Annual Progress Report
January – December 2015
Support to Territorial and Administrative Reform (STAR)
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<td>AT</td>
<td>Amalgamation Team</td>
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<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<td>GT</td>
<td>Grant Thornton</td>
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<td>LGU</td>
<td>Local Government Unit</td>
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<td>MSLI</td>
<td>Minister of State for Local Issues</td>
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<td>NAITR</td>
<td>National Agency for Implementation of Territorial Reform</td>
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<td>SDCO</td>
<td>Swiss Development Cooperation Office</td>
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<td>SIDA</td>
<td>Swedish International Development Agency</td>
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<td>STAR</td>
<td>Support Territorial Administrative Reform</td>
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<td>TAR</td>
<td>Territorial and Administrative Reform</td>
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<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nation Development Programme</td>
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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Tangible results are achieved during 2015 related to the implementation of STAR (Support to Territorial and Administrative Reform) project. Many actions have been undertaken in support of government's efforts to entering the local elections of 2015 with 61 units of local government. These elections were a significant milestone in the overall TAR implementation process. STAR Project activities, which have gone hand in hand with the TAR implementation, were planned and realised over two time periods corresponding to before and after the elections.

The pre-elections period focused mainly on completion of the pilot phase in Pogradec and Ura Vajgurore, leading to the development of the guidelines and manuals necessary for the amalgamation. The piloting of the due diligence and amalgamation process design started by the end of 2014 and was finalized in April 2015. This exercise prepared the ground for the next phase of full replication to all former LGUs, which constituted the major action for the second half of the year, after the elections.

In preparing for a large-scale engagement in the processes of amalgamation and consolidation of the new units, local working groups have been established at both prefectural level (12 groups) and local level (61 groups). A tailor-made capacity building activity on LGU due diligence and amalgamation was provided from March to June to 61 local working groups, benefitting a total of 268 local professionals. The know-how in undertaking due diligence was established in the new LGUs.

Support was also provided in preparing and improving the legal framework for the amalgamation of the existing LGUs, which were reflected in the Law 30/2105 "On changes and additions to the Law 8652 on the organization and functioning of the local governments", adopted in April 2015.

The due diligence exercise replicated in all 384 former LGUs (including 11 municipal units of Tirana Municipality) informed directly the process of transferral of functions and responsibilities to the new 61 LGUs. The related financial and operational data collected and produced for each of 384 former LGUs directly informed the new administrations on the realistic situation and challenges in preparing budgeting and resource allocation for next year. It also helped to identify and analyse current weaknesses that prevented LGUs in delivering efficient and effective services, which forms the basis for taking appropriate measures to address them in the future consolidation of LGUs.

A Practical Guide, uniquely designed for each new LGU in accordance with their specific needs and characteristics was produced and disseminated to the new mayors' cabinets immediately after the elections. The Guide included detailed instructions for a smooth transfer of functions and responsibilities from the former LGUs to the new ones.

Parallel to the actions related directly to the due diligence preparation and implementation, STAR support in 2015 also focused on the area of service delivery and included the piloting of one-stop shops in two LGUs as well as a piloting of a Data Management System and Digitalisation of Archives in one of the LGUs. Two pilot one-stop-shop service delivery offices, offering up to 9 services, were implemented (Durres-Ishem and Elbasan-Bradashe). Digitalization of local archives was piloted in one LGU (Durres-Rrashbull) and the completion of the piloting has led to the development of a replicable model.

Assisting the new LGUs to plan effectively and manage their jurisdictions has also been part of STAR implementation during the reporting period. In this framework, a particular focus has been given to providing technical assistance to the new municipalities to prepare short-term (three years) Local
Development Operational Plans including specific projects fiches for capital investments. In order to carry out such assistance, UNDP selected, though competitive bidding procedures, seven local organisations, providing for a total of 26 municipalities organised in seven clusters. Furthermore, two gender experts were mobilised by UNDP to ensure the mainstreaming of gender issues throughout the entire exercise. The Local Development Operational Plans are drafted in cooperation with the elected mayors and interested local stakeholders. They would serve as blueprints for the new municipalities, especially during their first 2-3 years of existence. The first drafts of the plans were already developed by the end of December and within February 2016, they will be finalized and validated by the established forums at the local level and the respective mayors.

