setting example of women social and economic empowerment. Based on this good practice, the Programme seeks to involve more local people belonging to the groups which tend to be under-represented (women, persons with disabilities, youth, persons from remote communities) into the project activities.

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 5.4.).

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

²¹[Web page of the organization](#)

²²[Web page of the organization](#)

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 programme).

The Slovak Agency for International Development Cooperation (SAIDC) has the intention to support enhancement of waste management on the territory of the APL in the frame of a complementary project.

As far as the particular area of this Programme is concerned, there are no donors currently working here, apart from the World Bank supporting the construction of the paved road from the Zhinvali reservoir to Barisakho.

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 interventions in other mountain regions of Georgia. It is interested in a possible cooperation within this Programme.

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). These two groups together with the group of people who live outside the region but consider coming back should the circumstances make it possible, comprise for some 5,500 people who consider this area their home – approx. 3,000 in Pshavi, 2,000 in Piraketa Khevsureti and 500 in Gudamakari (please see the chapter 2.1. for details). A proactive approach will be taken within the Programme to ensure involvement of women and persons belonging to the groups which tend to be under-represented or whose access to income is usually more complicated (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, good agricultural practices, 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 and are often leading actors of development interventions. 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.²³ The Programme results shall create an enabling environment for them to return to / settle in the region.

²³ Based on the experience from the programmes implemented in Tusheti, people coming from the region living in lowlands are often leading participants of development interventions. Specific criteria (e. g. readiness to settle/invest in the region and to employ locals) in specific calls for proposals will be considered.

5. Logical framework

5.1. Methodology

The Programme shall foster a comprehensive development of the area of the designated Aragvi Protected Landscape – economic, social as well as environmental. Such a development shall help create an enabling environment for the people to stay in the area or come back there.

The LEADER approach shall be applied for the implementation of this Programme, duly adjusted to the specificities of this region. The LEADER engages the energy and resources of people and bodies as ‘development actors’ rather than ‘beneficiaries’, empowering them to contribute to the development of their rural areas by forming area-based Local Action Group partnerships between the public, private and civil sectors. LAG shall play an important role in the implementation of this Programme. It shall closely interact with the administration of APL.²⁴ LAG shall also enable people living in this area to participate in local decision-making and thus enhance the local **governance**. Gender equality principles and the participation of persons belonging to **groups** that tend to be **under-represented** (persons with disabilities, youth, persons from remote communities, etc.) shall be ensured.²⁵

5.2. Overall objective

To contribute to sustainable development of the area of Aragvi Protected Landscape and to improved livelihoods of the local communities.²⁶

Programme objectives are following relevant international conventions Georgia is party to. Their objectives will be considered on project level, where appropriate.

Measures aimed at resource efficiency and sustainability, pollution prevention, climate change mitigation and adaptation will be embedded with respective safeguards in the objectives of particular projects.

²⁴ 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

²⁵For more details about LAG, please see the Result R 3.1.4. below

²⁶ 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))

5.3. Specific objectives

Specific objective 1: The economic situation of the local population, men and women, 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 (including climate change adaptation and mitigation), on the community dynamics, the principles of gender equality and on the integration of groups of the local population that tend to be under-represented (persons with disabilities, youth, persons from remote communities) into the project activities at all levels.

Specific objective 2: The quality of education and 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 *conditio sine qua non* for young families to stay / come back to the region. Education process should not be restricted to pupils only, it will encompass motivated adults as well (especially regarding environmental issues). An access to local health services and/or social services is then essential for the whole population including for women and vulnerable groups (persons with disabilities, elderly, youth, persons from remote communities). The vulnerable households should be systematically supported in their effort to gain access to better livelihood.

Specific objective 3: Good local governance and sustainable management of the Aragvi Protected Landscape are ensured, while participation of local people belonging to the groups which tend to be under-represented in the decision-making process is enhanced

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. The competencies of municipalities in protected landscapes in Georgia is governed by law on establishment of those protected landscapes. This unique opportunity shall be used also in the Aragvi Protected Landscape. An establishment of the Local Action Group (LAG) Aragvi and its close cooperation with the administration of the Aragvi Protected Landscape will enable inhabitants of the three regions to participate in the local decision-making. In the process of establishing the LAG, particular

attention will be paid to actively engage women and people belonging to the groups which tend to be under-represented (persons with disabilities, youth, persons from remote communities) in order to enhance their participation 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 and management of natural resources, including forest.

