



ORBELIANI

Catalysing Change Agents to Promote Volunteerism in Georgia

FINAL REPORT 2019

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1. Executive Summary

Catalysing Change Agents to Promote Volunteerism in Georgia was a four-year pilot project funded by Sida. The project allowed Orbeliani to incrementally build, test and operate an online platform for civically-minded individuals and groups in Georgia to take action for the benefit of the communities. Orbeliani's working assumptions were that individuals and groups across Georgia wanted to become civically active but faced barriers in accessing resources through the dominant model of small-grants. We assumed that even with minimal funding support – in the form of things/items needed for small-scale initiatives, people would come forward to solve local issues and implement ideas that matter for their communities. We assumed that giving people the space to process their own ideas without setting ridged requirements or classifications would empower people to set their own vision for change. Furthermore, we wanted to offer a new way of adhering transparency in finances and in the successes, challenges and learnings of individuals actions. Our assumptions were tested, verified and delivered results which exceeded our aspirations.

Backed by technology created for Orbeliani, we achieved national outreach and vetted potential transformational ideas from every corner of Georgia. Orbeliani supported 220 initiatives with SIDA funding alone by procuring items that they needed for their initiatives and we attracted funding from four more donors to support 78 initiatives in four years. We saw that 1181 people have actively volunteered their time and contributed additional resources, and they mobilised at least 3800 additional community members. Those who have actively volunteered improved their civic engagement skills and gained in confidence and an agency to act, while in those communities who were affected, we saw evidence of features of stronger, well-connected communities emerge and a diverse set of social impact. Our light touch model for engagement allowed them to follow their dreams and implement ideas that their communities wanted, and inspired dozens others to make their first steps.

During the four years, Orbeliani was able to successfully leverage resources from multiple donors. The popularity of the platform inspired Rustavi local government to pilot a new partnership model and demonstrated the potential for using Orbeliani in the realm of participatory digital democracy. As trust in NGOs is showing little signs of improvement in Georgia, Orbeliani's success of spurring trust into NGOs among change agents and affected communities is especially noteworthy. We have seen that when communities see the NGOs responding to their everyday needs and offer practical solutions and make funding more available to many actors – as happened in the case of Orbeliani, trust improves.

Orbeliani remains grateful to SIDA for taking the leap and being the first to invest in Orbeliani. The partnership has not been without its challenges. Orbeliani encourages SIDA to not default back to funding only established, large-scale actors and ideas, but to lead the way for more innovative ideas or partnerships. Orbeliani has outlined a number of recommendations for SIDA to consider in achieving this.

We have an important heritage in the form of the online platform infrastructure, a wide network of change agents all across Georgia, a good reputation in the NGO community and trust from the local communities, which hopefully guide us in the future. With that said, Orbeliani continues to faced challenges in influencing other donors and development agencies to adopt the model. Moving forward, SIDA has made the decision to exit the partnership. The future of Orbeliani lies in its challenges to achieve a sustainable funding model.

2. Why we started Orbeliani

Since gaining independence in 1991, Georgia has received over four billion U.S. dollars in international assistance. The flow of aid funds has varied significantly year to year and has mainly targeted either state institutions or well-established NGOs. Most projects are based in the capital and have sizeable and complex budgeting and proposal formulation requirements. Smaller grants have gone to domestic and smaller NGOs; however, individuals who could potentially become powerful change agents in their communities have had significant difficulty in getting what they need to undertake their own initiatives. These initiatives typically would have addressed specific needs and goals in direct response to a specific demand from their own communities.

Orbeliani decided that the gap in the current foreign assistance approach in Georgia presented an opportunity. The Orbeliani team came up with an innovative financing mechanism that directly addresses problems for volunteers, Georgian society and donors and the inroad of the internet and Georgian enthusiasm for online social networks would aid this.

With funding from Sida, Orbeliani started a pilot program in 2014 and in the following years followed up on its commitment to build an easy-to-use, accessible and transparent online platform and a funding structure, which would remove the barriers to funding through easier and more intuitive application reporting processes. Once tested and fully operational in the successive four years, the platform allowed to support 220 ideas proposed by change agents with funding from Sida alone. With funding from four more international donors, local municipality and private donations we have supported 78 more initiatives.

Running from 1 December 2014 to May 2019, Sida funding provided the backbone of Orbeliani's programming, critically enabling the organisation's establishment, platform development and launch.

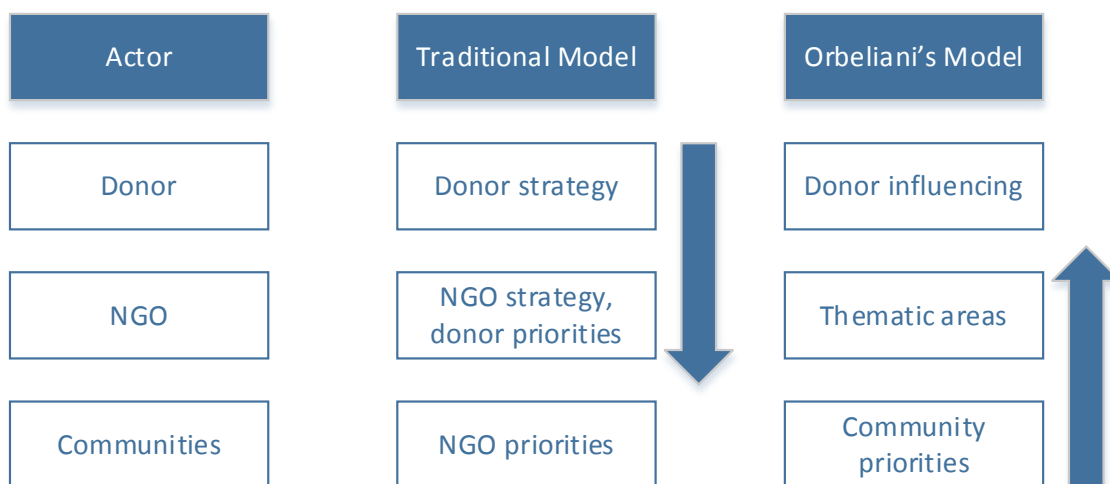
3. Orbeliani in the development context

Orbeliani’s model is analogous to developments underway in the humanitarian sphere in which “beneficiaries” are increasingly viewed as agents of their own recovery through modalities such as Cash Transfer Programming (CTP).

It rejects the model whereby activities at a community level are designed downwards through a process of mediation between donor and NGO strategies, following which communities will be brought on board to predetermined, sectoral interventions.

Instead, Orbeliani sought to act as a conduit for resource flow that channelled from the bottom up, allowing anyone with internet access¹ to propose an initiative within their community and receive material resources (procured goods) to support its implementation.

Once supported, initiatives are required to undertake minimal, light-touch narrative reporting on Orbeliani’s online platform. The platform details purchases made with Orbeliani’s support, to mitigate against procurement fraud and promote transparency of the initiatives. It also provides a mechanism for community engagement in and feedback towards the initiative; and a whistle-blowing mechanism where severe problems with an initiative can be reported.



Orbeliani believes that this approach provides tangible, relevant benefit, whilst encouraging individuals to take voluntary action within their communities, and develop more trust towards the non-profit sector in Georgia.

¹ Georgia has large and growing internet usage, with 74% of 18-35 year-olds and 46% of 36-55 year-olds using the internet at least once a month. Caucasus Barometer 2015, CRRC, Georgia, 2016, <http://caucasus-barometer.org/en/cb2015ge/FROINTR-by-AGEGROUP/>, accessed 26/06/2017.



4 ● Goal, purpose and achievements

Orbeliani's broader goal was to contribute to the mobilisation of a diverse civil society which promotes civic engagement in Georgia.

Project Purpose: To enable diverse 'male and female change agents' to take actions which support positive change in Georgia.

By focusing on change agents rather than organizations, Orbeliani wanted to lay the foundation for a broader culture of engagement in society as a whole. We wanted to work with active citizens, neighborhood organizers, individual activists and people who want to take action, even if they do not call themselves activists. It is this group Orbeliani sought to engage and instil with good civil society skills and habits.

Since one of our concerns was that the funding went mostly to the NGOs based in the capital, we wanted to move the funding away from Tbilisi and engage with change agents outside of the capital, mostly in rural areas and geographically isolated communities. Furthermore, since we focused on "broad" engagement, Orbeliani wanted to also reach out to those with limited previous experience of getting support from donors/NGOs, the so called 'usual suspects' among others.

4.1 So how did we perform? – key findings

To achieve these goals Orbeliani's outreach strategy was multi-faceted. First, we used a variety of channels to reach potential change agents, including traditional face-to-face informational meetings with individuals, groups and communities, outdoor advertising including posters and a billboard, and online advertising using Facebook. Secondly, we used a variety of spaces, both conventional and unconventional, to identify and engage with potential applicants including NGO offices, community houses, local municipality buildings, schools, kindergartens, coffee-shops, shops, *marshutkas*, *birzhas* and private houses of local community leaders. This was done to ensure diversity, as described above, but also be able to find safe places to engage with women, in some of the communities.