Another activity undertaken during 2015 has been the definition of the legal and administrative framework as well as the concrete definition of the administrative borders of the 61 new local government units. This process aimed at updating and documenting the territorial boundaries of 61 new municipalities, in order to help improve territorial planning and the tax base as well as avoid existing or likely administrative/community disputes. This activity was contracted out to a local joint venture led by GeoConsulting shpk and implemented during April - December 2015. An integral part of this process had also been the capacity enhancement of all 61 LGUs on the use of GIS system and its population with the necessary data. At the end of the process, the administrative borders of the 61 LGUs are defined in a participatory way with no contestation from any of the parties involved in the process. A draft decision of the Council of Ministers is being finalized by the MSLI for approval in early 2016, which will lead to officialising the new LGUs’ borders.

One of the STAR project objectives relates to building capacities of the staff of Minister of State for Local Issues and supporting the transfer/exchange of relevant know-how to the benefit of national counterparts. In this regard, in April, NAITR staff as well as national experts participated in a study tour to Kosovo and benefitted from Kosovo experience on LGUs organisational structures, service delivery and citizens’ participation mechanisms in decision making. This was followed by a two-stage exchange visit with Emilia Romagna region in Italy. During the first stage taking place in June, three experts from Emilia Romagna Region visited Albania and became acquainted with recent developments regarding TAR implementation through meetings with key stakeholders. Based on the collected information, they came up with recommendations for the MSLI related to the management of social services and public utilities at the local level. During the second stage in early September, a group of 10 professionals from the MSLI, the NAITR and the municipality of Tirana, visited Emilia Romagna and were exposed to relevant experiences of this region about territorial and administrative reform and mainly to service provision methodology and mechanisms in place.

Two major events took place in 2015 out of a series of efforts organised by STAR in the framework of awareness raising and info sharing about TAR. The first one was the national conference organized in June with the participation of the Prime Minister and several members of the Council of Ministers and the Albanian Parliament, representatives from central and local public agencies and numbers of international development partners. The Conference marked the completion of the preparatory phase and the commencement of the transition stage towards the real amalgamation of 373 LGUs into 61 new municipalities. A second event was the National Conference on Local Government organized on 30th October supported by and in partnership with the Council of Europe, Swiss Development Cooperation and USAID. The participants, representing national and local government, civil society and media, were informed about the achievements related to local governance in the country. Discussions about current and upcoming challenges were part of the conference fora and
different models and experiences on how to tackle them were presented and shared with participants.

The international support for the administrative and territorial reform remained high throughout 2015. Most donors contributed for the second time to the STAR pooled fund, responding to a revised and further detailed implementation roadmap and the plan of activities presented by the MSLI for the pre-election period preparations and the immediate support actions to be undertaken in the aftermath of elections for consolidating the newly emerging LGUs.

Two Steering Committee meetings were organised during 2015, in April and in December. Discussions about STAR implementation, problems encountered and future steps have regularly been part of the agenda. A no-cost extension of six months was discussed and agreed at the last Steering Committee meeting to ensure implementation of the indicated activities, the closing of the all the contractual agreements and preparing the final report.

Coordination among partners and the MSLI have increasingly touched upon themes regarding organizational and functional aspect of the LGUs, beyond reviewing the progress of implementation of STAR planned activities and components, given that specific donor-supported similar or complementary initiatives are ongoing or planned for the near future. The discussion has focused on areas related to local human resources management systems and reorganization, one-stop-shop models developed to date, and the scope and approaches for assisting local governments in defining their short-term local operational and development plans.

A certain level of clarity about the scope of individual initiatives has been achieved, However; it is becoming increasingly necessary for the Government to improve coordination and synergies, make use of all the positive knowledge developed, identify in more details the experiences and models with a high potential to function and fit to the local context and develop complementarities around them for best results.

Towards the end 2015, partners were also engaged in a more detailed discussions regarding future assistance needed to smoothen and help transition and contribute to a more effective and efficient local governance, the latter also leading to the shared interest of supporting a STAR 2 programme. In this regard, a project proposal is being developed by the Government and shared with the members of STAR Steering Committee at its meeting of December 2015. Comments and feedback provision would support an improved version of the proposal and potential funding of a second STAR project.
2. PROJECT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The final objective of the territorial reform is to strengthen the efficiency of local administration, the quality and standards of service delivery and the equitable development of the territory by enabling greater human and financial resources, increasing local responsibilities and competencies and adopting a more transparent and participative decision-making.