5.4. Expected results

R 1.1. Tourism

Tourists have not yet been visiting much the Programme area, even though 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. Not only that supported guesthouses will be constructed /refurbished by people living in this area, but the local people will also have a chance to share local traditions and the local way of life with tourists. All the activities supported within this Programme shall directly or indirectly improve economic and social situation of the local population and at the same time help protect (or at least do not harm) the local environment.

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 shrines²⁷, 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, Georgian National Tourism Administration (GNTA) and marked in a map.²⁸ 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 (such plan should be adhered to by both the APL Administration and the LAG).

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 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.

²⁷ 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.

²⁸ 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.

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).²⁹ Standards to be met by guesthouses shall be first clearly established, introduced and applied. Support shall be provided for a new construction well as for an upgrade or an enlargement of a guesthouse as well as for its equipment (devices for hot water, flush toilets, etc.).³⁰ 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 and climate friendly innovative solutions, gender equality and social inclusion (in terms of payment, working conditions etc.) will be among selection criteria in these 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 the APL, the Regional Development Agency of the Mtskheta-Mtianeti and the 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, marketing 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.

Setting up campsites

²⁹ The Arabuli family guesthouse in Korsha is one of the few exceptions.

³⁰ Priority should be given to environment friendly and innovative solutions.

There are currently no established campsites in the area.³¹ 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, considering international practice regarding avoiding of contacts with the wild animals. 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 and for the use of the campsite facilities.

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 as well as about the local unique environment. 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

³¹ A first campsite is currently being established in the vicinity of Korsha.

special. The Programme shall support courses for local guides, those aiming at the knowledge about their local history, culture and the unique environment of their region. The guides will also participate in the lessons and workshops under R2.1.4, which will guarantee enhancing of their knowledge of environmental/natural resources protection issues.

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

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 to present the region (culture, traditional food products, tourism services...) both to national and international tourists.³²

³² 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.

Furthermore, tourism promotion activities will be organized annually at the occasion of the 'Mountain Week' around mid-July. The Mountain Week will be held as of 2019 (see the chapter 2.3 for details).

R 1.2. Climate smart agriculture

The Programme shall focus on organic agriculture, use of modern agricultural methods and equipment and on the adaptation and mitigation to climate change (climate smart agriculture). The selection of supported activities, their location as well as methods of their implementation shall be based on the Management Plan of the APL.

The minimization and correct and safe disposal of waste is an approach that will be implemented as a safeguard under R1.2 activities. To operationalize the safeguard on waste, measures such as composting, reuse of construction material (and others) can be developed and introduced.³³

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.³⁴ 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 600 GEL while it can be sold for ca 1500 GEL to traders who come directly to the valleys and pay cash).³⁵ Unless the situation on the market changes, it is not recommended to support purchasing extra heads of cattle within this Programme. On the other hand, projects of re-introduction of traditional cattle breeds, up-to-date methods of cattle crossbreeding or purchase of modern equipment for cattle/sheep breeding, pasture management, 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

³³ A parallel project focused on waste management in territory of APL is intended.

³⁴ Some cattle breeders prefer to stay with their cattle in the mountains for the whole year while some of them have sustainable practice of using winter pastures in the lowlands.

³⁵ The information from the community meeting in Kitokhi, Gudamakari on 18/7/2018

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 currently permanent population are elderly 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.

The pasture management shall not be carried out separately but rather within an integrated management approach. The Management plan of the Aragvi Protected Landscape will be the guiding and binding document for any efforts in this regard.

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 trademark 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 to produce 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.

The preference shall be given to the support of those "value chains" (production and marketing of commodities) which especially provide benefits for women and disadvantaged groups. On the other hand, activities potentially harming the environment (e.g. activities leading to overgrazing of pastures) shall not be supported.

Within the Programme interventions measures to minimizing waste production, such as composting, reusing construction materials will be also considered.

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 is 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...) and promotion of circular economy activities with economic and environmental gains following a resource efficiency and pollution prevention approach 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 affordable 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.

