



ევროკავშირი
საქართველოსთვის
Project funded by the European Union

Austrian
Development
Cooperation



Research

European Neighborhood Programme for Agriculture and Rural Development in Georgia (ENPARD Georgia)

Implementing LEADER in Mestia municipality for better livelihoods in high mountainous regions of Georgia

Reference: ENI/2018/402-469

3rd INTERIM NARRATIVE REPORT



December 2021

Table of contents

Title	Page
List of Acronyms	2
1. Description	3
2. Assessment of Implementation of Action Activities	4
2.1 Executive Summary of the Action	4
2.2 Results and Activities	6
Output 1	13
Output 2	16
Output 3	16
Output 4	19
2.3 Updated Logical Framework Matrix	22
2.4 Updated Action Plan	22
3. Beneficiaries/affiliated entities and other Cooperation	23
4. Visibility	24
List of Annexes	30

List of acronyms

ADA	Austrian Development Agency
ADC	Austrian Development Cooperation
BAB	Bundesanstalt für Agrarwirtschaft und Bergbauernfragen (Austrian Federal Institute of Agricultural Economics, Rural and Mountain Research)
CBOs	Community Based Organizations
COVID19	Coronavirus disease, SARS-CoV-2, identified in Dec 2019
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
ENPARD	European Neighbourhood Program for Agriculture and Rural Development
EU	European Union
FB	Facebook (social media platform)
GA	General Assembly
GALAG	Georgian Association of Local Action Groups
GRETA	Green Economy Sustainable Mountain Tourism and Organic Agriculture Project
HACCP	Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points - food safety system for registered food business operators.
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
LAG	Local Action Group
LDS	Local Development Strategy
LEADER	Links between actions of rural development
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
ToT	Training of Trainers

1. Description

- 1.1. Name of Coordinator of the grant contract: **CARE Austria**
- 1.2. Name and title of the Contact Person: **Morgan Siegel, Program Officer**
- 1.3. Name of Beneficiary(ies) and affiliated entity(ies) in the Action:
CARE Austria, CARE International in the Caucasus, PMC-RC
- 1.4. Title of the Action: **Implementing LEADER in Mestia municipality for better livelihoods in high mountainous regions of Georgia**
- 1.5. Contract number: **ENI/2018/402-469**
- 1.6. Start date and end date of the Action: **DEC/03/2018 – DEC/02/2022**
- 1.7. Target country(ies) or region(s): **Mestia Municipality / Georgia**
- 1.8. Final beneficiaries &/or target groups¹ (if different) (including numbers of women and men):
Residents of 17 territorial units of Mestia municipality (circa 10,000 people), particularly: women (at least 30%), youth, IDPs, people living with disabilities, elderly and socially vulnerable/ local farmers and their groups/cooperatives, Mestia LAG, local CSOs/CBOs, local rural businesses and community services; local authorities.
- 1.9. Country(ies) in which the activities take place (if different from 1.7): N/A

¹ ““Target groups”” are the groups/entities who will be directly positively affected by the project at the Project Purpose level, and ““final beneficiaries”” are those who will benefit from the project in the long term at the level of the society or sector at large.

2. Assessment of implementation of Action activities

2.1. Executive summary of the Action

Implementing LEADER in Mestia municipality for better livelihoods in high mountainous regions of Georgia is the four-year project funded by the European Union (EU) through ENPARD, co-financed by the Austrian Development Cooperation (ADC), and implemented by CARE in partnership with PMC-RC. The Project accomplished its third year under extraordinary conditions caused by the global COVID-19 pandemic. In the reporting period, the epidemiological situation in the country has substantially worsened. The daily infections and the mortality rates have increased, while the vaccination process could not be accelerated significantly.

Despite these constraints, the project accomplished a number of strategically important activities for the **institutional strengthening of the Mestia LAG** and its sustainability. This resulted in the successful fund-raising efforts of the Mestia Local Action Group (LAG) and enlarged the exposure of the Mestia LAG as legitimate representative of the population of the Mestia municipality. Mestia LAG successfully managed the quite sophisticated and challenging process of scoring and evaluation of submitted sub-grant proposals, field assessing and live interviewing applicants and making well-informed and justifiable decisions on the grant funding. Further training of the Mestia LAG Members has taken place, specifically in the field of sub-grant component management, organization and evaluation. The LAG youth wing was specially trained in communication and visualization tools and methods and is currently actively engaged, ensuring relevant media coverage of LAG activities using social media and other web-based platforms. The Mestia LAG, under the facilitation of PMC-RC, independently elaborated its organizational development strategy and established close working relationships with other LAGs operating in Georgia. It was admitted as a member in the LAGs Association (GALAG) thus ensuring its further engagement in the policy advocacy work and platform building within the GALAG.

As a result of two rounds of grant funding competitions, a **substantial portfolio of sub-grants has been developed** through selecting 78 sub-grantees (50 in the first round and 28 in the second one – selected in the reporting period). It is remarkable that in the light of the overall economic decline in the country caused by the COVID-19 lockdown and restrictions, still considerable investments (worth of almost EUR 1,2M) are being made in Mestia municipality. These investments are made into such critical sectors of the local economy as social and economic infrastructure, education, agriculture and food production, tourism and other rural non-agricultural businesses grounded on the existing local resources and potential. It is exciting to observe newly built sport stadiums in five communities, attracting youth to a healthy lifestyle and boosting socialization among young members of the community; completely rehabilitated drinking water supply systems in two communities, solving the long-lasting local problem of access to drinking water; a rehabilitated road to one of the remote villages, tackling the problem of poor access and remoteness; a newly built storm channel saving the entire community from otherwise inevitable natural disaster; and a renovated cultural centre in one community preserving the local traditional cultural centre and creating equipped multiple spaces and premises for various educational, cultural and social actions, especially for the local youth. Numerous new micro enterprises for local quality food products, wood crafting, the production of local traditional building materials, revived tourist routes, alongside recreational infrastructure, and new tourist products are all the result of the grant-funding scheme of the project. Operating this grant-funding scheme represents the largest component of the project, taking approx. 60% of the time of the entire project team in order to ensure smooth implementation despite the constraining environment caused by the pandemic.

The COVID-19 induced delays had an impact on the budget consumption (the overall burn rate is 50%). The major cause for underspending was the delayed implementation of the grant-funding component (which carries by far the highest share in costs). Logistics around the selection, contracting, and implementation were made more difficult. This was followed by a combination of postponed capacity building activities, trainings and learning visits, including the international study

visit to Austria as well as external consultancy support. However, the delays are not expected to hamper the overall achievements under the project's objectives. All postponed activities are now being planned against the (post-) COVID-19 background and will be implemented in the fourth project year (remotely and/or in person), including the final evaluation.

2.2. Results and Activities

During the reporting period, the Mid-Term evaluation (MTE) of the project was conducted by the outsourced specialized consulting agency “DEPA Consulting” in the period of May to August 2021. The MTE final report has been shared with the EUD.

The project was assessed based on OECD/DAC criteria on effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and impact. The brief findings on each criterion are presented below.

Under output 1 the Local Action Group (LAG) was formed and it is functional. The forming of the LAG through the LEADER approach was a new initiative at the municipality, which enabled the facilitation of civil participation at the municipal level. Around 70 LAG members are actively involved in LAG activities. Representatives of vulnerable groups are members of the LAG assembly as well as of the LAG board. The local population is aware of LAG activities as quantitative research results indicate that 78.5% of the population (82% women, 69.8% men, and 61.8% socially vulnerable) have heard of the LAG and 81.6% of them rate LAG activities very positively or positively. Prior to the project, these communities had limited social communications with each other. The LAG enabled community members from different areas to share their common concerns and issues and interact with each other. During the COVID-19 pandemic, LAG initiated and organized humanitarian actions for the most vulnerable people living in the municipality.