4.2 Who did we engage with? – Age, Gender and Ethnicity and more

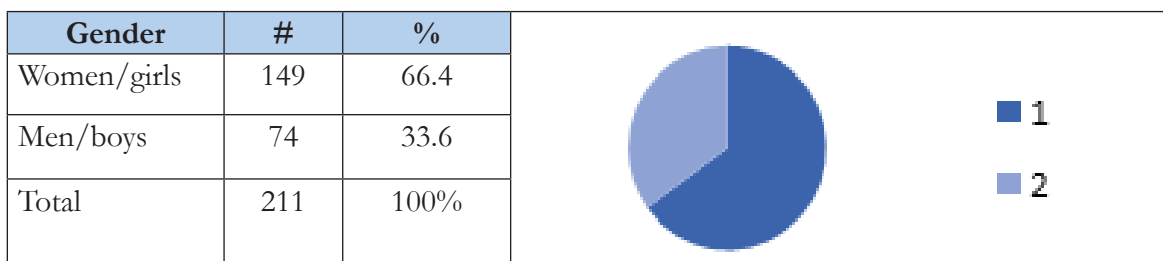
Age

We did not intentionally target only young people, since we wanted to engage with anyone with the desire to act. However, the majority of those who came forward were young - 56% per cent are in the age of 16-29 but a significant portion of 44% were of 30 and up, which served well of our intention.

Gender

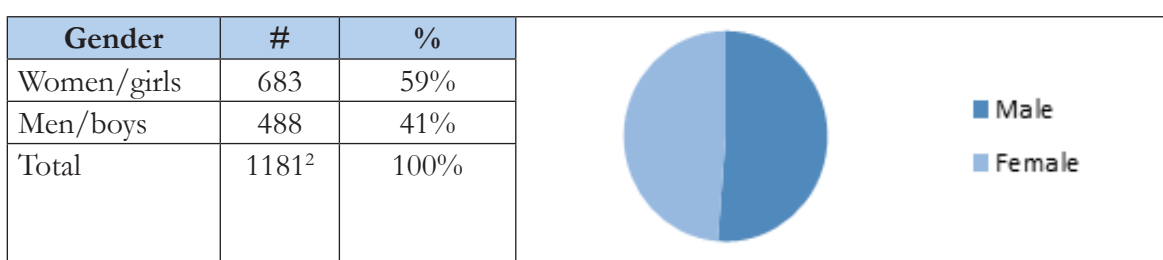
In consideration of gender stereotypes, barriers that women face in civic participation and public life, we set the goal that 40% of people we engaged with would be women. However, to our surprise, we ended up engaging more women than men. Participation in the project, both in terms of the change agents leading the initiatives and the volunteers engaged, has leaned towards women. 67% of all change agents were female.

Monitoring results: gender segregation of the change agents



This disparity is similarly reflected in lead participants reporting on the number and gender of volunteers engaged in the implementation of the initiatives.

Monitoring data: number of volunteers in the team leading the initiatives



Ethnicity:

As expected an overwhelming majority of the change agents are ethnically Georgian. Twelve out of 211 change agents (5%) belong to ethnic Azerbaijani, ethnic Kist, ethnic Roma and ethnic Armenian. Given that we did not apply any quotas for higher inclusivity, we believe that this is a significant proportion.

Internet access:

An overwhelming majority of the funded change agents have regular access to the Internet. In an online survey, 95% said they use internet every day.

Education and jobs:

The demographics further show that 72% of funded change agents have higher education and 66% have regular jobs. The data also demonstrates that the platform is a good opportunity for higher education institution students, who formed 11 % and 6% of school pupils in the representative sample.

Geography:

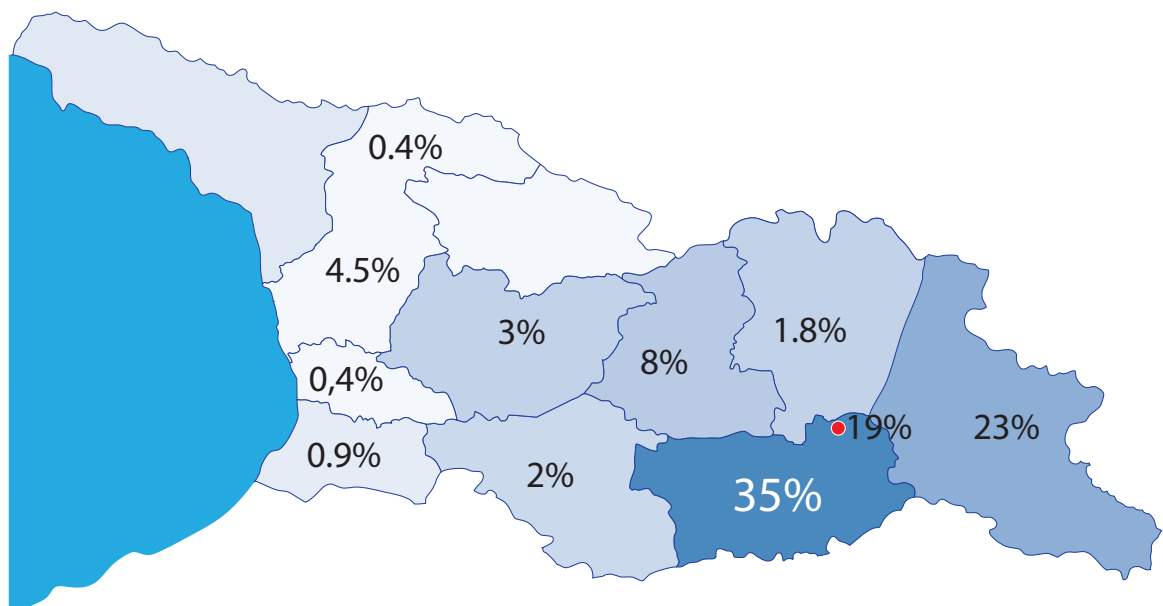
The majority of supported initiatives were implemented in Kvemo Kartli and Kakheti, primarily because Orbeliani chose to work in those two regions, due to operational limitations in the last phase of the project. The partnership opportunity with Rustavi also affected the final figures. The third largest location was Tbilisi, most likely due to the higher concentration of potential actors (think of the proportion of Tbilisi population against the country population). We believe that we would have ended up with a higher number of applications in Tbilisi, unless Orbeliani limited the applications from Tbilisi intentionally to meet the program results.

What is interesting with the Tbilisi case, a neighbourhood meeting was never organized in Tbilisi due to its geographic peculiarity, and we only used social media to solicit applications, unlike all the other

² This is the number of the volunteers in core team. The teams then engaged with other community members, thus the number of volunteers is higher.

regions. This shows that with information and access to internet, many actors use the opportunity, even if face-to-face interaction with the organization has not taken place. See the chart below for more details

Region	# of funded initiatives	%
Achara	2	0.9%
Guria	1	0.4%
Upper Svaneti	1	0.4%
Tbilisi	42	19%
Mtskheta-Tianeti	4	1.8%
Kakheti	50	23%
Samegrelo	10	4.5%
Samtskhe-Javakheti	5	2%
Kvemo Kartli	78	35%
Shida Kartli	18	8%
Imereti ⁷	7	3%
Nationwide	2	0.9%
Total	220	100



New actors:

Since we sought for broader engagement and diversity, we minimized the barriers of engagement. Prior experience of managing a project was not required, the application process was simple and through successful role models in their community has attracted many new actors to apply. We found that 41% of those supported had never received funding from NGOs. This included those who applied for NGO funding but were rejected, those who did not know where to apply or did not want to apply for funding before.

Further, most of the team members interviewed/ surveyed as part of the fieldwork at the end of the program said they would not have done what they did had they been required to start an organization, no matter how much formality this required, i.e. an NGO, a CBO, or any other formal arrangement. This allowed Orbeliani to tap into the untouched potential of male and female change agents who wanted to do good but were not willing to be part of any formal arrangement to be able to do so.

Based on these demographics, we have a few interesting findings:

Majority of those who came forward seem to be somewhat higher on the social economic scale: they have higher education, they have regular jobs and have good access to the internet. This is not surprising. A number of research in civic engagement practices in other countries have also demonstrated this trend. Nonetheless, what is interesting and noteworthy is that there is a significant number who say they are jobless – 9%, or self-employed 8%, who also decided to engage and contribute to the community. While individual endowments in terms of money, time and civic skills is believed to influence the likelihood of engagement, we saw in Orbeliani's case it encouraged many more without at least one of these assets to participate and influence in decisions that affect their lives and the lives of the communities.

Furthermore, face-to-face meetings and direct interaction with potential change agents positively influenced the action to apply for funding. Those communities where we had community outreach in addition to social media generated higher number of applications. In fact, in some of the communities e.g. ethnic Kist community digital interaction would not have worked, given the internet restrictions for women in the community. However, for more experienced and confident applicants, direct interaction was not necessary and being informed of the opportunity was enough. This is what seems to have happened in Tbilisi.

Those who engaged with Orbeliani have regular access to internet. With so much hope pinned on digital democracy tools and e-governance in Georgia, there is a need to make sure that access to the internet is equitable, that opportunities for resources and development aid is also equitable.

While the majority of the change agents were young (aged 16-29), we engaged a significant proportion beyond this age. Obviously, there is no doubt that investing in youth is a strategic choice, but solely supporting youth civic engagement programs risks losing the potential of people in other age groups. As youth migrate from rural areas to Tbilisi, opening up opportunities for those in other age groups who are less likely to leave and involving them in civic engagement activities, will be increasingly more important.

The experimental nature of our engagement methods, the combination of on the ground and online outreach resulted in mobilizing a diverse set of actors, living in urban and rural areas of different ethnicity and new actors, who had little experience and links with development finance and the NGO community. The innovative nature of Orbeliani and the use of the internet-based platform created a more equitable field to compete for resources with ideas and it has been central in finding new ways of reaching previously less included groups.