The aim of the STAR project is to provide coherent support to the Minister of Local Issues for an effective implementation of the administrative-territorial reform process.

The project has identified four major outputs and a series of activities aiming to achieve the main aim aforementioned - effective implementation of the territorial and administrative reform.

(i) Technical and institutional capacity developed at MSLI to manage and complete the reform
(ii) Facilitation of public consultations and consensus building
(iii) Support for transition and implementation phase
(iv) Timely logistical input in all the stages of the process secured

Consistent with the TAR process, the STAR implementation is also organized around three stages namely:

(i) Administrative model design
(ii) Transition and preparatory measures for the administrative amalgamation
(iii) Empowerment and capacity building of new LGUs to implement administrative amalgamation

During 2015, the focus had been mainly on the phase related to transition and preparatory measures for the administrative amalgamation.

3. CURRENT IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS AND RESULTS ACHIEVED

During the reporting period, corresponding to a pre and post-local elections context, the territorial and administrative reform focused primarily on the development of due diligence guidelines and methodology, the constitution of new municipalities and preparation for the amalgamation and consolidation of former LGUs. The activities of STAR were aligned to address the needs of these processes. The implementation was organised in achieving the four major outputs which are presented below:

(i) Technical and institutional capacity support to the MSLI to manage the reform process

This direction was clearly identified, at the outset, as one of the primary objectives of STAR. To achieve it, STAR had regularly organised its activities using knowledge transfer and sharing platforms where best practices are discussed and experience sharing and mobilization of expertise is continuously generated. The key platforms consist of:
\textbf{a. Study visits:}
During the reporting period, STAR has facilitated the transfer of know-how to the staff of MSLI and other national counterparts aiming to improve their knowledge about relevant issues with the reform implementation, service delivery and citizens’ participation in local government.

In this framework STAR supported a visit of MSLI staff and Amalgamation Team (10 persons in total) to Kosovo during 16-17 April 2015. The main objective of the study tour was to get an understanding of the organization and functioning of the local governance units in Kosovo. The scope included also the way services are provided through the one-stop-shops in urban and rural areas, the system of information on the performance management system implemented by the local administration, and last but not least, the mechanisms used by Local Governance Units in Kosovo to ensure representation and participation of citizens in the decision-making process. 
\url{http://www.reformaterritoriale.al/images/study%20tour%20in%20Kosovo%20April%202015.pdf}

Another visit of a few Ministry staff to selected Sweden municipalities led by the Minister of State for Local Issues took place during 2015. Sweden has a long and positive experience related to the reorganisation of local government. Their special knowledge on amalgamation processes resulting from direct experience with territorial and administrative reform was very useful and helpful to all the members of the Albanian delegation.

Another learning opportunity for the governmental officials involved with TAR and the members of the amalgamation team was the exchange visit with Emilia Romagna region. In this regard, a contract was signed with ANCICOM for the provision of technical assistance in support to TAR and organisation of a study visit to Emilia-Romagna region. The exchange happened in two stages:

1. the first stage took place at the end of June. During this stage, three local governance experts from the Italian region of Emilia-Romagna visited Albania, met with the major stakeholders of TAR and became acquainted with recent developments its implementation. Based on the field visits and information collected, they provided MSLI with several relevant recommendations related to provision and management of social services and public utilities at the local level. \url{http://reformaterritoriale.al/en/roadmap/documents}

2. the second stage took place at the beginning of September. During this stage, a group of 10 professional from the MSLI, the National Agency of Reform Implementation and the Municipality of Tirana visited Emilia Romagna and became acquainted with relevant experiences of this region as regards the territorial and administrative reform. The participants focused in and were able to identify useful experience and modalities serving the consolidation of services.

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\textbf{4 learning opportunities organized aiming to upgrade knowledge and share best practices related to territorial reform and public service provision (25 persons benefiting)}
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\textbf{b. Strengthening of the Coordination and Amalgamation team:}
Since the beginning of the year, the regional coordinators contractual arrangements with STAR project were renewed as the role of the regional coordinators was considered crucial for liaising and assisting the working groups at the local level, facilitating the due diligence processes and the STAR implementation in general and ensuring overall coordination of TAR stakeholders at local level.
two days training is provided to all the contracted regional coordinators on due diligence replication and their coordinating role in the process.