A capacity needs assessment shall be carried out first so that training areas could be defined. All trainings organised within the project will incorporate relevant elements of cross-cutting issues, climate change, natural resources, good governance, gender equality, social inclusion and reduction of vulnerability. Below are several training areas which may be considered:

- new trends in climate smart agriculture
- climate-sensitive management of soil and water resources (e.g. introduction of water harvesting, soil and water protecting techniques...)
- how to set up and run a cooperative
- organic farming³⁶
- sustainable management of meadows (avoiding overgrazing, erosion, etc.)

³⁶ Lessons learnt within the EU financed programme on Economic and Business Development in Georgia (AAP 2017) shall be used, besides others, with regard to organic farming as well as experience of actors in this sphere.

- reintroduction of traditional crops (adjusted according to periodical soil testing)
- introduction of climate resilient crops (adjusted according to periodical soil testing)
- phytosanitary issues
- use of modern equipment (which could be purchased within the Programme)
- gender mainstreaming, etc.

Moreover, the Programme may support provision of sustainable veterinary services of good quality.

R 2.1. Education

The below-defined education-related results are based on the analysis and on the objectives of the Social-economic Development Strategy of Georgia “GEORGIA 2020”.³⁷ The education-related results encompass enhanced knowledge about tradition embodied in traditional spiritual and material culture, as well as about gender and environmental issues. Given the limited numbers of pupils compared to the high number of teachers and availability of educational infrastructure, the education-related projects/activities will embrace a broader audience (e.g. during summer courses/workshops) of diverse age categories, thus expanding the impact of the respective results.

R 2.1.1. The knowledge of the 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

³⁷ Chapter 2 „Development of human resources“, part 1 „Development of work force that meets labour market requirements“

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. The Programme shall also contribute to awareness raising among the local population on the differences with respect to their local traditions and commonly accepted values of modern society (e.g. some sacred shrines are only for men, others only for women), and mitigate thus potential conflicts.

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, 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.) and on the environment (see R2.1.4). The focused foreign language courses can be also considered for a broad audience (including rangers/tourism services providers). Moreover, supporting a study visit of local teachers to European schools (or innovative schools in Georgian regions) and/or a short-term stay of European teachers (or Georgian teachers from other regions) at local schools could be considered. The main objective of these visits would be to enable local teachers to learn from best practices of selected European/Georgian schools.

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

Gender-based violence is a human rights violation, a public health challenge, and a barrier to civic, social, political, and economic participation. It is vital to promote the rights of all individuals and reduce gender-based violence while mitigating its harmful effects on individuals and communities. The project activities under this result aim at increasing awareness of the scope of the problem and its impact and strengthen prevention efforts. Apart from that, strong emphasis will be put on raising awareness about importance of equal participation in political structures and formal decision-making and, in the economic sphere, on the ability to obtain an income that enables participation in economic decision-making.

R 2.1.4. The knowledge of local teachers, pupils and community about environmental challenges, climate change and waste reduction are enhanced

The schools (in terms of its premises and potential of their staff) should be perceived as an ideal venue for holding lessons and practical workshops about environmental challenges, climate change and waste reduction. The project activities under this result aim at dissemination of knowledge about climate change challenges, resource efficiency (including energy), natural resources sustainability, pollution prevention (including waste management and waste water).

The lessons and workshops will be held by invited experts for a broad audience (including pupils, LAG members, APL rangers, local activists, representatives of tourism-related business). Separately another set of lesson/workshop will be held particularly for the teachers of the schools to enhance sustainability of the activity results. As in all mountain schools concerned, the teachers are allotted a comparatively small number of pupils, they have enough capacities and motivation to get involved in environmental education process.

Through the participation of all respective project beneficiaries (as mentioned above) the cross-cutting character of the activity results will be achieved.

R 2.2. Social services

A significant number 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 and social assistance. 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 health and social care services.

The below-defined results related to social services are based on the analysis and on the objectives of the Social-economic Development Strategy of Georgia “GEORGIA 2020”.³⁸

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 European practical doctor’s office (or to the office of innovative Georgian physician) and/or a short-term stay of a European medical doctor / nurse (or the innovative Georgian one) in the local medical point could be considered. The main objective of these visits would be to enable local medical doctors / nurses to learn from best practices of selected European/Georgian hospitals.

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

³⁸ Chapter 2 „Development of human resources“, part 2 „Improving the social assistance system“ and part 3 „Policies to be implemented in order to improve the quality and accessibility of healthcare“.