5. Working Together



Result 1: Male and female change agents work with others to develop creative solutions to local problems

Our hypothesis: Orbeiani saw a great potential for grassroots-initiated change by engaging with potential change agents, individuals driven by passion. We believed that people bring tremendous social value, whether working individually or collectively and encouraging them to take action for the benefit of others, was a worthy cause in itself. Further, we thought that these individuals do not always seek formalization and they can be more driven by a cause, rather than by affiliation with an organization. At the same time, for the sake of achieving a broader civic engagement, we also wanted to encourage taking collective action, mobilizing local networks to spur social capital of the communities.

Orbeiani's instructions on priority areas or actions during idea challenges initially was intentionally very broad. We did not either limit the funding support to only groups, neither did we make it time-bound, since we wanted to make a welcoming, inviting space for all people regardless of their affiliation, networks, experience to come forward. As a result, the number of actors involved in initiatives, themes of funded activities and forms of action have varied.

5.1 Forms of collective action

Yet, in order to classify and categorize the civic engagement activities supported through the platform, help understand the nature of activities and present them in a summarized manner, we used the following dimensions/features to look at them:³

- Whether the activity is undertaken by individual or groups of individuals
- Whether it is time bound or one off, or ongoing through time
- Whether it was reactive or proactive

We found that an overwhelming majority of the supported initiatives were undertaken by a group of individuals. Only 11 out of 215 initiatives were led by a single actor and mostly they were about sharing skills and knowledge, like English language classes, sewing skills, cloisonné enamel techniques or providing some kind of service (e.g. veterinary care) on a voluntary basis to their community members. With that said, in majority of the cases, we see a few of individuals giving the spark, and the leaders mobilizing existing networks within their community and beyond it.

Another common feature was that the majority of engagement activities were time-bound, that is, involved actions that were meant to start and complete to achieve a particular goal, like conducting a series of trainings/meetings/workshops, events which served a particular goal for a particular period of time, which did not require follow-up activities. There was not a single one-off initiative, which most likely has been filtered during selection process and did not win in the competition of other more long-term initiatives. A significant portion of initiatives, 47 out of 220, are those which are still ongoing in some form and there are some actions still taking place. These are mostly youth gathering places, or green places, which have been further developed.

³ This is the framework suggested to categorize civic engagement activities by David Beetham and others in D Beetham, A Blick, H Margetts and S Weir, *Power and Participation in Modern Britain*, Democratic Audit, London, 2008.

Even though Orbeliani has been touted for fast turnaround of ideas unlike other grant-making mechanisms, it has not been used to support actions/campaigns that are reactive to a policy decision/government decision/ or about a particular urgent problem. Again, this is mostly because idea cycles/selection and procurement process may not always fall on occurring events, to allow potential change agents react and use Orbeliani as a funding source, or at least it has not earned a reputation for being such. There was only one such initiative Campaign for Labour Rights, which aimed to bring the difficult conditions of the miners closer to citizens through photo stories and posters around Tbilisi <https://app.orbeliani.net/en/initiatives/positivesocial-change-86/>, which was a reaction to the death of miners in Tkibuli. In all the other examples the action was proactive, with actors raising and campaigning for different issues they care about or solving an issue relevant for their community. What is worth mentioning is how a number of initiatives were undertaken not because it would benefit the doers, but rather those they care about, or issues that they care about.

Overall our monitoring data has suggested that 1,181 volunteers were involved in the teams working on the initiatives. However, based on the interviews with volunteers, they engaged with at least 3,800 additional community members.

5.2 What has changed for volunteers?

Before looking at the outcome of civic engagement activities, we also looked at what has changed for the volunteers themselves. We decided to apply a four-type power tool to look at, analyze and summarize the change that volunteers have experienced as a result of undertaking initiatives.

While power is often described in negative terms, it can also have a positive expression and it is recommended to apply it in development programs. “Power to” is about being able to act. “Power with” describes collective action or agency, “Power within” describes the sense of confidence and dignity that comes after realizing the possibility of doing something about it.⁴

So, how does the power lens help analyse the change that Orbeliani volunteers experienced?

Power to: Since many of Orbeliani volunteers have worked with those who were new to the development sector, we found that Orbeliani has become a starting point for many volunteers to act. It helped them develop skills and capacities in the process of taking action and so did their realization that they can affect change.

There have been many examples across the initiatives where change agents have acquired new skills and knowledge through applying and leading the mini initiatives as well as participation in it. This is particularly important for those who are new to the field, who have never applied for a grant or implemented an initiative before. The starting point for the volunteers is different and so are their pathways of gaining knowledge and acquiring skills.

When asked what skills they gained, many of the volunteers mention the initiative manage-

⁴ Veneksen, L, Miller, V. (2002), A new weave of Power, People and Poolitics: The Action Guide for Advocacy and Citizen Participation. Available at www.participatorymethods.org

ment skills, time management, speaking in public, presenting information, facilitation of a meeting, negotiation skills, communication, event planning and organizing. Along with these skills also were mentioned more self-confidence and a can-do approach to deal with the community issues. More importantly, the skills are transferable from one initiative to another, as the volunteers have continued to apply for follow-up funding and implement more initiatives. Here are a few quotes from the online survey with volunteers.

“Since this was my first ever project that I’ve written and submitted and it was successful, my self-esteem has increased” - Nino Nadasbvili

“This process has shown that we can do good things, that our ideas are worthwhile and can be implemented. One funded project gives us belief and motivation that you can do more and you can try submitting projects in other organisations too” - Maka Peikrishvili

Power with: Those who wanted to act have started mobilizing local networks, whether within their immediate communities or beyond for shared purposes. They describe how the new opportunity encouraged them to approach new people and engage them in their activities. They have used tangible and intangible assets of the community, like their knowledge skills, interests to address shared needs.

The emerging change agents have realized the value of working together and the network resources. As they gained recognition within their communities, they went beyond their neighborhoods to gain additional resources. Moreover, volunteer engagement events, organized by Orbeliani, have provided opportunities not only exchange ideas, but also exchange networks.

Some of the initiatives seem to be reviving the ‘**power within**’ for either involved volunteers doing the projects or for those affected by the program. Those who have used the chance and came forward feel greater confidence and satisfaction about their achievements. Becoming responsible for managing a project or doing something good for their communities has increased their self-esteem and responsibility for managing initiatives, helped discover and realize their potential and gain in self-confidence.

For instance, one volunteer describes her journey from a local teacher to an activist.

*“The attempt to implement this initiative and finding the pathways, has become a motivation to me to join Gori Democracy School, and ultimately become a volunteer trainer.”
- Suzi Beridze, Shindisi Community Centre*

“I have learned how to talk in public and to community members and make the local-governance representatives do things for the community”

Power to empower - On the other hand, the empowerment initiatives targeted for others seem to also develop personal growth and transformation. Personal empowerment, developing the first step has proved transformative for some. For Ilkhan Gasanova finding her self-confidence after a short exchange program is describing the change she has experienced:

*“I would not go to anywhere alone before but now I have experience. I have learned overcoming difficulties. If I did this in this project, then it means that I can do it, and will do it next time, whether it is a Georgian family, German or other. Now I realized that I can do things by myself, if I go somewhere else to study at University or for some other purpose, without Mom a friend or ateacher, I will be able to do that. I can do it.”
This year Ilkhan Gasanova left for Turkey to study at University.*

6 Mapping Social Outcomes



Result 2: Initiatives make a positive social impact in respective communities

Following Orbeliani's mission to focus on bottom-up grassroots initiatives, Orbeliani did not have predefined targets of 'positive social impact' at the outset. This was intentional: we wanted to unlock the power of individuals and group, so that they have the freedom to define the change they wanted to achieve, experiment, use creativity and define the social issues they wanted to tackle. We assumed that simple application, quick turnaround of ideas, minimum bureaucracy, flexibility in action plans, no restrictions on geography and demographics of change agents would aid that.

As a result, the platform supported a wide range of initiatives, addressing diverse social issues, targeting and benefitting different groups. At the same time, since civic engagement was something we cared about, we expected that more than half of the projects would contribute to community development and one of its objectives.

Orbeliani adopted a UN definition of community development broadly as "a process where community members come together to take collective action and generate solutions to common problems." Further, we monitored the initiatives in relation to the agreement of the projects' contribution to the following objectives:

- creates wealth and gives men and women access to its benefits
- cares for community members, when they need it
- provides an environment that is safe and attractive
- enables people to express and celebrate their creativity and diverse cultures
- enables men and women to participate in decisions that affect their lives

6.1 How did we perform?

It is challenging to categorize community initiatives serving just one clear objective, since many could be serving more than one. Nonetheless, we attempted to classify them for better understanding of the nature of the initiatives and present them.

We found that almost half of the initiatives aimed to contribute to creating an "environment that is safe and attractive for the community members." This included arranging and restoring green spaces, gardens, parks, community gardens, damaged areas in forests, creating spaces attractive for children by building playground, stadiums and other sports facilities. The second most popular category were the initiatives, which could classify as ones "caring for community members, when they need it" aimed to benefit socially vulnerable groups, including elderly, disabled children with activities like increasing access to food for socially vulnerable and elderly, providing services to disabled people, creating playing facilities for disabled children, providing different services for elderly. Since the funding cap for initiatives was small, there were only a handful of initiatives, which aimed to generate income for the community members and could somewhat qualify as contributing to the objective 1. See the table below for more details.