The Amalgamation Team continued to provide technical assistance and regular support to MSLI. Their engagement has been crucial for guiding a series of functional assignment including, among other things:

- The monitoring and quality assurance of the results delivered by various engaged commercial service providers, especially the piloting and replication of the due diligence and the development of a new One-Stop-Shop prototype,
- Training of 61 working groups tasked to undertake due diligence at local level
- The constant communication with all LGUs and their respective local working groups across Albania, as a follow up of the training provided to all 61 municipal local working groups in anticipation of the due diligence replication. Such contacts have also facilitated cooperation between LGUs and TA service provider interested entities as well as helped provide solutions on various issues emerging at the local level concerning the amalgamation exercise.
- The development of a prototype of digitalization of archives in cooperation with the General Directorate of Archives, the piloting LGUs and their personnel, as well as the initial assessment of the archiving situation in the remaining LGUs and the ways for addressing such situation.
- Support to the MSLI in some additional tasks involving the formulation of various legal documents and financial templates related to local financial management and reporting.
- Synergy and support to the activities carried out by the NAITR, etc.

**c. Contracting of archiving specialists:**
As part of the development plan of digitalizing LGUs’ archives, 13 archiving specialists were mobilised; their main task was about scoping and further analysing the current situation of archiving practices and documentation management for all LGUs. Their engagement by UNDP was done in close consultation with the MSLI and the amalgamation team and followed competitive recruitment procedures.

**Facilitation of information sharing and public consultations**

Public awareness activities and consultations with the public at large continued to be in the focus of STAR during 2015.

**a. Photo competition**
Under the leadership of MSLI, a photo competition was organised during March–April, primarily targeting youth and aiming to showcase the TAR through photography. The competition required also to highlight the human face of TAR. To realize a comprehensive competition, focusing not only in the capital city and to draw the attention of young artists to participate, UNDP/STAR project made use of innovative tools of information. A separate domain [http://shkrepe.reformaterritoriale.al](http://shkrepe.reformaterritoriale.al) was set up in the territorial reform website which was active during 12 March – 25 April 2015. 11,455 persons visited the website. This activity was preceded by a round of consultative meetings with the Minister
of State for local Issues with students of Tirana, Shkoder and Vlora Universities which were regularly posted on the web page on TAR, as well as in Facebook account. 399,272 was the number of the audience reached through Facebook with a total number of 17,106 visitors interchanging. As a result, 266 applicants (37% females) made it to send their photos and directly participate in the competition.

b. Spot production

The efficiency and quality of service provision have increasingly been considered as a serious obstacle to local governance development and emerged in national policy debates since the beginning of STAR implementation. In different awareness raising activities, it has been highlighted that the citizens will continue to have access to services at the same location as they used to before the reform. However, there was still confusion about the way citizens would receive services, especially in remote and rural areas. That was the rationale for the development of a spot on “One Stop Shops” approach targeting young and mid-age citizens that most frequently approach local government administrative offices for services. This spot was also accessible on the web page of territorial reform [http://www.reformaterritoriale.al/en/] and distributed by PIK Creative Company through YouTube video campaign, Facebook and Google Ads. 4700 persons viewed the video in YouTube, and 6093 (1487 in desktop and 4606 in mobile) is the total number of people clicking and liking the video in Facebook.

c. Consultative meetings

During March – June 2015, 30 consultation meetings were organised by the Amalgamation Team all over the country. These meetings served to inform the respective communities about the new setting and all the related actions to make the new LGUs operational. Explanation of the detailed steps to take place in the upcoming period (after the local elections) had also been part of the discussions with current representatives of LGUs, and their administration. About 500 people have taken part and provided their opinion about the process.

To facilitate the sharing of important and relevant information and procedures useful to the new local administrations, consultative meetings were organised with the newly elected mayors and the municipality councils. Three general meetings were organised during July-August, for discussing in detail the LGU functions in the new context. To this aim, another important activity carried out was that of preparing of personalized practical guidebooks [http://www.reformaterritoriale.al/en/roadmap/documents], which were delivered to each of the new 61 municipalities. These tailor-made guidebooks, besides general headers and standard instructions, contained information pertinent only to the municipality and mayor they were specifically prepared for. The instructions comprised guidelines on a variety of issues that are necessary for the mayors and municipality councils to immediately commence their work. They included:

- relevant decisions of the Council of Ministers,
- forms of request to be equipped with original municipality and administrative unit stamps,
- the order of appointment of new administrators,
The guidebooks were drawn as an instrument contributing to a smooth transfer of functions and responsibilities to the newly amalgamated 61 ones.