Under output 2, the elaboration of the Local Development Strategy (LDS) was planned. The document aims to analyse the local needs/obstacles and elaborate respective measures for solving them. The strategy was developed by the LAG. It describes the problems of the municipality and develops approaches to resolving them. The Strategy has six priorities and relevant measures to achieve the strategic objectives. The LDS provides a good frame for grant implementation and it can be a robust reference and planning document for the municipality. The further advocacy of the strategy within local authorities is recommended to increase the use of the strategy by local authorities. One memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed between CARE, the LAG and the local government to jointly implement a community development infrastructural project and cooperate to develop social services for the elderly population. The third MoU outlines that the rural development projects implemented by the municipality will be monitored by the LAG. Signed memoranda indicate that the project established effective cooperation with the local government.

Under output 3, two rounds of the grant competitions have been completed, the portfolio comprised of 78 sub-grant contracts. The grant competition’s results are in line with the LDS. The allocated grants are supporting agricultural development, the development of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) at the local level, tourism development projects, social projects and many others. In fact, it was the highest community level direct investment in recent years in the municipality. Moreover, it is worth noting that the joint community development infrastructural projects were implemented through partnerships with CARE, local government and rural development grants. With this cooperation, the budgetary amount has significantly increased, the synergy of cooperation is high and the outcomes of the projects help to increase the quality of life at the community level.

The overview of the applicants by social status indicates that the project staff effectively managed the dissemination of information within most vulnerable groups.

Various trainings were conducted for the LAG members and project grantees. As revealed from consultations with the target groups, the trainings were useful for their businesses and their personal development. Trainings on gender were also conducted to raise awareness on gender issues at the local level. As the project document and baseline research indicates in the traditional local communities, the women require more social and economic empowerment to ensure inclusive and sustainable development. For this purpose, the gender trainings were important.

Under output 4, several activities had to be postponed. The project plans to be more active to develop and establish the mountainous LAG’s network. In addition, the “Mestia Brand” concept needs to be elaborated. In 2022, the project will focus more on the implementation of activities under

output 4 defined by the Logistical Framework. Mostly, the activities were delayed due to COVID-19 restrictions.

The table below shows the current, Y3 status towards achieving the objective and outputs as per Logical Framework:

Specific Objective	Indicator	Level of Achievement
To improve diversification and competitiveness of the rural economy, the inclusion of vulnerable groups, and the sustainable management of natural resources in Mestia municipality by implementing the LEADER approach.	Proportion of vulnerable population in Mestia with a perception of improved inclusiveness as a result of the project	<u>MTE - 49,3% (51% women, 49% men)</u> 40% - target by the end of the project.
	Proportion of population in Mestia benefitting from improvements in the local business environment, service provision, infrastructure or natural resource management	<u>MTE – 53% (56% women, 44% men)</u> 25% - target by the end of the project.
	Number of business operators registered in Mestia municipality, per sector	<u>248 registered business operators</u> 1st Grant Round: 38 newly registered business operators in Mestia municipality 2nd Grant Round: 22 newly registered business operators in Mestia municipality <i>Target to be achieved by the end of the project: 242 registered business operators.</i> <i>Baseline²: 188 registered business operators.</i>
	Gross number of jobs created in rural areas with support from the project	<u>1st round of grant competition – 32 new jobs created (19 women/13 men)</u> <u>Target: 80 new jobs (44 women/36 men).</u>
	Number of people benefitting from rural advisory services, VET/skills development with support from the project	600 (334 women/266 men). A) 26 LAG board members (14 women/12 men) received trainings on organizational development, budgeting, advocacy, research, and gender; B) 22 LAG youth club members (15 women/7 men) received training on teamwork and communications; C) Full proposal writing training (1 st Grant competition): 135 total participants (57 women/78 men); D) Full proposal writing training (2 nd Grant competition): 78 total participants (38 women/40 men); E) Training conducted by LAG board members, who have passed the ToT (training for youth): 74 total participants (53 women/21 men); F) HACCP (1 st Grant competition): 22 total participants (13 women/ 9 men);

² SMRA, 2019 October data

		<p>G) Capacity building trainings conducted by the selected grant applicants: 225 total participants (122 women); participatory monitoring trainings: 17 total participants (9 women);</p> <p>H) 2 trainings for youth- (November, 2021): 20 total participants (women 17/ 3 men);</p> <p>I) Data visualization training: 10 total participants (9 women/1 men);</p> <p>J) Administration of communication with the public for LAG members: 10 total participants (9 women/1 men);</p> <p>K) HACCP- II grant competition- 14 total participants (8 women/ 6 men).</p> <p>Note: total number of people is unique and excluding HACCP training participants.</p>
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	<p>Number of people receiving inputs and assets (e.g., livestock, seeds, tools, etc.) with EU funding,</p> <p><i>disaggregated by sex and, value and type of input (Number of individuals)</i></p>	<p>90 (47 women/43 men). Total value: EUR 504,043 Euro.</p> <p><i>Non-agriculture production machinery & equipment - 15 individuals (6 women, 9 men). Total value: 134,056 Euro.</i></p> <p><i>Agricultural production equipment and machinery - 25 individuals (10 women, 15 men). Total value 107,942 Euro.</i></p> <p>Special programs and equipment for education projects - 7 individuals (5 women, 2 men). Total value: 14,674 Euro.</p> <p>Guest house equipment and building materials - 13 individuals (7 women, 6 men). Total value: 131,082 Euro.</p> <p>Kitchen appliances - 4 individuals (2 women, 2 men). Total value 35,282 Euro.</p> <p>Service equipment and installations - 4 individuals (1 women, 3 men). Total value: 33,437 Euro.</p> <p>Medical equipment - 1 women. Total value 14,392 Euro.</p> <p>Social Enterprise machinery and equipment - 15 women. Total value 9,069 Euro.</p> <p>Sport equipment - 6 men. Total value 24,139 Euro.</p>
Output	Indicator	Level of achievement
<p>Output 1</p> <p><i>The Mestia Local Action Group (LAG) is an operational and representative public-private partnership that improves the local economy and the social inclusion of vulnerable groups in rural development.</i></p>	<p><i>Proportion of Mestia population perceiving the Mestia LAG as a representative entity and a key actor for the inclusive development of the municipality</i></p>	<p><u>64% - First data collection - midterm survey in APR/2021.</u></p> <p>Target by the end of the project: 60%</p>
	<p><i>Proportion of the Mestia LAG Board members belonging to public sector, civil society, private sector and the vulnerable groups identified by the project</i></p>	<p>Achieved</p> <p>LAG Board members distribution:</p> <p>32% - public sector (Target: 20-49%)</p> <p>21% - private sector (Target 20-49%)</p> <p>47% - civil sector (Target 20-49%)</p>
	<p><i>Proportion of vulnerable population participating in the establishment of the LAG</i></p>	<p>Achieved</p> <p>93% of people participating in LAG establishment are vulnerable people as defined by the project, among them:</p> <p>50% - women (Target: 30%)</p> <p>57% - young people (Target: 30%)</p>