Community Dev-OBJECTIVE	# OF INITIATIVES	KEYWORDS
Creates wealth and gives men and women access to its benefits	3	Small-scale income-generating initiatives
Cares for community members, when they need it	38	Initiatives targeting the needs/ interests of disabled children, elderly, socially vulnerable
Provides an environment that is safe and attractive	106	Initiatives aiming at protecting environmental protection, awareness, education and creating spaces for sports, healthy lifestyle, youth exchange
Enables people to express and celebrate diverse cultures	8	Art studios, cultural events
Enables men and women to participate in decisions that affect their lives	21	Initiatives giving awareness of girls/women's rights, girls/women's issues

Small social infrastructure projects seemed to be one of the key priorities in the regions and widely popular in the communities. Building playgrounds for children, arranging and equipping sports facilities for youth, building/renovating libraries and similar were in high demand and have turned out an effective way to bring communities together around a common cause.

Notably, the skills, reputation and engagement strategy of the local champions who led the project determined the success and the level of participation of the related communities. Moreover, since the available resources through Orbeliani platform were limited, the volunteers obtained additional financial resources through either alternative platforms (e.g. a crowd-funding platform) or other local NGOs while the local communities have contributed labour to all the initiatives. What makes playground projects stand out is that they usually bring the members of the entire community together irrespective of their age and gender. This has provided the local communities to unleash the local potential, generate excitement in the community and turn this energy into a practical project responding to the needs of parents, but especially youth and mothers. In one of the communities, the project turned an overall sense of apathy into a can-do spirit and created a sense of momentum for collective endeavours (see the story of play-ground building in the Urta village for greater details).

Youth spaces/community centers

Suzi Beridze in Shindisi, Ketí Mchedlishvili in Garikula, Mari Devidze in Nikozi, made the most of many different types of local assets, and had great success in mobilizing networks, starting new relationships and producing new ideas in their local areas. First, they identified unused buildings, then worked with the community to refurbish it using local skills and volunteers to turn it into community spaces. All of the three spaces received materials from Orbeliani worth no more than 1,000 USD and are still up and functioning. Because they were eager to create such spaces, many youth groups have worked with the local government successfully, so that public often-unused spaces gain new life. The spaces are still run in a very open way, mostly by youth for youth.

The stories of Suzi and others are similar to 17 other change agents who set up community centers or youth exchange centres in many other communities, which are used as hubs for youth to gather, exchange skills and ideas, plan community initiatives and hold various events. Notably, resources granted through Orbeliani served as a start-up investment, catalyzing the launch of

completely new centres in Nikozi, Khikhani, Shindisi, Gurjaani, Sagarejo, Senaki, Giorgeti and Gurjaani communities. Centers in Senaki, Nikozi, Sagarejo centers were set up three years ago and they are still functioning and centers in Shindisi, Khikhani, Navazi and Pshaveli, Kazbegi established two years later have been full of activities for more than two years. Only three out of 17 supported centers – Tsurtavi, Giorgeti, Sanavardo have limited activities, mainly because the leaders of the initiatives left the community and the handover of leadership was not successful.



Inclusivity and Integration

Whilst integration was not a key target under the SIDA grant, some respondents identified ways in which Orbeliani-supported initiatives created space for different ethnic, ability and age groups to integrate within their communities.

For instance, One initiative supported by the project has sought to promote the integration of ethnic minorities through youth drama in Nakhiduri. An ethnic Azeri respondent praised the initiative for raising his confidence, improving his Georgian language skills and providing new opportunities to meet with Georgians of his age. Another initiative worked with Roma community in Kvemo Kartli region and created a mobile summer school all led by volunteers to prepare the Roma children for public school and encourage parents to send them to school (see a picture of one of the lessons below).

Numerous initiatives have also worked to deliver services for and support the integration of people with disabilities. The project has supported initiatives to adapt or create infrastructure for children with disabilities, including play areas in [Khashuri](#) and [Akhalstikhe](#). Other projects have sought to build integration of People with disabilities through shared learning activities, specifically through arts and crafts in [Senaki](#) or cooking classes in [Marneuli](#).

Orbeliani was very committed to support these groups, particularly ethnic minority communities. Therefore, we so sought complimentary funding from three more donors and supported forty-eight additional initiatives in this area. This means, that almost one sixth of the initiatives



were either proposed by minority community members and/or were targeting the minority community members.

6.2 How do the affected communities perceive change?

In addition to Orbeliani's observations on the change that the funded initiatives have caused, we wanted to see how people within those communities, not just the change agents themselves, interpreted and perceived social impact of the supported initiatives. For that purpose Orbeliani recruited professional interviewers and conducted face-to-face surveys and solicited feedback from the people who either directly benefitted, using the service and/or were merely aware of the initiative happening in their community. We conducted the questionnaire in three cycles and in total which involved asking 704 community members their opinions about 52 supported initiatives. We conducted a random sampling on the supported initiatives during all the three cycles in consultation with MEAL expert. See a full list of the covered initiatives in the annex.

Based on the analysis of the survey, what we found is that the affected communities believe that:

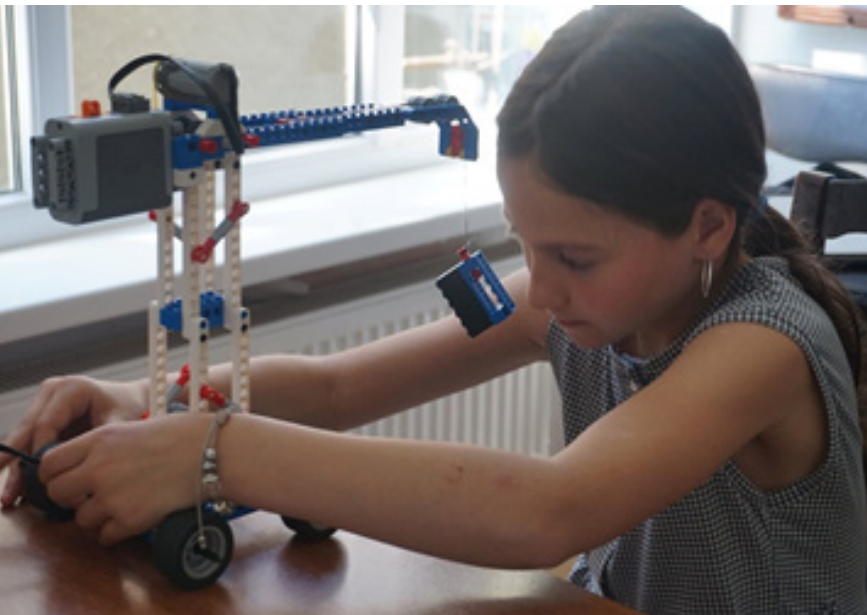
- The clean up activities and informal education courses in Martvili, installation of creative bins in Koda and Kutaisi, installation of separate plastic collection boxes in Senaki and campaigning in some of these settlements were productive and affected the behavior of the communities to the positive. It reduced littering and increased responsibility of the community in Senaki, Martvili, Koda and Kutaisi communities.

“We were skeptical at the beginning, we thought what would that [just repainting of the bins’] will change. But we were wrong! People would throw garbage bags in the street. That no longer happens”!

“It’s so positive that the youth make small steps. I believe in them and I know that they will not stop”

- Some of the initiatives provided quick and practical solutions to everyday neighbourhood problems. Like, creative Zebra crossings encouraged people to abide by traffic rules and stay safe in Tetrtskaro and Koda and address signboards in Tbilisi and Rustavi allowed the community to avail from ambulance, fire and taxi services with greater ease, a bus stop in Koda provided a space for the community to feel protected in bad weather. Some initiatives made public/neighborhood spaces better kept and more beautiful in Koda and Samghereti and Duisi and elsewhere.

“When women in the neighbourhood saw the flowers, they also decided to install similar pots and planted flowers. They brought flowers from their friends and neighboring community. All were excited.”



- Youth camps, informal education courses and trainings and youth spaces improved connection between youth, fostered interethnic relations and built trust and links between the communities. The trainings increased various skills, like English, math, enhanced confidence and motivation of the engaged youth to become more active and helped choose right professions in Tetrtskaro, Akhalsopeli, and Eniseli communities.

“I was so excited about this project [Lego robotics courses for girls] that I would tell everybody I knew to follow the opportunity. My children look forward to each lesson and her motivation to do classes has also increased.”

*Parent of a child who took
Lego robotics courses*

„ We saw conflicts happening between youth of our villages. This was one of the reasons why the camp was set up and the children made friends with each other.” - Parent

“The youth space was not only important for youth but for us, parents too. We feel at peace when they are in that space. Many in our community do not have access to internet. The space created one for them and children study together, they have become closer to each other” - Parent

“The knowledge of English skills is important today. Therefore, this initiative was very much needed and timely for our children.” – parent of a child who benefitted from English language courses



“Such projects (geocaching) should be funded, not just trainings. This was a super idea with super results...such initiatives are important for ecological education and having direct contacts with nature”.

Social Fridge in Gori and a Communal Fridge in Akhmeta increased access to food and reduced the risk of hunger for socially vulnerable.

“There were many people in Gori community who took food from the fridge and it was vitally important for them.”

“I could not keep my food products anywhere. Now I can keep things in the communal fridge and they take care of them. They even cook dishes for us and we feel taken care of.”- a pensioner benefitting from communal fridge in Akhmeta

Some initiatives created safe space for women to come forward and have social interaction in Akhmeta and Tetrtskaro.

“This initiative engaged many women. They were competing with each other. Women who would not leave the house, because of the domestic work, have an ambition now to find a job and were involved in community initiatives.”