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 officially approved traditional local medicinal herbs could be considered.³⁹

R 2.2.3. A basic social assistance and care is provided

A substantial number of households living permanently in the target region are listed as socially vulnerable by state agencies, even though they comprise family members with ability to retrain or to gain livelihood as independent farmers. Elderly people constitute a significant part of the permanent population. There are also people with disabilities living in the region. Those vulnerable groups need a regular and quality social assistance and social care. As far as social assistance is concerned, the Programme shall encourage the younger and active family members of vulnerable households in gaining professional skills and retraining as independent farmers and/or producers. This shall happen in close cooperation with the activities pertaining to R1.2 (via comprehensive trainings and self-subsistence support grants, followed by start-up grants). This Programme will also contribute to improved sustainability of the communal (non-governmental) social care services and in consequence diminish the burden laying in particular on women, whose role in family care, care for elderly and people with disabilities is traditionally higher. The project will also focus on the gender misbalance between the role of men and women and seek to tackle the gender gap in providing family care, care for elderly and people with disabilities by raising awareness of this issue and offering alternative models of division of labour in this fields. This will be achieved among other by capacity building activities which will engage both men and women.

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

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

³⁹ The health care line ministry secures collection of medical waste connected with operations of all medical centres in Georgia.

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 consider not only the environmental protection but also the needs and concerns of the local population, especially marginalised and/or under-represented groups. Therefore, it needs to be clearly interlinked with the Local Development Strategy (see R3.1.4.).

In case of protected landscapes in Georgia, the management plan covers not only biodiversity conservation, but all environmental aspects of the area and sustainable use of the area by local communities also. Besides that, the management plan sets rules for maintenance and development of infrastructure. The data and other results acquired during the preparatory stage of APL management plan drafting will be regularly shared with other programme projects to provide them with environmental stimuli. The steering committee will be included in the process of interconnecting of the management plan projects with other parts of the programme.

In order to ensure a participative process of drafting of the management plan an Advisory group composed of local stakeholders will be set up.⁴⁰ 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, women and men (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)⁴¹ and local (farmers, providers of tourism services, etc.). All these stakeholders will also participate in its drafting. The management plan shall be finally approved by the Dusheti Municipality, which shall then submit the draft document to relevant governmental bodies for their final approval.

The Management Plan shall consider besides other requirements of disaster risk reduction as well as a sustainable management of forests, meadows and natural resources, such as sand or gravel.

⁴⁰ As soon as the LAG is established, it shall also become a part of the drafting / consultation process.

⁴¹ Dusheti Municipality will be the authority responsible for the functioning of the Aragvi Protected Landscape.

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 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. This database has been developed within the previous project in the Tusheti Protected Landscape and submitted to the Agency of Protected Areas which will make it accessible for project beneficiaries and broader expert community.

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. They will then share their experience with their fellows in Georgia as inspirational examples for implementation, which however, need to be adjusted for local conditions.

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.⁴²

⁴² This activity will be coordinated with the Caucasus Environmental NGO Network (CENN).

Finally, the Czech, Austrian or other EU 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: During the inception period the LAG has been established on the territory of the envisaged Aragvi Protected Landscape which is rather small and socially cohesive. The heterogeneity of this area stemming from the existence of three different regions shall 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. The broader context given by the Management plan (see R 3.1.1.) shall be considered. 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 like 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 is composed of individual persons, business representatives, NGOs, public sector representatives and all the other interested stakeholders. Public actors do not constitute more than 49% of the LAG members.
4. Innovation: the LAG has acquired 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. Attention shall be paid to 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 have been providing assistance and sharing their experience with the newly established LAG⁴³.

LAG Aragvi has been 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 functioning of newly established LAG Aragvi relies on the activity of local people who are interested and capable of drafting the Local development strategy and progressively taking up more responsibilities (see the chapter 6.2. for details). Given the emigration of the young proactive people from the three regions, it has been important to carry out an extensive community mobilisation and a search for suitable candidates and encourage them to participate in founding the LAG. Among the members of the LAG are also Pshavs, Khevsurs and Gudamakarians who currently live outside the region. The incentive tends to 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 has been ensured.

The members of the Board of the LAG have been 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 were elected because they were trusted).