		<p>10% - elderly (<i>Target: 5%</i>)</p> <p>10% - IDPs;</p> <p>2% (one person) – persons living with disabilities (<i>Target: 4% or at least 1 person</i>)</p>
	<p><i>Proportion of LAG members with increased capacities on subjects concerning local development and LEADER methodology</i></p>	<p>93% (65.6% women/34.4% men) (<i>knowledge increase</i>)</p> <p><i>Total of 26 LAG Members (19 of the Board) (14 women, 12 men) have received trainings in Organizational Capacity Building, Gender Basics, Advocacy, Research, and Budgeting. 96% have increased their knowledge in the above areas. In addition, 22 LAG Youth Club members (15 women, 7 men) were trained on teamwork and communications, 92% increased their knowledge based on pre- and post-tests.</i></p> <p><i>ToT training LAG members (excluding overlap) Total Participants: 77 (53 women/21 men), 91% increased their knowledge based on pre-post tests.</i></p> <p><i>Total: 125 (82 women, 43 men)</i></p> <p><i>Target: 90% Endline</i></p>
	<p><i>Number of fundraising proposals developed and submitted by the Mestia LAG</i></p>	<p>3 fund raising proposals have been elaborated and submitted by the LAG.</p> <p><i>Target: 3 fundraising proposals developed by the end of the project.</i></p>
	<p><i>Number of fundraising proposals by the Mestia LAG that were approved</i></p>	<p>Achieved</p> <p>3 fund raising proposals were approved.</p> <p><i>Target: 1 fundraising proposal approved by the end of the project.</i></p>
<p>Output 2</p> <p><i>Local stakeholders have drafted and implement an inclusive and gender-sensitive local development strategy (LDS) that represents the needs and potential of all groups.</i></p>	<p><i>Proportion of vulnerable population participating in the development of the LDS</i></p>	<p>Achieved</p> <p>95% (52% women, 48% men)</p> <p>SWOT: 136 participants (52% women, 9% elderly (60+) 9%, 63% youth (18-45), 1 % disabled people, and 8 % IDPs.</p> <p><i>Receiving Social Aid: 15%;</i></p> <p><i>Composite Minimum Target: 40%</i></p>
	<p><i>Proportion of Mestia population perceiving the LDS as relevant to local needs and potential (additionally</i></p>	<p><i>MTE 15% (44% women, 56% men)</i></p>

	<i>disaggregated by group of interest - public sector, private sector, civil society)</i>	<i>Target by the end of the project: 60%</i>
	<i>Proportion of development measures within the LDS including innovative focus on specific priority themes</i>	<u><i>Targets to be measured at Endline in NOV/2022:</i></u> Mountainous development 20% Gender and diversity 20% Environment and disaster risk management 20%
<p>Output 3</p> <p><i>An initiative scheme funding innovative economic and social initiatives enhances rural development based on the priorities set in the Local Development Strategy.</i></p>	<i>Proportion of short-listed applicants with increased capacities on proposal development</i>	<p>87.3% increased capacities (186 people: 78 women, 108 men)</p> <p>1st Grant Round: A total of 135 people, including 57 women (42%) were trained in full proposal writing. 116 trained applicants demonstrated that they increased their proposal development capacities - 86%.</p> <p>2nd Grant Round: A total of 78 people including 40 women (51.2%) were trained in full proposal writing. 70 trained applicants demonstrated that they increased their proposal development capacities - 89%.</p> <p>80% - target by the end of the project.</p>
	<i>Proportion of local initiatives proving sustainability by the end of the project (e.g., initiatives operational by end of project, profit trends for income generating activities, sources of funding for non-commercial initiatives etc)</i>	<p><u><i>Target to be measured at Endline in NOV/2022:</i></u></p> <p>90% - target by the end of the project (Endline).</p>
	<i>Proportion of local initiatives generating jobs or improving employability</i>	<p>75%</p> <p>1st Grant Competition by 37 initiatives (75% of 49 selected initiatives) generated around 56 jobs (30 women, 26 men); plus 11 initiatives (22%) will improve their employment conditions.</p> <p>80% - target by the end of the project (Endline).</p>
	<i>Proportion of local initiatives improving access to social services for general population and specific vulnerable groups</i>	<p>49%</p> <p>1st Grant Round: 24 initiatives that improve access to social services</p> <p>35% - target by the end of the project (Endline).</p>
	<i>Proportion of local initiatives submitted by or having as final beneficiaries' vulnerable groups of population</i>	<p>High-Mountains population: 100% (70);</p> <p>IDP: 18% (14);</p> <p>Women: 37.6% (29);</p>

		<p>Young people: 31% (24);</p> <p>Elderly: 7.8% (6);</p> <p>Remote communities: 87% (67);</p> <p>Total Initiatives: 77 = 49 (1st grant competition) + 28 (2nd grant competition).</p> <p>Target - 60</p>
<p>Output 4</p> <p><i>Mestia LAG is embedded in and actively contributes to existing networks of cooperative relationships that promote, replicate and increase the sustainability of the LEADER approach in Georgia.</i></p>	<p><i>Number of new or amended policies, legislation, public programs, and/or budgets responsive to the rights, needs and demands of rural and mountainous population as advocated by GALAG, the Mestia LAG and the LAG network for mountainous development</i></p>	<p>MoU signed under the project's 1st Grant Round and the 2020 State Programme for Rural Development of Georgia, between the Mestia Municipality, the Mestia LAG and CARE, for joint implementation/financing of 11 infrastructure projects.</p> <p><i>Target – 3 new or amended policies, legislation, public programs, and/or budgets</i></p>
	<p><i>Number of memorandums of cooperation between the Mestia LAG and other Georgian and EU LAGs from mountainous regions</i></p>	<p><i>3 memorandums for cooperation have been signed with Tsalka, Kazbegi and Akhmeta LAGs.</i></p> <p><i>Target - 3 memorandums of cooperation</i></p>
	<p><i>Proportion of Mestia population benefiting from territorial initiatives (like a Mestia brand) promoted by Mestia LAG with a mountainous focus</i></p>	<p><u>Target to be measured at Endline in NOV/2022:</u></p> <p><i>Target – 10%</i></p>

Description of Project Activities

Output 1 – "The Mestia Local Action Group (LAG) is an operational and representative public-private partnership that improves the local economy"

A1.1 Inform, consult and mobilize the Mestia population to participate in the Mestia LAG

- Activity accomplished and reported on in the Year 1 interim report.

A1.2 Establish an inclusive Local Action Group for Mestia

- Activity accomplished and reported on in the Year 2 interim report.

A1.3 Support the institutional development and sustainability planning of the Mestia LAG

In the reporting period, the Mestia LAG received the skills and knowledge needed to ensure its efficient engagement in selecting project sub-grantees. Consequently, the LAG Board members have been trained in evaluating and scoring the grant funding applications. The LAG has evaluated applications submitted through the second round of the call for project ideas and proposals. Moreover, a sort of "on-duty" training was provided to detect possible discrepancies among scorers and to work out a common vision and approaches towards applying scoring.

Having observed the smoothness of the sub-grantees' selection process as well as final selection results that are reflecting the ENPARD Program/Project philosophy and strategy fully we are confident to conclude that the Mestia LAG is quite capable to handle such grant components in the future. Apart from purely technical skills and knowledge, the project was successful in strengthening the Mestia LAG's social control and responsibility mechanisms that facilitated making justifiable local investment decisions.

One of the most important outcomes of the LAG Board capacity building process is an Organizational Development Strategy of the Mestia LAG, elaborated through the special workshop organized and facilitated by PMC-RC. This strategy will later inform the LAG sustainability planning process to be initiated through the project's exit strategy work to be jointly conducted by the project team and the Mestia LAG.

As mentioned above, the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, related measures and regulations have had a constraining impact on a number of learning events planned in the reporting period, namely the exchange visits of the Mestia LAG to other LAGs operating in Georgia and the visit to Austria. Two local visits out of the planned 8 that should take place during the lifespan of the project were organized in the Kazbegi and Akhmeta municipalities. The visitors had an opportunity to learn and exchange experiences with the Kazbegi LAG, established earlier in the first phase of ENPARD and the Akhmeta LAG, established in parallel as part of the ongoing phase of ENPARD.