Many initiatives have built more green spaces, restored damaged sites and changes the attitude of the community to the nature in Samghereti, Manglisi, Samtredia, Lagodekhi.

“Many youth did not even know that Samtredia Park existed. This initiative sparked interest of youth in the natural assets that our city has”



The initiatives created spaces and facilities for children to play, have fun and become healthier, create a more comfortable space for older generation too, and on the sites adapted to disabled children, fostered creative a more inclusive environment.

“This initiative [sports for everyone] has enlivened our village. “

“There were bushes and wild plants in this area before. The square is next to a Justice House and pensioners had nowhere to wait as they queued. Now they can sit on the benches next to the space”.

“Youth did not go to theatre before even to watch plays. Now they want to play in the performances”

“We turned a trash dump into an attractive place, where children can play and have fun”

“I brought my childhood. I live nearby and she made friends here. Her opinion and attitude towards disabled children has changed and say that she will build a similar playground for them.”

A group of young actors in Tetrtskaro formed a children’s theatre in Tetrtskaro, revived cultural life in the community and provided space for the community to interact.

“It was important as the old generation and the new generation, we were together and shared our excitement and experience”.

6.3 Using Community Organizing Lens

Beyond this general classification of the funded community development initiatives, we wanted to see whether features of strong communities, community organizing and well-being have also appeared in Orbeliani supported initiatives. We decided to use the framework used by Nesta Foundation, to assess its community development projects under Neighbourhood Challenge program, since even though the scale of funding for project was different, the flexible, experimentation-focused approach that Nesta used to encourage community development was similar.⁵

Nesta led by the Learning Partner, Icarus, used the following four features of community organizing and community development based on the summary and meta-analysis of research reports:

- a. Communities are making the most of local assets – in particular the skills, passions and energies of local people, and the places and spaces where people can meet and make things happen.
- b. People and groups are well connected with each other and with those outside their community.
- c. People have the ability and ambition to drive change.
- d. People have opportunities to influence what happens in their community.

By applying the same framework, we analyzed the supported initiatives and found that mostly the first three features appeared in various degrees in all of social infrastructure/community spaces initiatives funded by Orbeliani, while the evidence of influencing change/decision making was limited there. Given that it is impossible to bring the details of 215 initiatives due to limited space, here are a few examples:

⁵ Neighbourhood Challenge Learning Paper, (2013), Nesta Foundation, available at <https://www.nesta.org.uk/report/neighbourhood-challenge-learning-paper/>

Communities are making most of local assets:



Examples:

- In Giorgeti, a young teacher Nino Modebadze built a youth space with purchases around 250 USD, as she brought a community of parents, neighbours, and students, who contributed skills and resources to set up the space.
- In Gori, community fridge was set up four years ago and is still functioning based on food donations of hundreds of people from Gori. It generated solidarity in Gori and has made food accessible for those who need it.
- In Akhalsopeli, Shorena Karalashvili organized a youth camp for youth of neighboring villages. With initial camp equipment donated through the platform, the organizers local government, a footballer, sports federation and businessman, and the local government decided to support the project every year.
- In Urta, Ukanapashavi, Duisi, people invested their skills/energy/time came together to make their spaces attractive and green and continue investing and maintenance.
- In Aghatakalia, Kvemo Kartli, educated, successful leaders from Roma community, worked with the locals and volunteer teachers, set up a summer school for Roma children, to spark their interest in education and prepare some others to school. Given that Roma children stay out of school and some up the age of 9 had never gone to one, this short course made miracles: five children went to school.

People and groups are well connected with each other and with those outside their community:



There is more than enough evidence that connection between the team and within the community has considerably improved as a result of the initiatives. Those who needed to draw resources from outside of the community set new connections and used network resources for the initiatives.

Examples:

- In Khoni, Tamar Ugulava and her team members reached out to book stores and other volunteers using her personal connections, new networks acquired through Orbeliani and thanks to the new relationships she attracted new resources for her newly established youth club;
- In Khikhani, the community center has increased the reputation and recognition of the group. After Orbeliani's funding they are invited to various exhibitions, cultural events, trainings in Marneuli and volunteers outside their community visit the centre to offer different training courses and informational sessions;
- In Gurjaani, local environmental activists connected to Orbeliani-supported social enterprise and learned how to recycle paper on the spot;
- In Shindisi, Suzi Beridze set up a community centre and involved youth, who have never volunteered before. In addition to building the space, the youth developed new initiatives to meet local needs, like environmental clean-up campaigns and even helped one socially vulnerable family to send children to school by filing papers and fundraise from the private sector.



People have opportunities to influence to what happens in their community

Examples:

- Anti-lead Pollution campaigners mobilized public pressure on the government to take actions to address lead contamination issues. The core group were invited by Minister of Health to consult possible solutions to the issue;
- Youth activism and enthusiasm in Rustavi has encouraged Rustavi Mayor's Office to assign another 25,000 GEL to be spent on community-led initiatives, which citizens will select.
- A successful co-creation project in Rustavi kindergarten encouraged Rustavi Mayor's Office to assign additional funding to kindergartens, so that they replicate the model of community building in other spaces.
- A group of activist developed Tbilisi Metro Maps and redesigned it engaging architects, designers and activists. Tbilisi Metro Administration has decided to reprint the maps and used the product in successive years.



People have the ability and ambition to drive change

Examples:

- In Shindisi, Kazbegi, Sagarejo, Gurjaani, Garikula, Khikani, Talaveri, Kuldara and other community centers, there are more opportunities for formal and informal learnings.
- In the majority of the communities, the engaged youth have greater confidence and skills to initiate community projects, as described. More than half of the volunteers interviewed at the end of the project have implemented at least one more community initiative after Orbeliani.⁶
- In Rustavi and Tetrtskaro, more youth are aware how the local council works and how citizens can participate in their activities.

⁶ In a survey conducted over the phone, 28 out of 50 volunteers said they have implemented an initiative.

7. Trust towards NGOs

Understanding of what NGOs in Georgia do and having trust in them has been consistently low in Georgia. Therefore, Orbeliani wanted to look whether funding opportunity from Orbeliani and the initiatives focusing on practical solutions for local issues would have any effect on the trust levels towards NGOs.

What we found is that 80% of change agents that we worked with have reported an increased trust towards NGOs. Furthermore, what is more noteworthy with less risk of courtesy bias in the responses, is an increased trust level into NGOs among the affected communities, as revealed in face-to-face surveys. Seventy five per cent of those communities interviewed face-to-face said they feel more trusting towards NGOs than before. Further analysis of their responses, showed that the mistrust was caused by their lack of understanding what NGOs in general do and their misperceptions about them changed after seeing real results and real changes happening in their communities.

Given that 'bad rumours' circulate about NGOs and their funding, I had a feeling that this organisation does its best to support communities and volunteers – this is why my trust into NGOs have increased.

This initiative has allowed many people to become actors, participate and deal with the problems of their communities. Besides, this process was transparent and this changes perception and attitudes towards organisations.

"I loved that anybody can implement an idea with Orbeliani. They value an idea and now the influence of the applicant" – Tinatin Kulinanashvili

"Most of the NGOs disburse big grants which are for large scale activities. Neither they care much about volunteerism and activist groups. I believe that the support by Orbeliani is more result oriented and great opportunity for volunteers. Small outcomes that this project is producing are bringing, mostly in rural areas, are real. This is why the trust towards NGOs has increased." – Kristine Mujiri

8. Donor uptake

Orbeliani set ambitions to share learning and influence donors and agencies to improve the mechanisms they use to support the people of Georgia, whereby the people themselves drive change. Further, Orbeliani sought to promote a model where transparency of aid is improved and where the people of Georgia can access resources easily, without facing the heavy burden of paperwork currently associated with aid.

Nonetheless, we had great success in testing, demonstrating and promoting the alternative – how the new funding mechanism works and what results it produces. We found that we were watched with great interest from donors and international NGOs for how this innovation would fare. We promoted Orbeliani through bilateral meetings, donors and practitioner events, participation in civic and social impact forums in Georgia, Poland, Hungary, meeting with various grant-makers and connecting to peers and allies. At the same time, the events organized by Orbeliani have been innovative in terms of raising issues that are rarely discussed, like the aid accountability and how to make it better responding to the wants and needs of people at the grassroots level. As a result of these efforts and our programming, Orbeliani's awareness and recognition on the local NGO landscape and building a reputation of offering a new way of doing things and new thinking has been very successful.

In these four years, Orbeliani attracted funding from four donors in addition to SIDA, including the Embassy of Netherlands, the Embassy of Czech Republic, the UNDP and the USAID through the East West Management Institute (EWMI). The additional funding helped Orbeliani work more on the issues of ethnic minorities, religious minorities and LBTQI community members, made our platform even more inclusive by targeting the minority groups and fostering new partnership with the local government in Georgia.

Furthermore, Solidarity Foundation is planning to use Orbeliani to promote participatory budgeting. Even though this does not directly translate into funding opportunity, it attests to the appetite of donors to use our platform infrastructure to test their projects and try new ways.

The partnership with UNDP has been especially exciting and productive, and has helped Orbeliani formulate its added value on the NGO landscape. With more interest to apply technology in civic engagement and the desire to address the challenge of bringing citizens closer to the government, Orbeliani's platform is emerging as a valuable tool to make that happen. UNDP support has enabled Orbeliani to start working with Rustavi Mayor's Office and obtained a match funding of 50,000 GEL in total to support citizen led initiatives in two rounds.