The members of the LAG received a general training on the functioning of a civil society organization (CSO). The members of the Board received a comprehensive training on the management of a CSO, financial management, transparency, accountability, evaluation of proposals, project monitoring, negotiation, conflict resolution, conflict of interests, etc. The detailed curriculum drafted by the partner implementing the LAG project component. Other Georgian LAGs (the nearby LAG Kazbegi) helped with organization of this training.

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

⁴³ 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,

is led and supervised by the Czech Development Agency. The experience of already existing LAGs in Georgia 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.

R 3.1.5. Introduction and operations of sustainable forest management of the Aragvi Protected Landscape

There are three main pillars of the forest management of the APL. They are the social, ecological and economic role of the forest. Proper zonation of the forest will allow tailored inventory for each zone. The General Forest Management Plan will have a special focus on zones of economical use according to close to nature principles and with application of sustainable traditional forms of forestry.

Under this result a scale of capacity development activities is anticipated. The newly established administration of the APL will be provided with forestry machinery and tools, trainings and manuals as well as with the administration/operation rules including protection of forest on territory of APL.

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 to the involvement of and benefit for women and groups of the population, which tend to be under-represented (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 its available modalities that were accredited for the indirect management: Grants for the NGOs and international public procurement. Provision of special services from other Czech public institutions will be used as well. The Czech Embassy can support the Programme through Small Scale Local Projects. The specific modality will depend on the type of the required intervention. During the inception period the CzDA awarded a grant to an implementing partner dedicated to results focused on women empowerment, rural youth and economic development. (implementer PIN, project title *Sustainable Development of Aragvi Communities*; respective budgeting cf. in the Programme budget).

6.2.1. Grants

Most of the activities aimed at enhancing the economic situation of the local population have been implemented through award of grants. The main type of the grant is “bilateral grant” for International NGOs. During the programme’s inception phase the CzDA selected the Czech NGO People in Need (PIN) as implementing partner for the programme’s component aiming at strengthening the LAG, based on an invitation to submit applications which was published by the CzDA in May 2019.

Thus, PIN will be responsible for the preparation of the announcement of the sub-grants to local subjects as well as for the conclusion of sub-grant contracts, the monitoring of implementation of the sub-grants and for ensuring proper technical and financial reporting on sub-grants. All these activities will be performed by PIN under the supervision and monitoring of the CzDA, based on the grant agreement concluded between the CzDA and PIN.

The size of these sub-grants will be subject to consideration of the available budget for particular components.⁴⁴ The maximum amount that is foreseen for sub-grants to local subjects totals 548,110 EUR (according to PIN's project approved budget). It is envisaged to progressively involve the LAG on the consultative basis in the selection of projects to be financed, their monitoring, etc.

The LAG will be supported by Georgian consultants on ad hoc basis.⁴⁵ The representative proposed by the Programme Steering Committee will regularly attend the PIN events and LAG session connected to the sub-grants (as was the case with the programme coordinator during the inception period). Thus, the Programme Steering Committee shall supervise the proper implementation of the project in question. Further details on the envisaged procedures and the role of the above mentioned stakeholders are outlined in the table below:

⁴⁴ The Embassy of the Czech Republic may distribute complementary „Small Scale Grants“ outside of this programme.

⁴⁵ 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.