**d. National Conference**

A major event for the administrative and territorial reform was the national conference organized in June with the participation of the Prime Minister and several members of the Council of Ministers and the Albanian Parliament, representatives from central and local public agencies and numbers of international development partners, about 260 participants in total. The Conference marked the completion of the preparatory phase and the commencement of the transition stage towards the real amalgamation of 373 LGUs into 61 new municipalities.


Another National Conference on Local Government was organized on 30th October in close collaboration and partnership with the Council of Europe, the Swiss Development Cooperation and USAID. About 250 participants present in the conference were informed about the work done for the implementation of TAR, on the decentralization process and about the drafting of a new organic law on Local Government which expands responsibilities and competences to local governments starting from January next year. The National Conference coincided with the 30th Anniversary of the opening for signature of the European Charter of Local Self-Government, the 20th Anniversary of Albania’s membership in the Council of Europe and the 15th Anniversary of the ratification of the European Charter of Local Self-Government. Information about both events was made available in written and electronic media.


**e. Newsletter**

In January, STAR project started publishing a newsletter which aimed to inform on the latest development on TAR, presented the achievements as well as the challenges to overcome. The newsletter is quarterly produced (four numbers published so far) describing activities taking place during the reform and project implementation.

The newsletters along with other information regarding TAR implementation were fed into TAR’s dedicated website and its Facebook page. Media reviews and cross linking of information from all relevant sources had been prepared for all the main stakeholders through periodic media reviews.

(iii) Provision of technical services in support of the transitional phase

The series of activities under this heading are entirely related to the transition phase which includes activities happening before and after the local elections.

**a. Piloting in Pogradec and Ura Vajgurore**

Implementing such a reform with high impact on citizens on one side and accompanied with lots of uncertainties related with the more distant relocation of some public service providers, loss of identity of place and more importantly redundancy of local government staff on the other side, were significant reasons for the Minister of State for Local Issues to opt for starting the due diligence by piloting the development of amalgamation modalities to selected LGUs prior to full replication at country level. The piloting started in November 2014 and was completed with the delivery of the necessary guides and manuals for replication in April 2015. Consequently, this caused additional delays of all the other following activities.


Support was provided by STAR project to the hired company through the regional coordinators and experts of the Amalgamation Team in establishing the relations with the pilot local administrations, collecting data and development of the manuals that realistically reflected the context and situation of the local government units in the country.

**b. Establishing and training of working groups**

61 local working groups (each group consisting of 4 specialists) were established during the reporting period to scale up the due diligence exercise at the country level, covering the 361 remaining LGUs. All members of the local working groups received training sessions following the manual developed during the piloting phase. Similar training was provided to the 12 groups established at prefecture/regional levels totalling the number of trainees to 268 at the country level.

**c. Due Diligence replication**

UNDP carried out a major competitive bidding procedure for the selection of a qualified entity that would replicate in all municipalities the due diligence exercise that was previously piloted only in two LGUs. UNDP, through STAR, cooperated closely with the MSLI in designing detailed Terms of Reference for this assignment which then followed the respective tendering procedures. The bid resulted in the awarding of Grant Thornton for the provision of TA for the due diligence replication. Grant Thornton started the implementation in September.
The due diligence replication consisted of a process of reviewing the financial and operational aspects of the functioning of the LGUs. The financial review focused primarily on assessing the financial statements whereas the operational review focused on all other paperwork including relevant document annexes, the identification of the description of current and inherited responsibilities and practices, the availability of public services, the availability of administrative functions, executive roles and the organizational structure.

The team of GT consultants engaged with financial reporting has gathered financial statements and other financial information from each LGU and has already provided 384 reports corresponding to the former 384 LGUs (including 11 municipal units of Tirana Municipality).