With regard to provided assistance for the Mestia LAG to review the LDS, the Austrian Federal Institute of Agricultural Economics, Rural and Mountain Research (*BAB – Bundesanstalt für Agrarwirtschaft und Bergbauernfragen*) contracted by CARE Austria, has provided comprehensive inputs for revising the LDS. The LAG Board has further prepared relevant additions and corrections to the strategy but still COVID-19 restrictions did not allow organizing a LAG General Assembly session to conclude and approve revisions – the latter is to be accomplished in the first quarter of Y4.

It is remarkable that the Mestia LAG has been admitted as a member of the Georgian Association of LAGs (GALAG) and already participated in its Session in Tskaltubo, represented by the Mestia LAG President, Vice-president and LAG Coordinator.

Last but not least, the Youth Wing of the Mestia LAG has been received a training on basic communication technics and social media use with the purpose to form a special group within the LAG tasked to serve communication and PR needs of the organization. The trained group is already actively engaged in building the content for the social media platform of the Mestia LAG.

In terms of capacity building, the following topics have been delivered to the LAG members:

Name of Training	Outcomes	Dates	Training Mode		Participant numbers				
			Live	Online	Men	Women	Youth 18-30y	IDPs	Socially vulnerable
#1 ToT Training	ToT training participants are well aware on trainer techniques, positive aspects of competent and effective feedback, and defining competencies for the quality of the training module.	12-14/03/21	X		3	16	10	6	3
#2 Mestia LAG Board Training- Business ideas scoring	Workshop participants are well aware of the grant guide, and scoring methods of commercial and non-commercial applications.	20-21/03/21	X		8	11			
#3 Grant Business application evaluation training of the Mestia LAG Board	Participants know the grant application criteria, and how to determine the relevance of the application idea to the local development strategy. They know how and in what case to turn to a direction expert.	17-19/06/21	X		2	7			
#4 Mestia LAG organizational strategy development workshop	The Mestia LAG Organizational Development Strategy is elaborated.	01-05/07/21	X		9	14	13	4	9
#5 Training in the administration of communication with the public	Attendees learn about the importance of visual identity, the LAG's new brand book, social media management, and media communication details.	04-08/11/21	X		1	9	10	4	6
#6 Training in data visualization	Training participants learn about the importance and practical part of data visualization: photo-video recording techniques, interviewing, data visualization, and basic tools.	04-08/11/21	X		1	9	10	2	4

Output 2 – “Local Stakeholders have drafted and implement an inclusive and gender-sensitive local development strategy that represents the needs and potential of all groups”

A2.1 Participatory territorial analysis and elaboration of an inclusive gender-sensitive Local Development Strategy for Mestia

Activity accomplished and reported on in the first annual report.

A2.2 Adopt and review the Mestia Local Development Strategy by the LAG

For the purpose of assisting the Mestia LAG in reviewing the strategy and adjusting it to the newly emerged realities, the Austrian Federal Institute of Agricultural Economics, Rural and Mountain Research (*BAB*) was contracted. Virtual support was provided by the BAB through comprehensive inputs for revising the LDS in the beginning of the reporting year. The LAG Board met specially to discuss these inputs and relevant revisions to the strategy. This resulted in the LAG preparing relevant additions and corrections to the strategy. Regrettably, the LAG General Assembly could not convene as planned due to COVID-19 restrictions thus delaying the adoption of the reviewed LDS. The adoption of the revisions to the LDS and its publication will be accomplished in the first quarter of Y4.

In addition, it is worth mentioning that the LDS review process was informed by the specific recommendations elaborated by an expert from the EU/Results Oriented Mission (ROM), who studied the project in the period of September to October 2021.

Output 3 – “An initiative scheme funding innovative economic and social initiatives enhances rural development based on the priorities set in the Local Development Strategy”

A3.1 Establish an initiative scheme to fund priority actions set by the Mestia LDS

In the reporting period, the project’s aim under this activity predominantly was to facilitate engagement of the Mestia LAG in the decision-making process so that in the end of the project’s life, the LAG is capable to implement similar initiatives independently. At the initial stage of the scheme’s development, the project team (CARE & PMC-RC) together with the Mestia LAG Board, jointly elaborated, documented and agreed on the segregation of duties and responsibilities as well as on the working schedule.

In the next stage, the Mestia LAG has been directly engaged in working out relevant guidelines of the scheme, considering funding criteria, priority sectors and grant parameters that resulted in the written agreed guidelines containing detailed conditions, eligibility criteria and the scoring scheme for selecting applications for grant funding.

The core principles and the stages of the scheme have not been changed but the roles of the parties engaged have been partially redistributed. The Mestia LAG became fully responsible for scoring and selecting the applications, whereas CARE coordinated and managed the process and PMC-RC ensured relevant training of the scoring team of the Mestia LAG and facilitated the provision of the relevant expertise while scoring. (*see the segregation of duties and responsibilities attached*). The second round of the initiative scheme can be summarized as follows:

The decisions of funding the initiatives are grounded on a two-staged process of solicitation and assessment of the applications, comprised by Stage 1 – Call for Project Idea Applications, and Stage 2 – Call for Full Proposals. In both stages the pre-defined scoring mechanism, as outlined in the call’s guidelines is applied to rank and select applications. The pre-selected applicants at the idea stage are then trained in elaborating the full proposal. Upon the evaluation of the solicited full proposals, those with the highest eligible scores are chosen to be further assessed through field assessment visits, led

by the project M&E expert and assisted by the LAG Board members. The field assessments are then followed by a final interview with each of the selected candidates led by the LAG Board and assisted by the project manager and M&E expert. Only if all the above-mentioned stages and processes as per the guidelines were successfully accomplished, the selected candidates are contracted.

Types of Grants – Two types of grants were introduced to fund: 1. Business initiatives as per priority sectors of the LDS (range: EUR 3,000 – 20,000), and 2. Non-commercial social support and development initiatives for rural communities (range: EUR 1,000 – 10,000). For both grant types, cash and in-kind contributions were requested from grantees amounting to the following percentage of the proposed total budget: a) 25% for business initiatives, and c) 10% for non-commercial initiatives.

For the second round of the grant competition scheme described above, the following modifications have been applied: 1. Funding of community infrastructure was removed in order to pledge more resources to local production/business sectors. 2. The lowest eligible score was increased from “81” to “89” in order to ensure screening the most quality applications. 3. The maximum grant amount to business applications was decreased from EUR 25,000 to EUR 20,000 due to general project resource availability considerations and taking into account the average grant amount requested in the first round. 4. The maximum grant amount to non-commercial initiatives was increased from EUR 8,000 to EUR 10,000 to attract more local initiatives with a social purpose, with a particular focus on vulnerable groups.

Reflecting on the LDS strategic priorities and providing links to them has been added to the core evaluation criteria for submitted applications. The LDS has been included in the grant guidelines, disseminated publicly and the applicants were required to provide references to the LDS in their applications and to describe the potential contribution of their project idea to the overall implementation of the LDS.

A3.2; A3.3 Select, fund, support implementation and monitor local initiatives; improve the capacities of applicants and implementers.