Table: Roles of CzDA, PIN and LAG Aragvi in sub-grant procedures				
<i>Phase</i>	<i>Rules/Definitions</i>	<i>Role of CzDA</i>	<i>Role of PIN</i>	<i>Role of LAG</i>
Setting of overall targets and expected outputs/outcomes of sub-grants	PIN project document (available in English)	Changes in original project text based on securing of targets set by programme document for inception period (CzDA headquarters)	Submitting of project document ⁴⁶ text (based on programme document for the inception period), adjusting of the text according to CZDA requirements	- (LAG was established only in the process of project implementation)
Announcement and execution of sub-grant competitions	<p>Sub-grant announcement, separately for each round (available in Georgian)</p> <p>Internal rules of PIN office in Georgia defining the relationship with donors, including submission of any announcement for remarks (available in English)</p> <p>Internal rules of PIN office in Georgia for evaluating during sub-grant competition (available in English)⁴⁷</p> <p>Development strategy of Aragvi LAG (available in Georgian)</p>	<p>Text of announcements are submitted to CzDA programme coordinator (after its establishment, to the Steering Committee) for comments and remarks</p> <p>Representative of CzDA (Steering Committee) regular member of sub-grant selection committee (represented also representatives of local/central authorities, e.g. Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development)</p>	<p>Preliminary submitting of announcements text to the Steering Committee (before its establishment to the Programme Coordinator) for remarks and comments</p> <p>The announcement text makes reference both to programme text and LAG strategy</p> <p>Management of sub-grant competition (PIN staff representatives being members of selection committee), summarizing and announcement of its results</p>	<p>Authoring of development strategy for Aragvi communities, which further precises the targets and expected outcomes set by programme document (strategy approved by LAG in spring 2020)</p> <p>LAG representatives are among members of sub-grant selection committee</p> <p>As is obvious from these two points the role of LAG is purely consultative in its character</p>
Sub-grant projects implementation	Contracts of PIN with sub-grantees (available in Georgian)	Regular consultations, possible connection with experts (through programme coordinator)	Regular trainings and tutelage for sub-grantees, permanent control of implementation process	- (no financial transaction made or contracts signed through LAG)
Monitoring and audit of sub-grant projects results	Monitoring and audit part of programme document (available in English)	CzDA regular monitoring of PIN project (through programme coordinator and Embassy), commissioning of external audit	Cooperation with CzDA monitoring and external auditors	- (no monitoring or audit is to be conducted by LAG)

⁴⁶ i.e. by PIN in response to the Call for Proposals

⁴⁷ Internal rules of PIN defining both relationship with donors and evaluation of (sub-)grants competitions were checked with no discrepancies with CzDA rules found.

6.2.2. Public procurement

Public procurement is carried out when goods, services or works are requested. Regarding this Programme, it may be used for the implementation of activities aimed at achieving the results 2.1.2. and 2.2.2. Public procurement under this Programme will be governed by the Czech law. Green procurement principles will be applied to guarantee appropriate environmental standards.

Regarding the types of procurement used, CzDA announces public contracts for services, supplies and construction works. CzDA uses all types of public contracts as they are classified according to their estimated value, i.e. above-the-threshold public contracts, below-the-threshold public contracts, and small-scale public contracts.

The types of competitive procurement procedures used by CzDA are open procedure, negotiated procedure with publication, negotiated procedure without publication and simplified below-the-threshold procedure. All types of competitive procurement procedures are based on Act No. 134/2016 Coll. (the Public Procurement Act) with considering the Directive of the CzDA on Public Procurement. The exception are small-scale contracts that do not fall within the scope of the Act No. 134/2016 Coll. (the Public Procurement Act) and that are governed only by the Directive of the CzDA on Public Procurement. However, also the small-scale contracts must respect the basic principles (transparency, proportionality, equal treatment, non-discrimination) based on the EU legislation.

6.2.3. Provision of specialized services

Provision of specialized services would be obtained from relevant (governmental) public administration institutions. This modality may be used in the situation when only identification of unique know how and/or experience of the governmental institution is needed for particular component implementation. So far the National Park Krkonoše and the Forest Management Institute (FMI) established by the Ministry of Agriculture of the Czech Republic have been identified for the provision of specialized services under the Programme. The purpose of this modality is institutional capacity development, i.e. technical assistance on municipal level in the context of this programme.

6.3. Coordination of the implementation of the Programme

6.3.1. A Programme coordinator

A Programme coordinator was selected by CzDA to ensure a smooth implementation process including solving problems directly in the field. The Programme coordinator is based in Tbilisi and travels 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 will have a proven experience in project implementation as well as in assignments implemented in protected areas. The Programme coordinator will be contracted and managed directly by the Czech Development Agency and will cooperate closely with the Czech Embassy. She/he will cooperate with all potential donors, Georgian authorities at all levels, the administration of the Aragvi Protected Landscape, LAG, Programme beneficiaries and others. She/he will also be responsible for supporting the Czech Development Agency in ensuring gender mainstreaming and other cross-cutting issues throughout the Programme activities.

6.3.2. Steering Committee

The stakeholders will coordinate with each other the implementation of the Programme through the establishment of a Steering Committee as outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding to be concluded by donors (ADA, CzDA, SAIDC) and national/local partners (Municipality of Dusheti and Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture). The Steering Committee will serve as an advisory body providing guidance on all key issues related to the implementation of the Programme and the Committee will ensure a good flow of communication between all participants and other partners on important functionality.⁴⁸

⁴⁸The rules of procedures of the Steering Committee will be agreed upon during the Committee's 1st session.