With different donors promoting different tools for participatory democracy, Orbeliani has become a flagship innovation for Rustavi Mayor's Office to put some power of decision-making in the hands of people, a partnership that Rustavi Mayor's Office is proud of. Furthermore, the partnership with Orbeliani has influenced local-government decisions. For example, Rustavi Mayor's Office decided to expand a successful community mobilization model and assign additional funding to kindergartens, so that they improve infrastructure and implement projects together by mobilizing parents and neighbourhood

community. As other actors are promoting participatory budgeting, a well-known tested international of participatory democracy in other cities of Georgia, Orbeliani is emerging as another successful experiment, in the realm of citizen engagement and participatory democracy. With the Rustavi project still in progress, UNDP is considering to replicate it in other cities and build on the success and learning of the first round.

Welcome to ORBELIANI

Orbeliani is revolutionizing aid by changing how citizens engage with the resources they need to take positive action in their communities.

49,996 ₾
allocated in aid

44
Initiatives supported

26
Initiatives led by

FEATURED THEME:

Education

Supported by SIDA & The Swiss Embassy of Tbilisi

There are currently 11 Initiatives within this theme.

[See Initiatives](#)

[See More Themes](#)

9.

The Platform

Environment
Community
Democracy
Technology
Media

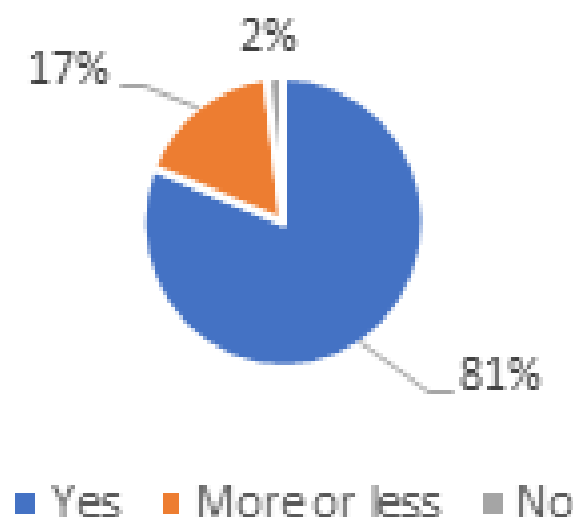
Women & Girls
Human Rights
Economic Development
Peace & Conflict
Arts & Culture

Orbeliani's platform has become a critical component of the organisation's operations, performing a number of functions in the initiative management process. We built the platform in several cycles, developing it based on user needs, feedback from various users and the requirement of the operations. While we did not intend it to make it bilingual, we ended up to have a platform in two languages English and Georgian. The platform now allows the following operations:

- Application
- Selection
- Procurement transparency
- Public reporting by change agents
- Whistleblowing

The most important tool used by Orbeliani in gauging satisfaction with the platform has been the platform survey, conducted in December 2016. Overall, satisfaction with the platform is high, with 81% of respondents stating that they believe the platform is easy to work with, and only one individual responding that they feel it is not.

Is the platform easy to work with?



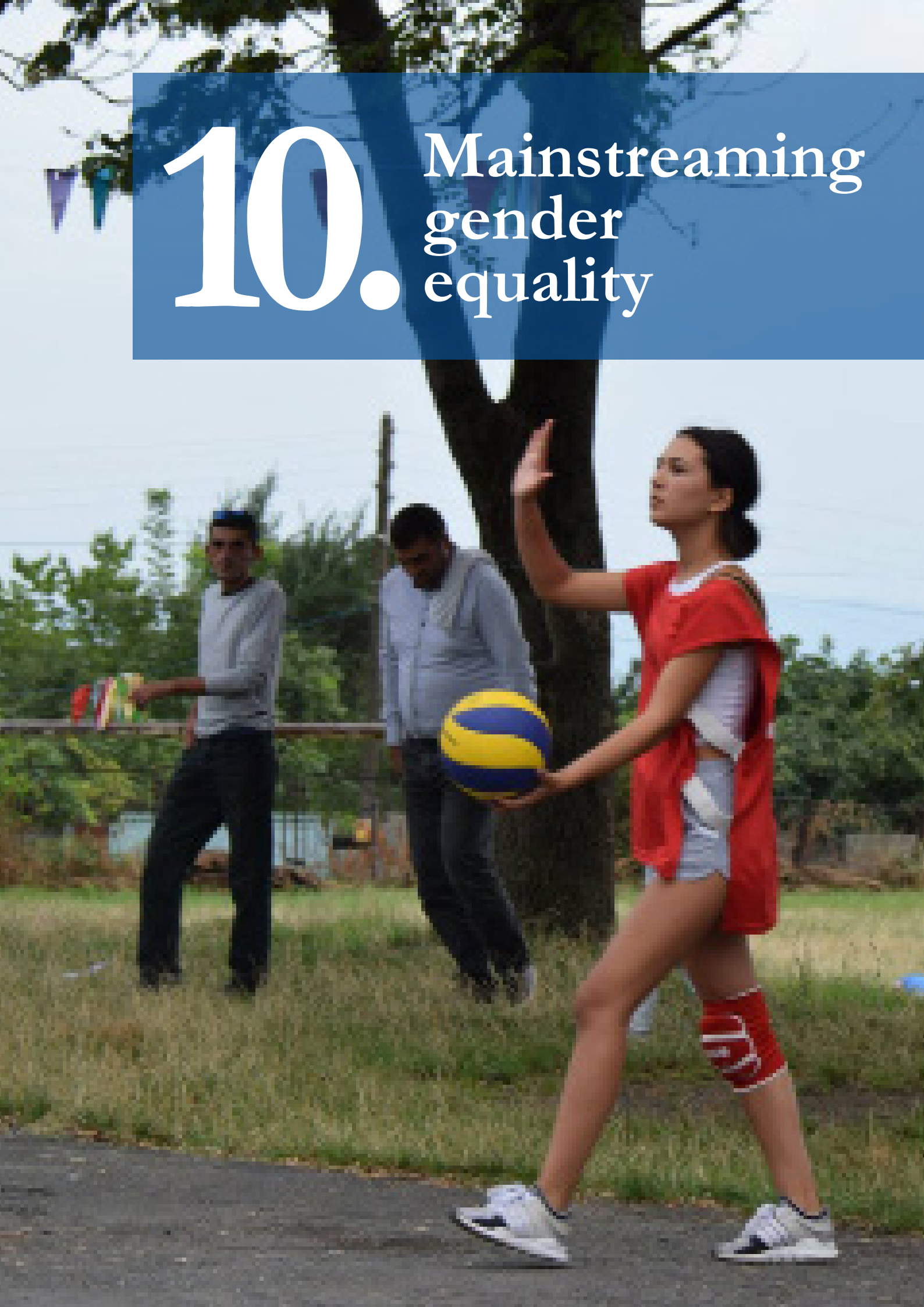
Critically, interviews with Orbeliani staff suggest that limited use of the platform has been made in terms of accountability and whistleblowing, with no significant incidents reported via the platform to date. Further, the majority of engagement on the platform appears to come from change agents themselves, as opposed to individuals in their communities.

Despite these weaknesses, we are proud that the platform has turned into a learning tool for change agents and spreading ideas after making it available in Georgian. The uptake of the platform and its popularity has been rising and some of the ideas were big hits, especially in ethnic minority communities where the platform was used to share ideas and promote the results of the project. For instance, one of the ideas on [Women Voting rights in Sadakhlo](#) has had 5,126 views on the platform. In the final interviews, the majority of change agents noted that they would see the initiatives funded previously by Orbliani before submitting an application and that it helped them make the applications more focused.

“When I started thinking of my initiative, I felt that it was not clear enough. Then I read similar applications on the platform and started shaping it. The platform has helped me a lot! All volunteers should become familiar with it. You learn so many things from it, so many ideas come to you mind! Then you just change them, make them more fitting your context. The platform is a great guide, a guide of ideas! – Nana Gabaidze, Khikhani Community Center

Furthermore, we saw an example of the application of the platform by external users to identify and connect to potential change agents. In August 2019, a Publishing House browsed Orbeliani initiatives to identify those working in conflict-affected region and contacted Shindisi Community Center. In the follow-up the publishing house collected books from their colleagues, travelled to Shindisi and donated the new books to the center. This all happened without the involvement of Orbeliani.

10. Mainstreaming gender equality



Orbeliani has invested significant resources to gender equality as reflection of its organizational staff and boards wider commitments to such issues. Its efforts to improve gender mainstreaming involve a very comprehensive list of actions.

For example, using the toolbox as a lens for analysis:

- Orbeliani has conducted gender analysis;
- It has used separate focus group discussions during the project cycle to adapt targeting and appropriate reach;
- It has different gender experts participate in reviews of ideas;
- It has an organisational gender policy;

Furthermore, Orbeliani has made steps to support transformative changes through the targeted call for ideas on GE issues and supported twenty-seven initiatives aiming to promote the concept of GE among boys and girls, increase its awareness, inform women and girls of their rights, reduce domestic violence, encourage girls to take IT skills and go for sports etc.

In order to scope the outcomes of the initiatives, Orbeliani had a separate questionnaire and on-site visits specifically focused on the Gender Equality ideas. As a result, we found that: For girls/women a change in attitudes on gender roles, responsibilities and opportunities was a result of them being trained, having received information, being able to talk and converse, given opportunity and platform to speak up. This change is exceptionally noticeable with girls/women who felt that the projects gave them a whole new perspective on what gender equality means, as if they mean to imply that the projects “corrected” what they believed what gender equality was about.