The related financial and operational data collected and produced for each of 384 former LGUs directly informed the new administrations of 61 consolidated LGUs on the realistic situation and challenges in preparing budgeting and resource allocation for next year. It also helped to identify and analyse current weaknesses that prevent LGUs in delivering efficient and effective services, which forms the basis for taking appropriate measures to address them during the consolidation phase.

d. The definition of new territorial boundaries
Another important activity in the focus of implementation has been the follow up of the commenced work for the accurate definition of the territorial boundaries of the 61 new municipalities. STAR subcontracted, at the conclusion of an opening tender process, GeoConsulting (the leading partner) Invent and GentAlb shpk, for the definition of territorial boundaries of 61 municipalities as an integral part of STAR project. Clear territorial boundaries will definitively avoid administrative disputes and help better territorial planning at the same time. The implementation started in April 2015 and till the end of December the results achieved in the framework of this assignment include:
a thorough analysis and identification of the boundary overlaps for 61 new municipalities;
the virtual definition of territorial boundaries of 61 newly established municipalities using GIS systems;
the designing of a manual for municipalities’ specialists on the use and definition of the borders of their territory using the information they possess at the local level;
in addition, four training sessions of Urban and Property Registration Office specialists from the 61 municipalities (approx. 120 people) have been carried out. The sessions provided with detailed instruction on how to input the required data in the system as per the (pre-developed) manual above.

More information about the training provided can be found in the video [https://youtu.be/rCeZ5TYALTM](https://youtu.be/rCeZ5TYALTM). By the end of December, 100% of the municipalities have entered data in the web created specifically for this purpose. In early 2016, the defined and agreed administrative borders will be acknowledged through a decision of the Council of Ministers.

### e. One Stop Shops

In the area of service modernization, STAR support in 2015 included the piloting of One-Stop Shops in two LGUs. Given that the re-organization of local governments may affect the access to and delivery of local public services, special considerations were given by STAR project on the viability of one-stop-shop offices and the modernization of the provision or integration of services.

The contracted company in cooperation with STAR experts has accomplished the following:

- An analysis of workflows for each of the nine services currently being piloted in the administrative units of Durres-Ishem and Elbasan-Bradashesh
- The development of a detailed description of the workflow for each service. This includes the outlining of thorough and detailed descriptions of the service implemented modalities by the different sectors of the Municipality
- The inputting of the service workflows into a dedicated software platform
- The analysis of the current infrastructure needs for the municipalities to use the platform.
- The coordination with the National Agency of Information Society to connect the OSS-MIS system with national databases such as QKR and DPGJC. The connection has been successfully achieved.
- The coordination of work with third parties to integrate the OSS-MIS system with tax systems existing in the piloting municipalities.
- The integration of the OSS-MIS system with the protocols and archiving system developed by STAR.
- Training of staff to adequately use the system.

Also, the necessary IT equipment has been purchased and provided to the pilot LGUs, which enabled a full functioning of the pilot and software platforms for the concerned LGUs. 100 leaflets and 50 posters were produced on service delivery and functioning of OSSH and distributed in the pilot areas.


In parallel with STAR efforts to pilot a one-stop-shop model based on open source, as per the Government counterpart requirements, other alternative models were developed or are at an advanced stage in the framework of two specific donor programmes: the Swiss-funded Decentralised Local Development Programme (dldp) and the USAID Planning Local Government Programme (PLGP). In acknowledging the value of diversity, the MSLI is planning to review in early 2016 the functionality and operability of such developed models with the aim of understanding the replication potential of each approach and enabling the environment for such replication. The adoption of one-stop-shops for the delivery of local services is an objective of the Government including a full country coverage by 2020. One of the main objectives of the territorial reform was about the efficiency of the LGUs and the ways they provide services to the citizens, which includes both improvements in the quality of services delivered and ensures public service accessibility for all.
f. Digitalization of local archives

Document management and archiving had been one of the weak issues identified when piloting the due diligence in LGUs of Pogradec and Ura Vajgurore. In this context, STAR worked to design a model on how to address this issue which was piloted during June–July 2015. [http://www.reformateritoriale.al/images/document%20management%20system%20protocol%20and%20archives%20inventory.pdf](http://www.reformateritoriale.al/images/document%20management%20system%20protocol%20and%20archives%20inventory.pdf)

To further replicate this model (in an eventual upcoming phase), a thorough analysis of the situation was undertaken at national level which was expected to feed the MSLI with accurate evidence on the volumes of work and materials needed as well as the technical assistance required for implementation. In this regard, 12 archiving specialists and one national coordinator were contracted since the beginning of September. By the end of December, the regional specialists visited all the administrative units and finalized the assessment of the situation with documentation management.