2nd Round of Grant Funding Competition

- **Selection of the Applicants – 1. Idea Stage** – A total of 153 project idea applications were solicited through the first stage of the call. Out of the 153 applications, 92 applications were selected for the full proposal call. Out of the selected applications, 80 were for business initiatives, and 12 for non-commercial initiatives. **2. Full Proposal Stage** – A total of 59 full proposals were solicited through the final stage of the call. Out of those, 28 applications were selected through scoring, and additionally assessed in the field. 24 were for business initiatives, and four were for non-commercial social initiatives. Following the field assessment, 28 candidates were called for an interview, and finally 28 candidates were selected for the funding.
- **Sectorial Distribution of the grant funding** - Out of the final 28 selected proposals, 8 (29%) are in the tourism sector, 7 (25%) in agriculture, 2 (7%) in education, sports and healthcare, 7 (25%) in non-agricultural production, 1 (4%) in environmental protection and sustainable use of local resources, and 2 (7%) in community infrastructure improvement. The percentage of the selected initiatives engaging vulnerable groups were: 14% IDPs, 25% youth, 11% elderly, and 39% of the selected initiatives are led by women.
In the second round, the total requested grant funding of the selected proposals amounted to GEL 1,317,775 (approx. EUR 372K) (see Annex 3 for an overview of the grant amounts of all selected initiatives)
- **Training the applicants** - The training on proposal writing for the selected applicants during the first stage of the call was conducted in two blocks: 1. For business idea applicants; 2. For non-commercial/community initiatives' applicants. A total of 78 people, including 38 women (49%) were trained in full proposal writing in the second round of the grant competition.

- **Geographic Distribution of 2nd round Grants** – The proposals selected through the second round of the grant competition cover 14 administrative-territorial units of Mestia municipality with the following distribution:

Community	Business	Social non-profit
Becho	1	
Kala		1
Mestia	9	2
Nakra	2	
Chuberi	1	
Khaishi	1	
Etseri		
Latali	2	
Mulakhi		
Ushguli	2	
Idliani	1	
Lakhamula		
Phari	2	
Tsvirmi		
Iphari		1
Lenjeri	2	
Tskhumari	1	

Sub-grant projects selected in the First Round of the Grant Competition

Out of a total of 50 sub-grant project applications selected and contracted during the first round of the grant competition, two sub-grant contracts were cancelled on request of the beneficiaries, and 48 were funded (the total grant request was GEL 2,612,612 – EUR 739K). Out of the funded sub-grant projects from the first round of the grant competition, 27 have been completed and 21 are to be completed during the course of Y4, latest in September 2022.

Output 4 – “Mestia LAG is embedded in and actively contributes to existing networks of cooperative relationships that promote, replicate and increase the sustainability of the LEADER approach in Georgia.”

A.4.1 Establish a cooperation mechanism with LAGs and rural development networks.

The Mestia LAG achieved quite remarkable results in its fund-raising efforts with the efficient facilitation and leadership of PMC-RC. One such project funded by the EUROPEAN FUND/PIN (People in Need) has supported the LAG to conduct continuous civil monitoring of the community infrastructure rehabilitation projects in four communities of Mestia municipality financed through the state funded “Village Support Program” and co-funded by CARE/ENPARD III Mestia. The Mestia LAG has been engaged in the whole process of mobilizing communities, awareness raising and information campaign, organizing community meetings, documenting the discussions and decisions, conducting monitoring missions and reporting the results, ensuring the social media coverage of the process and reporting to the larger public. As the above project ended, the results of the final evaluation have drawn the donors to conclude the Mestia LAG experience as a best practice to facilitate inclusiveness in the process of community development support planning on the local level. In fact, through this project, the Mestia LAG has demonstrated the LEADER approach in action where all the parties involved have complemented and supported each other, and the Mestia municipality administration has strongly endorsed the LAGs role in the processes of inclusive planning, organizing and monitoring the implementation of the “Village Support Programme”. Lately, the Mestia LAG presented its experience at the working session of the Georgian Association of LAGs (GALAG) held in Tskaltubo in November 2021, where it has been admitted to become a membership of the GALAG. During the discussion after the presentation, other LAGs expressed an active interest to facilitate joint efforts to introduce such practices as a permanent mechanism in their respective municipalities.

In conclusion, the LAGs agreed to elaborate a joint advocacy agenda as an integral part of the GALAG’s current policy advocacy work for recognizing LAGs as a mechanism of formulating and implementing rural development support programs and projects on the municipal and community levels.

A.4.2 Build ties between the Mestia LAG and other LAGs in Georgia and the EU.

This activity has been particularly affected by COVID-19 restrictions and by the general epidemiological situation in the country that has been significantly worsened over the course of the reporting period.

The planned visit of the Mestia LAG Board to Austria has been postponed again to June 2022 with an alternative virtual learning program in mind in case the pandemic restrictions persist.

Out of the total eight planned visits to LAGs operating in Georgia, two were held to Kazbegi and Akhmeta in October 2021. The Mestia LAG representatives had an exciting opportunity to learn about the experiences and independent operations of the early LAG established in the first phase of ENPARD (Kazbegi). Moreover, they were also able to get a closer look at the work being implemented by and sustainability plans of the LAG (Akhmeta) established in parallel with the Mestia LAG during the on-going phase III of ENPARD.

The two planned visits to mountain Ajara LAGs (Khulo and Shuakhevi) in November 2021 were cancelled last minute, due to a considerable number of Mestia LAG Board members falling ill to COVID-19 and several others unable to join due to various health and social reasons.

All this has led to adapting the timing of the local learning visits, moving all the remaining six visits to the last year (Y4) of the project.

It is to be mentioned that communication between LAGs through the GALAG platform has proved to be very instrumental in establishing working relationships between the Mestia LAG and other LAGs. It was particularly beneficial for the Mestia LAG to interact with LAGs that are on the different stages of their development. It has given a space for observing various specific challenges and sharing the learning in real time. All the experiences, knowledge and observations shared have led the Mestia LAG to develop and approve the Organizational Development Strategy that will be used further in sustainability planning of the Mestia LAG during project exit phase.

A.4.3 Increase the visibility of LEADER in Georgia through territorial initiatives with a mountainous focus promoted by the Mestia LAG.

The activity envisions developing a territorial brand for Zemo Svaneti and an active involvement of the specialized expert assigned by the project contractor BAB that apart from taking a methodological and strategic lead, was supposed to conduct consultations with local and international stakeholders. However, COVID-19 related travel restrictions led to switching to distant support and networking through virtual means of communication.

With a purpose to initiate public discussion on the subject and to facilitate engagement of all local and international stakeholders concerned, the large thematic meeting was organized and moderated via Zoom by CARE and BAB on 29 August 2021. The meeting was attended by a large range of local and international and specialized agencies and organizations, including by UN bodies (FAO, UNDP), the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture (MEPA), the Mestia LAG and other ENPARD supported local action groups, the Austrian Development Agency (ADA), the Swiss Development Agency (SDC), the EU Delegation to Georgia, ENPARD implementing partners, and representatives of other development support projects in Georgia (i.e. GRETA, FinExCoop), EUROMONTANA, several practitioners and experts in food quality certification and food safety from EU countries and Switzerland.

As a result of a cascade of very informative presentations, analyses and follow-up discussions at the call itself as well as lately with the Mestia LAG Board members, it was concluded that the structure of the LDS of the LAG Mestia points to five thematic policy fields that are all interrelated and should be addressed when instigating local initiatives. This provides a clear and meaningful structure for activities throughout the LEADER implementation period. Contributing to cultural landscapes of the area is closely interlinked with local quality of life, attractiveness of the area and tourism destination management. For all types of „territorial branding approaches”, a view might be fundamental. Focusing on the commitment to advance quality of cheese production and consider labelling concepts for the local, highly valuable cheese products might present a very useful entry point to raise the recognition of local products and shed light on local specific food.