This is interesting because the changes in attitudes on gender roles, responsibilities and opportunities for boys/men often refers to the need of “real” definition of what Gender Equality or Gender Mainstreaming are and how it is not about “women dominating men”, and that instead, it is about equality.

It is obvious that changes in gender roles, responsibilities and opportunities are not as pronounced for boys/men as it is with girls/women. The resistance to Gender Equality/Gender Mainstreaming and re-discovering of Gender Equality are two by-products of the projects’ impacts for boys/men, and they are the changes themselves. On the one hand, the initiatives seem to have confronted some of the beliefs and values that boys/men hold in Georgia, which caused push back from men/boys, while on the other hand, they seem to have successfully “translated” that resistance into a conversation on what gender equality and gender mainstreaming means and how it is not about “women are dominating men”. It is important to note that backlash is not exclusive to boys/men and that, few comments referred to girls/women also defending traditional understanding of gender roles, responsibilities and opportunities. This is not a deviation and a surprise because when talking about traditional gender-lenses, girls/women as well as boys/men are equally susceptible to it.

As such looking at the changes that Orbeliani-funded Gender Equality/Gender Mainstreaming initiatives have achieved locally in terms of gender equality, these are:

- Influencing the discourse on gender equality locally
- Redefining Gender Equality as a call for equality among men and women vs. “to oppress man’s rights and put women in charge” as one respondent pointed out
- Championing a platform of conversation when girls/women lead the process and legitimizing their right to speak up and demand to be listened
- Redefining a male-privilege by confronting those who held outdated views on GE (through forum theatres, sports, Lego-project)
- Starting to question some key aspect of Gender Equality like male-dominated historical chronicles, hereditary property rights not being applicable to women, sex-selective abortions, reproductive and sexual rights and health, “cultural” right to divorce for women, “personal is political” concepts....
- Only so subtly, bringing in the notion of patriarchy and its universality across countries, states, centuries.

Besides the outcomes of the Gender Equality initiatives, we saw some evidence how the civic activism has positively affected female change agents in terms of increasing their agency and leaving the private realm.

“In that period when we were implementing the project, I had so much motivation and felt big stimulus to grow personally. What is more important is that I left the role of a housewife and my everyday space was not just kitchen. That initiative got me out of that isolated space: I had something to take care of, I was thinking what I would do in the future,” – Suzi Beridze, Shindisi Community Center.

11. Lessons Learnt



On Change Agents

Orbeliani has shown how access to resources, even small, can encourage individuals and communities to take action and contribute money, skills and time for a shared cause. Often the idea of connecting to Orbeliani and other change agents, the idea of winning and recognition, rather than the resources has been the driving force. We had a few ideas with budgets of 50 USD and less. This enthusiasm and energy of such young motivated activists can be used and directed, with or without Orbeliani. Orbeliani has identified a network of such change agents, which can be shared with other actors for further support.

Change agents value the fast and easy application process that Orbeliani has offered, comparatively to other resource initiatives. Many of the change agents we have worked with have repeatedly emphasized the simplicity of the system and the process that encouraged them to apply. Without that we would have lost many of the actors.

Change agents did not require capacity building to take action. Orbeliani has not provided any capacity building support to the volunteers under the SIDA program and we do not believe that it would have affected their performance, the quality of the action or the quality of the impact. When passion to act is the primary driver, change agents chart their pathway themselves without the need of external support. It is a great learning process in itself for them and is as important as the outcome.

With that said Orbeliani has seen great value in networking events and investing in peer-to-peer support mechanisms. We have found that bringing change agents together through various events and the platform between diverse actors strengthens intra-group learning and creates opportunities for collaboration. Peer support is important for change agents to stay inspired, learn from each other and for developing joint initiatives. Conversations to like-minded people has been important to keep the initiatives running and to exchange networks and the support and resources embedded in these networks.

Peer to peer monitoring was a cost effective model to allow volunteers the opportunity to be exposed to different ideas while creating collective accountability. We believe that peer-to-peer support and monitoring can contribute to the monitoring and learning systems and would encourage other agencies to use the model.

Further, we found that volunteer involvement can fall off over the years, as initial enthusiasm subsides or if the project does not provide sufficient recognition and motivation. Any future programs focusing on volunteerism and civic engagement should have a strong component to boost volunteer recognition and encouragement. Further, some initiatives stopped functioning because the leadership was not successfully handed over and the burden rested with very few figureheads. Those initiatives with big potential, larger-scale impact and higher chance of sustainability, should have program support to nurture future leader. This support in the form of mentorship could be offered to selected initiatives.

Light touch approach on reporting, action plans and implementation is crucial in engaging groups and individuals with little prior experience and/or with no clear organizational structure. Giving these actors full control over their initiatives is important, as they pace their develop-

ment in the way comfortable to them. Many of the projects took more time to implement their initiatives, some went six months overdue but putting pressure on the groups would have been discouraging and would have produced no effect.

With a high migration of youth from rural areas, it is important to make civic engagement more inclusive of the groups of various age. It is important to continue working with the youth as some take the resources back to the community and work for them. At the same time, it is critical to work with those who live and work there, especially with teachers who enjoy reputation and have good network resources.

Communication and outreach

Outreach via social platforms was inexpensive and very effective with those audiences with regular access to internet and basic internet skills. We were delighted to see that those people who Orbeliani did not communicate directly came forward and applied through the platform without support from Orbeliani staff. With internet access increasing rapidly in Georgia, this could well address the information asymmetry and unequal access to resources, at the same time increasing the cost efficiency of the platform in the case of scale up.

At the same time we have seen that in some communities face-to-face meetings were crucial to inhibit trust and encourage people to act. However, we have seen a few local champions emerging who would reapply for Orbeliani funding and encourage personal networks to pursue the opportunity in a way that could be seen locally to concentrate the opportunity among their own personal network. Since we have seen that spreading the word through networks has been as effective as using social media, it will be important to identify multiple focal points in the community to avoid the concentration of resources within certain groups. This is important to maintain trust in the community and establish a reputation of a neutral actor.

Engagement with and influencing donors

Orbeliani seeks to influence donors, to give them a new way of looking at their own funding mechanisms. We found that it remains difficult to influence donor policy and practice at any scale notably because this is largely set within headquarters not locally. While interested, most donors in country feel limited in how much they can work differently. Orbeliani's advocacy will be fruitful only by joining global campaigns and working in partnerships.

We invested heavily in building the platform and creating a mechanism to connect donors directly to the constituents. However, the donors that Orbeliani has partnered with did not engage with the platform, either to connect to the communities or to follow the ongoing initiatives and use it for monitoring purposes. We believe this was a missed opportunity.

Neither the platform and the generated information reduce our own reporting obligations to donors or reduce the burden of paperwork. With different donors having different reporting requirements and formats and standards set in the headquarters, there is little flexibility donor can offer. With that said, the platform-generated content has made it easier for Orbeliani to collect data and report to donors.

Despite having staff and a board who were very experienced in working with theories of change and measurement, the work of Orbeliani does not lend itself well to traditional models of articulating and capturing change. This was at times very frustrating for staff and donors.

The fundraising environment in Georgia has not developed as quickly as we hoped. While the existence of some limited crowd-funding and corporate giving is beginning, Orbeliani's ability to raise income through the diversification funding beyond institutional grant makers would require fairly significant investment in the sector as a whole.

Ultimately, what the people of Georgia particularly in rural areas want to prioritise for their community is often vastly different to what donors or agencies believe should be prioritised for Georgia. It requires time and the will to listen to people's needs and aspirations, if we want to make aid responding to people's needs. Orbeliani too had to withhold our own perceptions and overcome bias, which has been challenging, because the priorities do not always coincide.

12. Recommendations for SIDA

Recommendation 1: SIDA should continue to invest in innovative ideas and support organisational start-up

Orbeliani has been a pilot for SIDA as part of its purpose to support innovation. With so little funding for innovation from donors, the SIDA project has been a great opportunity for Orbeliani to make a foray on the development landscape, try things in new way and adapt its plans and learn throughout the way. This should be especially appreciated in consideration of the fact that Orbeliani was a start-up with no track record of operations. Orbeliani has demonstrated that with sufficient timeframe and support from donors, new organisations can deliver results and meet their obligations.

Recommendation 2: SIDA should reconsider how it engages the views of people in the setting of country priorities and in the partnerships they ultimately support

Grassroots level actors have very few platforms or channels to discuss their ideas and wants with donors. The change agents that we have worked with believe that donors, including SIDA should allow for a bottom up mechanism where communities can channel and express their vision for change. Donors, including SIDA, should improve communication with communities so that priorities match. At the same time, community members expressed desire to be more informed of donor priorities, so that that they understand better what donors want and expect. See an annex of summary notes of an event called *People at the Heart of Change*.

Funding for grassroots level actors for micro initiatives is very limited and almost non-existent for some age groups or for groups not falling in the donor priority areas in terms of demographics or geography. There is a risk of disillusionment for these people and the risk of losing their potential and to some extent trust towards NGOs. Bringing local players together, enabling them to make change happen locally can be a useful role for donors. The commitment and passion that these people bring to the table is unparalleled and should be recognized and supported by donors.

Individual change agents tend to be connected more deeply to causes than organizations. While supporting NGOs and organized entities has its value, it is important to create mechanisms to identify and support individual change agents. Formalization is not always a key for organized action and donors should not always push change agents towards it. We have seen that those change agents who did not implement follow up actions, did so because there is no funding for individuals or because they did not want to deal with bureaucracy. Had formalization been a requirement for some, they would not have implemented initiatives with Orbeliani either.