The following table summarizes information on the quantities of documents that are not systemized and properly archived and which conclusively need assistance to bring it to national standards.

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<th>Amount of systemized doc (in ML)</th>
<th>Amount of un systemized doc (in ML)</th>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Shkoder</td>
<td>980</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>963</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>5039.88</strong></td>
<td><strong>514.48</strong></td>
<td><strong>4512.13</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**g. Local development operational plans:**

In September 2015, STAR initiated its support to newly elected officials in designing the short term Local Development Operational Plans. These plans would serve as blueprints for the municipalities and are expected to be particularly useful during their first 2-3 years of existence. To guarantee a harmonized approach, the LDOPs will be compiled in accordance with a common and unified structure, prepared by the MSLI. As part of this assignment, 26 new municipalities have been assisted in developing LDOPs. The benefiting municipalities are grouped into clusters according to their geographical characteristics and similar development typologies.

Implementation work started with an informative workshop organized with the selected organizations to discuss on methodological and procedural issues to guarantee a common understanding of the planning structure and process. Also, UNDP engaged two experts tasked to focus on integrating gender mainstreaming during the entire phases including data collection, analyses and prioritization. They are closely cooperating with the selected organizations under the overall coordination of STAR. The first drafts of these plans are completed by mid of December and the consultation process with members of respective councils, civil society and other interested stakeholders already commenced. [https://www.facebook.com/reformaterritoriale/?fref=ts](https://www.facebook.com/reformaterritoriale/?fref=ts)

**iv) Provision of timely logistical inputs at all stages of the process**

STAR is implemented by the Minister of State for Local Issues under UNDP’s National Implementation Modality. UNDP provides its management and operational support upon formal request from the MLI/his delegate, in accordance with UNDP’s rules and procedures and based on a Standard Letter of Agreement with the MLI (signed on 8 November 2013) for the provision of project support services.

In this context, UNDP, as per the agreed implementation modality, has guaranteed the timely provision of logistical support at the request of the implementing partner in the project due course.

- **Human Resources**

UNDP has completed successfully the recruitment processes for 13 new staff (one national coordinator and 12 regional specialists) under Digitalization of Archives and managed the actual contracts’ modalities for 27 staff under STAR project (Technical Secretariat, Regional coordinators, UNDP staff).

- **Procurement of services and goods**

During the reporting period, based on the requests from MSLI, there are 14 procurement processes initiated and concluded in signing contracts for professional services with nine companies/organizations. 2 procurement processes for purchase of IT equipment are also handled.
### 3.1 Progress towards the achievements of the outputs