The Mestia LAG agreed on the principle of initiating branding support actions from selecting one specific local quality product and in line with expert recommendations to build a relevant **action plan** round the following issues and aspects:

- Geographical delimitation of mountain areas, as core reference point for product origin;
- Local/regional origin, encompassing notions of spatial “identity”, cultural (and natural) heritage and common production conditions, ensuring the quality of specific product;
- Making use of cultural narratives for place branding, e.g. by addressing protection areas status, landscape shaping processes, including approaches like Biosphere Reserves, seeking an integration of protection and socio-economic regional development;
- Addressing explicitly traditional, local knowledge, and procedures of cheese making derived from mountain contexts and climate conditions, and recipes linked to territorial branded products;
- Having a community (often rather small group) of producers in a small local area, sharing socio-cultural practices and knowledge on product origin and processing;

- Involve producer groups in preparation of territorial branding approaches;
- Relate to sensory experiences, quality approval and recipes based on specific products, aiming at safeguarding traditional methods of production of mountain areas;
- Linking product qualities to type of vegetation found in high mountain areas, and particularly in the local context, serving as the staple diet for animals, and for a specific method of production;
- Linking the territorial brand to mountain specificities, the culture and the history of the land management system in the area;
- Overcoming challenges in place branding by addressing the product origin, spatial implications of remote areas (linking mountain areas to local, domestic and international markets), processing obstacles (due to fragmentation and limited scale of production), and marketing issues;
- Managing production, processing and marketing activities costs in such a way that reasonable production and labelling costs are achieved to secure fair returns for involved farmers and producers, including considerations of distribution of benefits along the value chain;
- Use of swiftly emerging digital techniques to support the evolution, and preparation of the market and as a means to tap into evolving market potential;
- Analysis of social, ecological and spatial implications of labelling activities;
- Explore integration in value chains and regional (and national) trade structures;
- Explore impact on rural economy and up- and downstream relevance;
- Explore relation to existing (agricultural) policy and support of local development, to assess the scope for enabling the preparation of a community assessment of the branding strategy;
- Assess potential of rural development measures, regulations and promotion policies as well as marketing schemes and strategies to support elaboration, official branding decisions and implementation of territorial branding actions (of mountain areas);
- Highlight the importance of clear and reliable information to consumers;
- Need to simplify and realize the registration process;
- Need for prioritizing sustainability concerns and environmental standards in future frameworks;
- Protection of intellectual property rights;
- Implementation of adapted administrative national control scheme;
- Include assessment on land management scenarios and future shifts due to territorial label activities;
- Include sustainable mountain tourism pathways and integration of territorial branding products into those strategies.

The concrete product selection and the activity plan to initiate relevant sub-actions will be accomplished in the middle of Q1/Y4.

A.4.4 Establish a Georgian LAG network for mountainous development.

The activity will be implemented in Y4. A relevant ToR has been developed and a special expert/facilitator has been identified and is being contracted. Initial consultations have been conducted with the Mestia LAG and several other mountain LAGs on using the GALAG platform to establish and support the special sub-group on Sustainable Mountain Policy Advocacy and elaborating and agreeing on the joint agenda and the action plan.

2.3. Updated Logical Framework Matrix

The project's Logical Framework including the Y3 indicator assessment is attached as Annex 1.

2.4. Updated Action Plan

Activity	Year 4												Implementing body	
	Half-years	Half-year 1						Half-year 2						
	Months	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11		12
Activities for Output 1:														
1.3 Support the institutional development and sustainability planning of the Mestia LAG												CARE, PMC-RC		
Training LAG Members (8)														
Exchange visits of LAG Members – GE (6)														
Activities for Output 2:														
2.2 Review the Mestia Local Development Strategy by the LAG												CARE, PMC-RC		
Activities for Output 3:														
3.3 Select and fund more local initiatives through new cycles of calls for proposals incorporating lessons learnt.												CARE, PMC-RC, Mestia LAG		
Training on project management, procurement and assets management for selected applicants													CARE	
TA CARE													CARE	
TA PMC-RC													PMC-RC	
Activities for Output 4:														
4.2 Build ties between the Mestia LAG and other LAGs in Georgia and the EU												CARE, PMC-RC		
4.3 Increase the visibility of LEADER in Georgia through territorial initiatives with a mountainous focus promoted by the Mestia LAG												CARE, PMC-RC, Mestia LAG		
Develop territorial brand (zemo svaneti)														
4.4 Establish a Georgian LAG network for mountainous development												CARE, PMC-RC		
Meetings of the LAG network for mountainous development													CARE, LAG Mestia, GALAG	
National Mountain Forum Conference													CARE, LAG Mestia	
Elaboration and presentation of the advocacy paper on Sustainable Mountain Development Policy													LAG Mestia, GALAG, PMC-RC	
Final Evaluation of the Project														

2.5. Please list all contracts (works, supplies, services) above € 60 000 awarded for the implementation of the Action since the last interim report if any or during the reporting period, giving for each contract the amount, the award procedure followed and the name of the contractor.

N/A

3. Beneficiaries/affiliated entities and other Cooperation

3.1. How do you assess the relationship between the beneficiaries/affiliated entities of this grant contract (i.e. those having signed the mandate for the Coordinator or the affiliated entity statement)? Please provide specific information for each beneficiary/affiliated entity.

The action is being implemented by CARE as a lead agency and PMC-RC as a partner agency legally bonded through the implementation agreement between the parties. PMC-RC holds the primary role of facilitating the LAG establishment and operation, capacity building of LAG members, providing technical assistance in elaborating and reviewing the LDS and in the institutional development of the LAG as well as providing technical assistance to the successful applicants of the project grant scheme.

All of the above-mentioned areas of action by PMC-RC are being closely coordinated with CARE project management on a daily basis. The LAG coordinator from PMC-RC is firmly embedded in the project team and the LAG, and holds the primary responsibility in day-to-day communication and coordination of LAG members and its Board as well as in calling up and organizing board meetings.

3.2. How would you assess the relationship between your organisation and State authorities in the Action countries? How has this relationship affected the Action?

CARE nurtures and maintains a good relationship with local authorities in the project implementing area. The close collaborative relationships with the local authorities, established in the first and second year of the project, were further strengthened. During this reporting period, the local municipality endorsed the LAG as an efficient mechanism to ensure inclusion in the process of local development planning on the community level. Moreover, it has made the necessary efforts to change the policy to recognize the LAG as a collaborative mechanism in rural development planning.

3.3. Where applicable, describe your relationship with any other organisations involved in implementing the Action: N/A

3.4. Where applicable, outline any links and synergies you have developed with other actions.

In the reporting period, the Mestia LAG has managed to identify and explore synergies between its on-going work within the framework of ENPARD III and the new project opportunity under the EUROPEAN FUND program within which it has raised necessary funds to conduct community mobilisation and civil monitoring of the infrastructure rehabilitation projects funded through the State “Village Support Program”.

Close working relationships have been established with the EU/ADA/Swedish Government funded GRETA project that is being implemented in Mestia municipality. The GRETA outsourced organic food certification expert has been actively engaged in the initiated networking discussions on developing the local quality brand of Zemo Svaneti. Moreover, both projects maintain close operational contacts as well as exchanging relevant information on the methodology and project progress and specific information to cross-verify beneficiaries in order to avoid duplications and overlapping.

In October 2021, the project hosted ADA representatives that visited numerous sub-grant project sites, met the beneficiaries and Mestia LAG members and discussed further potential synergies and collaboration opportunities.

3.5. If your organisation has received previous EU grants in view of strengthening the same target group, in how far has this Action been able to build upon/complement the previous one(s)? (List all previous relevant EU grants).