Recommendation 3: SIDA should consider how it can most effectively demonstrate transparency of actions

Throughout the project, often SIDA would justify requirements or feedback to fulfil their responsibility to be accountable to constituents in Sweden. Orbeliani offered a transparent platform where a live record of expenses of initiatives was publicly available. Further the platform

offered an opportunity for anyone to ask questions directly to beneficiaries. Despite these opportunities, SIDA at no stage used the platform, nor showcased it.

Recommendation 4: SIDA should review its policies, pre-requirements needed to support emerging ideas & organisations

SIDA demanded a long list of organisational investments as a prerequisite to the grant. We believe that this list should be considered against the size and scale of the organisation. While we greatly value the policies and procedures to manage our operations, not all policies can be relevant for small organisations like Orbeliani. More space and flexibility should be given to organisations to develop those policies overtime and to be considered against the relevance of the operation during the initial start-up period .

Furthermore some of the support that SIDA has offered was not relevant to our needs. After project start-up, SIDA felt strongly that the agreed proposal lacked adequate gender analysis and thus felt Orbelani lacked ‘capacity in gender’. Despite reassurances that our board held this expertise and were working closely with the team, SIDA was pretty insistence that an external gender expert from Sweden arrive specially for Orbeliani to deliver a training. This training did not focus on practical ways to undertake gender analysis, but rather focused on broad gender terms and concepts. The training lacked cultural relevance, knowledge of the country or project. SIDA felt disappointed in Orbeliani’s lack of enthusiasm for the results and felt concerned that we didn’t believe gender was a relevant consideration. SIDA should think carefully about how they can more accurately assess partner needs and how they resources those gaps.

Recommendation 5: Focus SIDA’s efforts on identify ways SIDA can enable a partner, rather than continually re-evaluating the action

While SIDA has recognized the innovative nature of Orbeliani at meetings with partners, this has worked as a double-edged sword: Orbeliani was frequently branded as being ‘high risk and Orbeliani had to spend much of the first couple of years trying to justify its existence and rehash the logic and rational of the initiative. We believe that SIDA could have invested more in looking in ways in enabling the work e.g. connecting us with other partners implementing innovative ideas, linking us to innovation team at HQ, helping us to network with others donors.

Orbeliani was a pilot of a new global approach being tested in Georgia. The board worked hard to make connections at a central level and invested their own resources to visit during the lifetime of the project. Any learning being generated at a HQ level around innovation, community-mobilisation, governance or organisational start-ups, was never disseminated or shared. Orbeliani was never invited to share any learning at higher level. Moreover, we would have benefited from being connected to potential partners outside of Georgia.

Recommendation 6: SIDA should review the approach and skills set required to evaluates innovative ideas and projects

Our biggest disappointment in partnership with SIDA was with the process surrounding the external evaluation. SIDA funded an external evaluation and lumped the work of Orbeliani for review alongside many other long-term initiatives and partnerships. Despite our request to bring on board evaluators with experience in activism, innovation or community organising, the

team brought on board had no relevant experience. Warning signs emerged very early in the evaluation notably that the methodology would not be considering the views of beneficiaries, nor would it be using any data collected by Orbeliani throughout the project duration. The execution of the evaluation was unpleasant and at times unprofessional. The final results were beyond disappointing. SIDA was open and receptive to our concerns throughout the process, but ultimately the results were very disappointing.

SIDA kept up their commitments articulated in the grant agreement, notably partnership chats, and were understanding when we had to ask for extensions or deadline adjustments. We appreciated their efforts. We also appreciated their efforts in attending events and in helping us outreach to other donors.

We believe that focus should be on fostering long-term relationship with partners, so that partners can develop a more proactive and scalable strategy. Orbeliani understands the cautiousness of SIDA to fund new organization and highly appreciates several extensions that was granted throughout four years. At the same time the lack of long-term commitment and support inhibited Orbeliani to plan its operations long-term and in strategic way, the constant pressure to focus on fundraising, justify the model, left very little time to demonstrate its results to SIDA and other donors.

Annex 1: A list of questionnaires conducted to collect data:

Orbeliani has undertaken numerous activities to learn from those touched by the initiatives it has supported, with the aim of integrating feedback into programming, tracking progress against indicators (at a strategic and project level), and strengthening internal processes and procedures.

Specifically, in the period 1 December 2016 to 30 May 2017 Orbeliani has carried out the following questionnaires, FGDs, and the collection of MSC stories.

Activity	Date	Audience
Platform survey	23 Dec 2016	Platform users
Face-to-face survey	2 May 2017 - 20 May 2017 15 Dec 2018	End beneficiaries of supported initiatives in field locations
Online survey	17 May - 30 May 2016 Jan 2018 July 2018	Change agents
FGD	27 March 2017	Change agents: Library Projects
	8 March 2017	Change agents: Movie Screening Projects
	16 June 2017	Change agents: Gender Equality
MSC	15 Sep 2016 - 15 June 2017 Dec 2018	Change agents, volunteers, beneficiaries, local government
Face-to-face semi structured interviews	Feb-May 2019	Change agents in the field
Structured interviews over the phone	May - ne 2019	Change agents

Annex 2: A list of community/youth spaces funded through Orbeliani and their current status

		Started by Orbeliani	Additional support from Orbeliani	Ongoing
Udabno Rural Activity	Nov 2018		X	Limited
Create A Youth Space/ Sagarejo	Nov 30 2019	X		Active
Youth for Gurjaani	Nov 2019	X		Active
#Georgian /Koda	Nov 2019		X	Medium
KHASHURI YOUTH-LED INITIATIVE	Dec 2018		X	Limited
New Books for New Li- brary Adventure/Pshaveli	July 2017		X	Medium
Club space for Shindisi	June 2017		X	Active
Restore the village library/ Navazi	August 2017		X	Active
The Library of the fu- ture/Garikula	Jan 2017		X	Medium
Renovate the Nikozi Library	Dec 2016	X		Active
Kazbegi Children's Library	Nov 2017		X	Active
Rural Youth Center/Sen- aki	Sep 2016	X		Active
Literature square in Sagarejo	Sep 2016	X		Active
Reading hall for Tsurtavi School		X		Limited
Library and community center for Giorgeti	Dec 2015	X		Limited
Environmental Education in Sanavardo	2018	X		Closed
Community House in the village of Khikhani	Feb 2017	X		Active

Annex 3: A list of the initiatives, where face-to-face surveys with the communities where conducted.

Name of the initiative	Location
Geocaching	Kakheti, Lagodekhi
Constructor games	Kakheti, Telavi
Social fridge	Kakheti, Akhmeta
Square for children with disabilities	Tbilisi
Youth island	Kakheti, Gurjaani
Mobile Theatre	Kvemo Kartli, Nakhiduri,
Winter shelters for cats	Tbilisi
Alternative day center	Kvemo Kartli, Nakhiduri
Sports for everyone	Samegrelo, Senaki
Forum Theatre	Samegrelo, Senaki
Village discussions on gender	Samegrelo, Khobi
Funny Bins	Imereti, Kutaisi
Center for special needs education	Samegrelo, Senaki
Green Box	Samegrelo, Senaki
Wooden signs	Tbilisi
Volunteer Sweet Treats to Support PWD	Kvemo Kartli, Marneuli
Library of the future	Garikula
Let's learn English with Joy	Shida Kartli, Mejriskhevi
Youth Island in the middle of community	Kakheti, Gurjaani
Bike Center	Tbilisi
Atelie for Women	Kakheti, Akhmeta
Board game	Tbilisi
Movie Screenings in Lagodekhi	Kakheti, Lagodekhi
Youth Center	Imereti, Khoni
Restoring Samtredia Park	Imereti, Samtredia

Street Art on Women's Issues	Imereti, Zestaponi
Green Scouts are coming	Samegrelo, Martvili
Library in Eniseli	Kakheti, Eniseli
Friends of Forest	Kvemo Kartli, Tetrtskaro
Theatre – School of Vision	Kvemo Kartli, Tetrtskaro
Wait if colourful harmony	Kvemo Kartli, tetrtskaro
Fiddle About	Kvemo karti, Tetrtskaro
Playground in Asureti	Kvemo Kartli, Asureti
#Georgian	Kvemo Kartli, Tetrtskaro
Forum Theatre for Employment	Kakheti, Telavi
Listen to the Nature	Kvemo Kartli, Samgereti
Orbeti Stadium Reconstruction	Kvemo Kartli, Orbeti
Knowledge of the Right Choice	Tetrtskaro
Zebra Crossing in Tetrtskaro	Tetrtskaro
Art in the Modern Times	Akhmeta
More positive for school	Kvemo Kartli, Khaishi
Our Past and Its history	Kvemo Kartli, Enageti
Projector for Development	Kvemo Kartli, Tsintsikaro
Clean is Colourful	Kvemo Kartli, Koda
Healthy Environment, Healthy Generation	Kvemo Kartli, Tsintsikaro
Playground for Children	Kvemo Kartli, Kosalari
Share the experience	Kvemo Kartli, Tetrtskaro
Cloisonné Enamel School for Employment	Tbilisi
Climate Change education for Children	Kvemo Kartli, Bogvi
Earthenware for Children lacking parental care	Tbilisi
Corner of the library for Children	Shida Kartli
Social Fridge in Gori	Shida Kartli, Gori
Ethno camp	Kvareli, Kakheti