6.4. Implementation Schedule

Implementation schedule	4th	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	1st	2nd	3rd	4th
	2020	2021				2022				2023			
SO 1. The economic situation improvement													
R 1.1. Tourism													
R 1.1.1. Tourism infrastructure is enhanced													
R 1.1.2. The offer of tourism services is enhanced													
R 1.1.3 More tourists visit the region													
R 1.2. Agriculture													
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. Knowledge and skills of local farmers are improved													
SO 2 Education and Social Services													
R 2.1. Education													
R 2.1.1. The knowledge of the local population about their region is deepened													
R 2.1.2. The local teachers are trained, the curricula are enlarged and the equipment of schools is upgraded													
R 2.1.3. The knowledge of the local people about the women empowerment and prevention of gender-based violence is enhanced													
R 2.1.4 The knowledge of local teachers, pupils and community about environmental challenges, climate change and waste reduction is enhanced													
R 2.2. Social services													
R 2.2.1. The education and skills of medical personnel are improved													
R 2.2.2. The availability of essential means for providing medical care is enhanced													
R 2.2.3. A basic social assistance and care is provided													
R 3 Sustainable management of the Aragvi Protected Landscape and good local governance													
SO 3 Good Local Governance													
R 3.1.1. Proposal of 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 protected areas are strengthened													
R 3.1.4. A Local Action Group is established and functioning													
R 3.1.5. Introduction and operations of sustainable forest management of the Aragvi Protected Landscape													

The inception period (August 2018-November 2020), during which preparatory activities of several projects connected to results commenced, constitutes an inseparable part of the programme implementation.

The inception period applies to results R3.1.1, R3.1.2, R3.1.3, which are tackled under the project Ensuring of sustainable management of Aragvi Protected Landscape (implementation body: Krkonoše National Park; project started in August 2018). During the inception period, the preliminary text of the Management plan for APL has been proposed.

Furthermore, the inception period applies to results R 3.1.4, R 1.1.2, R 1.2.1-1.2.5, R 2.1.1. and R 2.1.3, addressed by the project Sustainable Development of Communities in Aragvi (implementation body: PIN; project started in August 2019). During the inception period, several activities started, e.g. the LAG Aragvi has been established and the first strategic grants were distributed to local farmers and providers of tourism services (in order to support the innovative approach in their activities) as well as to Dusheti municipality.

Finally, the inception period applies to results R 1.1.1 and R 3.1.5, where preliminary research for tourism infrastructure and forestry management projects have been conducted (by the Programme coordinator and FMI respectively).

During the first 3 months of the Programme phase the CzDA will commission a more in-depth baseline study combined with an Environmental, Gender and Social Impact Assessment (EGSIA) of the Programme.

The assignment will be procured under one service contract and conducted by an external team of experts/consultants. The aims of the assignment will be twofold:

- The purpose of the baseline study will be to determine/validate the logframe indicators as well as all baseline and target values for these indicators.
- The purpose of the EGSIA will be to assess if the potential environmental, social and gender-related impacts and risks associated with the Programme.

The terms of reference for the assignment will be jointly agreed between CzDA and ADA. The report from the assignment will be submitted as part of the first progress report from the Programme.

Should the report or the related Risk Management and Sustainability Plan include any proposed measures to avoid, minimize or mitigate environmental, gender or social risks associated with the Programme, these recommendations will be followed up by CzDA with the implementing partners, after consultation with ADA.

As a result of the assignment, the logframe of the Programme will be updated with the final indicators, baseline and target values as well as the activities to be conducted in order to reach the Programme's expected results. The updated logframe will subsequently be submitted to the donors; following its approval this logframe will be used for reporting against the programme's implementation progress.

7. Sustainability

This Programme has been designed with sustainability being the key criterion. The Programme is following the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), particularly with SDG 2, 5, 12, 13 and 15. The key elements of sustainability incorporated in the Programme are as follows:

- All the activities supported within the Programme 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 Programme shall contribute to economic, environmental, social and cultural sustainability of this region (please see the chapter 5.4. for more details).
- 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 (environmental sustainability)
- The Local Development Strategy of the Local Action Group shall comprise a chapter on LAG's functioning after the end of this Programme
- The LAG shall start fund raising already as of 2020 to have a guaranteed source of financing once this Programme is over
- The Local Action Group⁴⁹ shall keep participating in the local decision making after this Programme has been finalized, which shall be a safeguard for the continuation of the region's development path
- Principles of green procurement will be applied within the Programme. Activities will be implemented in a green way as much as possible, e.g. events will consider water, energy, waste and materials efficiency measures.

8. Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring will take place in accordance with the project cycle methodology of the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs as described in the “Bilateral Development Cooperation Programme of the Czech

⁴⁹ The LAG may be later transformed into a different entity, e.g. a Community Council

Republic” for Georgia for 2018-2023⁵⁰. The project implementation will be inspected and monitored by the Agency in cooperation with the Embassy.

Internal monitoring is part of the project management and involves regular documentation of implemented activities, achievement of project outputs and expenditure of human and financial resources. The outcomes of the annual internal monitoring consist of stage plans, interim, annual and final reports and financial reports, which implementing partners contracted under the Programme’s components are obliged to submit to the Czech Embassy and the CzDA. External monitoring consists of verifying the information provided in interim and annual reports submitted by implementing partners. This information is verified during a project site visit by the relevant Embassy of the Czech Republic, then during a possible monitoring mission of the CzDA officers. The embassy monitors projects in its territory continuously and regularly, at least twice a year, and pays attention to the broader impact and linkages projects may have (with responsible state and local authorities).

Both internal and external monitoring will follow up and analyse the project implementation progress against the indicators and targets set out in the logframe (Annex 1). The logframe matrix including final indicators, baseline and target values will be submitted to ADA together with the first consolidated semi-annual progress report from the Programme. The logframe matrix will also include activities to be conducted in order to achieve each expected result.

A mid-term evaluation will take place before the end of 2021, for which CzDA and the Czech Embassy will invite ADA to take part in. The terms of reference for the mid-term evaluation will be shared with ADA for review/comments prior to launching the procurement procedure for the selection of the evaluation team. 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. Reporting

The CzDA will prepare and submit semi-annual narrative and annual financial progress reports. The reports will be **consolidated** progress and financial reports compiled by CzDA. The basis for consolidation will be the reports received by CzDA from its implementing partners.

⁵⁰Ref. http://www.czechaid.cz/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Programme_Georgia_CzechAid_2018_EN.pdf

The CzDA will also commission an Independent External Audit of the Programme on an annual basis according to the rules assessed by European Commission in the frame of the Pillar Assessment of the CzDA. The terms of reference for the external audit will be shared with ADA for review/comments prior to launching the procurement procedure for the selection of the auditors. The annual external audits will cover all expenditures under the Programme, i.e. including expenditures incurred within all budget lines items including all grant contracts and procurement contracts.

All progress and financial reports as well as the external audit reports will be shared with ADA.

10. Risks and risk management / mitigation measures

Description of the Risk (concrete event, its cause and possible negative impact)	Likelihood⁵¹	Possible impact⁵²	Risk management / Mitigation measures planned (to reduce either likelihood or possible impact or both)
Aragvi Protected Landscape is not established	2	3	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	1	3	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 disproportionally used by active summer residents at the expense of permanent residents	2	2	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	1	2	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	1	2	Interventions along the whole value chain will be supported, including the marketing of local products, regional trademarks, etc.

⁵¹ (1) very unlikely, (2) unlikely, (3) likely, (4) very likely.

⁵² (1) insignificant, (2) significant, (3) major.

The construction of the road through Pshavi and Piraketa Khevsureti is delayed	1	1	A part of the funding (e.g. related to tourism) may be conditioned by the completion of the road construction (i.e. the funding would be provided only once the road is completed).
The local population is not interested in participating in the LAG	1	3	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	2	2	Grants from this Programme shall be given only to providers of sustainable community-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.
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.	2	3	The Programme implementers will take a proactive approach to ensure their involvement in and benefits from the Programme.
Social barriers and gender-based stereotypes regarding traditional roles and duties of women in the society	2	3	Proactive measures will be taken to advocate for gender equality, promote women social and economic empowerment and ensure engagement of women and girls in the whole Programme

Annex 1 Logical Framework Matrix

(separate attachment)

Annex 2 Budget

(separate attachment)

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 and specific objective for improvement of good local governance, i. e. the specific objective 3.