The Mestia project design is built on the results of similar rural development projects under ENPARD that were implemented in Lagodekhi and Khulo municipalities by CARE and PMC-RC respectively. Analysing learning and experiences from both projects have been a part of the action in the inception phase that included a field visit of the Mestia project team to Lagodekhi, meeting local project management, LAG representatives, and visiting grant-funded project sites.

4. Visibility

4.1 How is the visibility of the EU contribution being ensured in the Action?

The project implementing partners ensure that the action is widely publicised and that EU visibility is prominent at all events and on all action documents. The communication coordinator of CARE is engaged in ensuring the compliance with EU visibility guidelines of all visibility actions. A project specific visibility and communication plan was developed and approved by the EU. The visibility activities commenced with the introductory meetings with beneficiaries and stakeholders, where an informational brochure was distributed outlining the projects principal aims, objectives and activities and detailing the source of funding and EU's support. Electronic publications produced - including research papers and assessment reports - carry the logo of the EU and a description of the project activities supported through this funding. Furthermore, visibility banners were developed and displayed at all trainings, workshops and public events and all communication materials (brochures, guides, handbooks and leaflets) printed recognizes the support from the EU.

4.2 Communication & Visibility Activity update

During the third year of the project, the project's visibility activities aimed to reach and engage the wider audience and showcase the activities and ownership of the Mestia LAG on the local process, particularly of its young members. This was largely achieved through the active involvement of the LAG and its members in media campaigns to improve communication with the audience. All visibility and communication demonstrated EU support to the project.

The Facebook page of the Upper Svaneti LAG has been active and regularly updated, accessible at: <https://www.facebook.com/LAGMestia/>. At the end of the third year, the page has **14,104** followers and **12,144** likes, as it gained **2717** new followers and 1625 new likes during a year. (source: Facebook insights data).

During the third year of the project, the LAG Facebook page featured news from the project-including trainings, meetings, information about the grant competition, as well as stories of LAG members and particularly its youth wing members.

The social media page addressed different local and global issues, including COVID-19, local socio-economic problems in the municipality. The highlight of the LAG social media action has been its fundraising campaign to support children, single mothers, socially vulnerable, elderly and other groups in Mestia municipality with new year gifts, engaging the wider population and business companies. Through its diverse posts, the LAG Facebook page last year reached over **2 million** people and engaged **202,562 unique users**. (source: Facebook insights data: January 1 - December 30, 2021). Following are some examples of the LAG posts promoting the group, its values and work:

- **Campaigns:** The LAG accomplished their annual charity social media campaign, that lasted from 25 November to 31 December 2021 to fundraise for those in need in Mestia municipality. The campaign showcased the letters of children, elderly, socially vulnerable people, as well as businesses engaged as part of their CSR in the campaign.

Videos to start and end the campaign:

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=440632160838080>

<https://www.facebook.com/LAGMestia/videos/643697703655823>

LAG fundraising charity event on December 19:

<https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?vanity=LAGMestia&set=a.1348649628909676>

LAG members joining women's day campaign:

<https://www.facebook.com/LAGMestia/posts/1162293204211987>

- **Project news:**

The LAG becoming a member of the Association of Georgian LAGs (GALAG):

<https://www.facebook.com/LAGMestia/posts/1333469417094364>

LAG communication and multimedia training:

<https://www.facebook.com/LAGMestia/posts/1318561388585167>

LAG exchange visit with Kazbegi and Akhmeta LAGs:

<https://www.facebook.com/LAGMestia/posts/1315233315584641>

<https://www.facebook.com/LAGMestia/posts/1313949879046318>

<https://www.facebook.com/LAGMestia/posts/1311841349257171>

Visit of Mr. Georges Dehoux in Mestia:

<https://www.facebook.com/LAGMestia/posts/1293907614383878>

<https://www.facebook.com/LAGMestia/posts/1284058445368795>

Organizational Development Strategy meetings of the LAG:

<https://www.facebook.com/LAGMestia/posts/1236195160155124>

Training for grant competition participants:

<https://www.facebook.com/LAGMestia/posts/1232380460536594>

<https://www.facebook.com/LAGMestia/posts/1229117790862861>

Training of trainer events with LAG members

<https://www.facebook.com/LAGMestia/posts/1189634851477822>

Informational meetings on the second grant competition:

<https://www.facebook.com/LAGMestia/posts/1176446479463326>

LAG general assembly meeting on the second grant competition:

<https://www.facebook.com/LAGMestia/posts/1170325280075446>

- **Stories:**

Stories of project participants (participants of grant competitions) in social media:

Vika Pilpani, Digitalization of pedestrian routes in Mestia:

<https://www.facebook.com/LAGMestia/posts/1333039513804021>

Ivane Kordzaia, Family kitchen:

<https://www.facebook.com/LAGMestia/posts/1330408967400409>

Raia Gadrani, Culture house in Becho:

<https://www.facebook.com/LAGMestia/posts/1329095117531794>

Madona Tserediani, Women social enterprise:

<https://www.facebook.com/LAGMestia/posts/1328412424266730>

Elguja Jorjoliani, Non-timber products enterprise:

<https://www.facebook.com/LAGMestia/posts/1327811347660171>

Miranda Agapishvili, Energy efficient guesthouses:

<https://www.facebook.com/LAGMestia/posts/1326547537786552>
 Vakhtanmg Pirtskheliani, Improving drinking water infrastructure:
<https://www.facebook.com/LAGMestia/posts/1324601717981134>

The LAG webpage has been operational and updated and is accessible at: <http://mestialag.ge/>, following the EU external action's communication and visibility guidelines for media (placement of logos, etc.). The page displayed information about the EU-funded ENARD program, main goals of the project, Upper Svaneti LAG, its mission and structure. It features the details of the Local Development Strategy, local events and publications by the project and the LAG.

The project produced **photo and video materials**, available at the following link:
<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1UQkfKPaAIXHTbEFDHZF5gMeKHJnLIYa?usp=sharing>

Information about the project's main activities and events has been **shared with** ENPARD and the EU communications unit and disseminated on their media platform. This included: announcement of the second grant competition, the visit of Mr. Groges Dehoux in Mestia municipality and other LAG news. The photos and relevant materials have been uploaded to the **EUDigitool page**.

The LAG and the project were featured in several **media outlets**, including local media.

- LAG young members visiting Formula TV to talk about their campaign:
<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=385817969896855>
- Local media pieces on the grant competition winners:
<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=843537626339406>
<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=571428950624909>
- Austrian Development Agency featured a story of the Lenjeri sports field in their social media:
https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=2122660817897314&id=198697293627019

Updates on the Mestia project have been included in **CARE's news and social media** platform. Examples can be found here:

- Visit of Mr. Georges Dehoux:
<https://www.facebook.com/CARECaucasus/posts/4340504426025831>
- Visit of the head of the Austrian Development Agency:
<https://www.facebook.com/CARECaucasus/posts/4437207959688810>
- EU supported local action group activities (through EU4Georgia platform):
<https://www.facebook.com/CARECaucasus/posts/3742133802529566>
- Announcement of the second grant competition:
http://www.care-caucasus.org.ge/index.php?m=16&news_id=224
<https://www.facebook.com/CARECaucasus/posts/3751659421577004>
- Training on food safety standards:
<https://www.facebook.com/CARECaucasus/posts/3598679460208335>

The results and impact of the project was featured and disseminated with partners, donors and stakeholders through CARE's end of the year update/impact review:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=81baOvwMK-A>

To increase the visibility of the project-funded socio-economic initiatives, **banners and stickers** were printed and arranged for all projects funded under the first and second grant competition and placed at

visible locations of the different projects. The visibility materials were prepared in compliance with EU visibility guidelines, as they display the donor logo and mention donor support.

In the end of December, a tender was announced for multimedia service to contribute to increasing visibility and promotion of the LEADER approach in Georgia, through promoting the model's impact in improving socio-economic opportunities by implementing LEADER in Mestia. The selection process of the relevant media provider is ongoing.

As part of the project's **Communication & Visibility plan** that was approved by the EU, CARE developed a monitoring matrix displaying the suggested deliverables by the project with regard to communication and visibility, to monitor and report on their status:

#	Activity	Target Group	Deadline	Staff Responsible	Status (not started, in process, completed)
Objective 1: Increase the visibility and raise awareness about the LEADER implementation and the EU support, through promotion of the project's main activities with key audiences					
1	Launch event (1)	General public, media, partners	June 2019	CARE project team with EU communications unit	Completed
2	Press visit (international) (1)	Beneficiaries, general public, media, partners	Q2/3 2022	CARE	Not started
3	Factsheet on LEADER in Mestia (2)	Beneficiaries, general public, media, partners	Year 2,3, or 4	CARE with PMC-RC	In progress
4	Promotional items (1) (bags, t-shirts etc)	General public, media, partners	Year 2,3,4 Depending on project activity/event	CARE, with PMC-RC	Accomplished partially, but ongoing process
5	Animation on LEADER approach (1)	Beneficiaries, general public	March 2019	CARE and PMC-RC project team	Completed
6	Visual materials- infographics, posters, banners	Beneficiaries, general public, media, partners	Year 1, 2, 3, 4, semi-annually	CARE and PMC-RC project team	Accomplished partially, but ongoing process
Objective 2: Increase the engagement and support from relevant stakeholders to the project and the LEADER approach through demonstrating project success and results					
1	Project update (4)	Partners, beneficiaries, general public	Annually, starting Q1 2020	CARE, with PMC-RC	Partially completed, but ongoing process
2	Newsletters (12)	Beneficiaries, general public, media, partners	Quarterly, starting Q1 2020	CARE with PMC-RC	Partially completed, but ongoing process
3	Human interest (10) and Success stories (60)	Beneficiaries, general public, media, partners	Quarterly on regular basis, starting Q4 2019	CARE	Partially completed, but ongoing process
4	Press visit and Media coverage (national) (2)	Partners, beneficiaries, general public	Depending on the event	CARE with PMC-RC, (also with ENPARD communications support)	Partially accomplished, but ongoing process
5	Press visit (international) (1)	Partners, beneficiaries, general	Q2/3 2022	CARE	Not started

		public			
Objective 3: Achieve broader understanding of the local development processes in Mestia municipality and the project values, through illustrating project's impact and benefit for wider society					
1	Promo videos and photos (2 videos/documentaries)	General public, media, partners	On regular basis, starting Q1 2019	CARE, with PMC-RC and relevant contractor	Partially accomplished and in process
2	Media reportages (2)	General public, media, partners	Years 2,3,4	CARE, with PMC-RC, ENPARD communications and relevant contractor	Not started
3	LAG website and FB page (1)	Beneficiaries, general public, media, partners	Starting Q3 2019	CARE, with PMC-RC and relevant contractor	Completed
4	Project update (4)	General public, media, partners	Annually, starting Q4 2019	CARE, with PMC-RC	Partially completed, but ongoing process
5	Publications: LDS and advocacy report on mountainous development (2)	Beneficiaries, general public, media, partners	In the years of 2, 3 or 4	CARE and PMC-RC	Partially accomplished (LDS, advocacy report), but ongoing process
6	Conferences, advocacy forum (3)	General public, media, partners	In the years of 2, 3 or 4	CARE and PMC-RC	Not started

The following section illustrates a few of the social media stories, featured on the LAG Facebook with engagement of the LAG youth group:

Business/Commercial

Elguja Jorjoliani, Mulakhi community, Non-timber products processing enterprise

“It’s been years that I have a family business. We own a hotel in Mestia and years ago, we started providing non-timber products in our hotel. Tourists love the local tea and the demand was high. That’s why I decided to build a non-timber producing enterprise. We have around 20 varieties of local tea, including mint, blueberry, barambo and other berries.

I started building a processing enterprise with my resources and in the process, several organizations provided a helping hand.

In the end, I participated in the grant competition announced by the Mestia LAG, under the EU project. I won and with support from the EU, I purchased expensive tea processing units, a drier and also cemented one of the floors.

Building the enterprise was connected with many challenges. It also required to take out a large amount of loans from the bank. EU support has been a great help for me.

The building process will be accomplished soon. I think from next year we’ll be working actively. The enterprise will employ many locals, primarily in collecting the non-timber products. People of every age and



group can be involved. After the collection process is completed, we will dry the tea, process it, and package and sell it.

I think this product will bring benefits at the local level. Seasonally, it will employ many people. In addition, I plan to invite experts to transfer knowledge to local people. I think through this, we'll also contribute to development of this region and this sector”.

Community Infrastructure

Vakhtang Pirtskheliani, Tsvirmi community, rehabilitation of drinking water supply system



“I grew up in this village. I have two children and we live here with our family. I work at the Tetnuldi ropeway.

For all these years, our village has had a water problem. We didn't have a water tank and the surroundings were covered with swamp. The dirty water was used by the cattle, and we were receiving muddy water that was unsuitable for drinking.

I've been actively involved in the work of the Upper Svaneti LAG. From the LAG, I found out about the EU project and the grant competition. One of the directions of the grant competition was the development of community infrastructure. We held a discussion with village inhabitants, and agreed that solving the water problem would bring the most benefit for all of us.

Along with village development projects, we obtained financing from the EU and for EUR 9,000, we purchased not only a water tank, but also other materials, such as high quality water pipes. We also supplied all of the families living in the village with new water taps. We built a cement construction and supplied water to the kindergarten, school and gym.

Thanks to the project, now over 25 families have clean water available 24 hours a day. Sometimes there's even more water than needed. In winter, when the water level is low, we'll even have some supply.

Tourism has developed in our village. There are several guesthouses around, but it's impossible to offer tourists a stay without water. We are happy that we have this new opportunity now. I also own a cottage house and I hope that water availability will positively affect its functioning.”

Social/non-commercial

Madonna Tserediani, Latali community, Sewing workshop and social enterprise “Latliishd”

”Women employment is a pressing issue in many villages, which causes social problems and other challenges. I'm from Latali community and work as a school teacher. I see that many women have a routine life in the village, as they are occupied mainly with family care.

We decided to arrange a space that would empower rural women. The idea of establishing a social enterprise fitted our goal and plans well.

With support from the EU and the Upper Svaneti LAG, we bought 7 sewing machines, inventory, and a car, which is used for delivery. We also bought equipment to make Svanetian soap and sewing materials.

In the social enterprise of Latali community, 15 women are employed.



We work on felt, sew Svanetian bags, hats and curtains, and we produce traditional Svanetian soap, which is a very demanded product and we plan to add a delivery service as well.

Women in Latali community gained more confidence and motivation. They started earning income, and the experience also contributed to their learning and development. In future, we plan to organize charity events to support single mothers and mothers with multiple children and the elderly.”

List of Annexes

Annex 1 Updated Logistical Framework as per end of Year 3

Annex 2 Segregation of duties among implementing parties of sub-grant component – 2nd round (CARE Austria, PMC-RC, Mestia LAG)

Annex 3 Information on the selected sub-grantees (first and second rounds)

The European Commission may wish to publicise the results of Actions. Do you have any objection to this report being published on the EuropeAid website? If so, please state your objections here.

No objection.

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Signature: 

Location: CARE Austria, Vienna

Date report due: 02 February 2022

Date report sent: 02 February 2022

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