During 2015, the following is the progress towards accomplishment of the identified outputs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outputs</th>
<th>Progress /achievement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Technical and institutional capacity developed at the MSLI to manage and complete the reform process | ✓ Nine regional coordinators are re-contracted to coordinate work at regional level  
✓ 12 archiving specialists and one national coordinator have been hired to replicate the documentation management and digitalisation of archiving model  
✓ STAR supported a visit of three experts from Emilia Romagna region to Albania and facilitated a study visit of 10 professionals from MSLI, NAITR and municipalities to Emilia Romagna.  
✓ One short-term expert is contracted to support with territorial boundaries TOR drafting  
✓ One additional driver was recruited in January to support STAR implementation  
✓ Two days training provided to RC on due diligence replication and their coordinating role in the process  
✓ The Amalgamation Team has provided regular and various support to MSLI |
| Public awareness/ public consultations/consensus building | ✓ 100 leaflets and posters produced on TAR targeting youth  
✓ 100 leaflets and 50 posters produced on service delivery and functioning of One-Stop Shop and distributed to piloting areas  
✓ The quarterly newspaper is produced and circulated to members of the steering committee and other interested stakeholders  
✓ 30 consultation meetings with participation of 500 participants are organised (problematic LGUs)  
✓ Three consultative meetings with new mayors are organised  
✓ A Practical Guide produced and shared with the new mayors  
✓ A National Conference on Local Governance is organised in June. 400 participants took part representing central and local government, civil society, media, donors, etc.  
✓ Another national conference organised in October in partnership with other donors. 300 participants took part.  
✓ The Facebook and Twitter account regularly maintained and fed with information on all the activities organised during 2015 |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outputs</th>
<th>Progress /achievement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Provision of technical services in support to the reform | ✓ Piloting of due diligence is finalised in April; as a result, the guideline and the manuals for replication are produced  
✓ 61 working groups established trained at local level to carry out the due diligence process in respective LGUs  
✓ An assessment and inventory (due diligence) of the entire municipalities and administrative units has been carried out  
✓ Part of the due diligence process is also the establishment of a central help desk to assist local working groups in carrying out of the due diligence on financial and legal operations  
✓ 384 financial and operational reports are produced in the framework of due diligence  
✓ Analyses and identification of the boundary overlaps for 61 new municipalities is finalised  
✓ A technical manual on steps to define boundaries and input system data, targeting the specialists of the municipalities, is designed and distributed  
✓ Four training sessions are organised with specialists of the municipalities, departments of Urban and Property Registration; 120 persons participating  
✓ One Stop Shop delivery offices implemented in 2 municipalities Durres/Ishem and Elbasan/Bradashe  
✓ A detailed analysis of the situation with archiving and documentation at local level is undertaken  
✓ LDOP for 26 municipalities are under preparation; 2 gender specialists attached to the process |
| Provision of timely logistical inputs at all stages of the process | ✓ Five laptops Acer Aspire E5-571/1 HPPC + monitor Led/one backup/one Sharp copier/printer scanner are purchased for AT and TS  
✓ 2 Servers - CPU Intel E5-1600/2600, min 9000 points in benchmark, 16GB DDR4 ECC, Processor, 1TB RAID1 SATA, 1 VPN gateway, 1 MFP (A3) with DADF are purchased for OSSH assignment within STAR  
✓ Maintenance and operational costs are allocated to cover Project vehicle maintenance (parking, washing, and repairs), Project vehicle operations/fuel, Office consumables, supplies, Printing costs, Communication costs, etc.  
✓ Contract modalities for 42 staff in total are managed |
4. CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED, MITIGATING MEASURES AND LESSONS LEARNED

The STAR project ran smoothly and responded timely to all exigencies and requirements for support from the government counterpart. Regarding project implementation, the indicated actions, part of the annual work plan, have been satisfactory achieved. However, certain challenges have been encountered which directly relate to project implementation processes and some others lying outside STAR but with a considerable influence on the reform process.

- **Pressure for delivering products on time**
  
  The process of amalgamation did not end by the local elections date. As the newly elected local officials took seats only around September 2015, this caused delays and pressure as far as delivery of indicative activities and products were concerned allowed for some lead time to progress on the due diligence exercise through the local working groups. Changing of strategy and involvement of the working groups of experts established at the local level to support the replication model was an innovative solution to overcome delays and ensure timely implementation of activities.

- **Replacement of trained staff**
  
  The replacement of some of the already trained local working groups’ members after the elections continued to be a serious risk hampering the timely provision of data necessary for the accomplishment of the due diligence process. The measures taken to offset this issue include the utilization of the help–desk to efficiently respond to questions raised by the newcomers address their lack of information. Also, on-the-job training and coaching are provided by the experts of Grant Thornton.

- **Process delays**
  
  Some delays occurred in the piloting phase, creating a shift of plans. Delays were due to unsatisfactory accuracy of reports and assessments which required further rounds of consultations between the contractor and the MSLI staff, especially the amalgamation team. Due to this reason, replication of the due diligence model was postponed to September, after the constitution of the new mayors and the municipality councils was finalized. Good coordination of amalgamation team, regional coordinators and Grant Thornton resulted in being efficient by overcoming delays and ensuring timely implementation of activities.

**Lessons learned**

STAR project is an encouraging learning model of collaboration, with the government in the lead, for implementing government priorities through joint donor support. This way of project design demonstrated that, by aligning with the government’s objectives, ensures effective implementation, sustainability of results and ownership of the process. It also confirmed that complex and multi-dimensional processes such as that of territorial reform cannot be addressed through fragmented approaches. They require good cooperation, integration and cohesion of intervention.
Nevertheless, there is more room for improved coordination and synergy. Many donors are involved and contribute to reforming the local governance in Albania through addressing various aspects of governance. Ongoing initiatives with a relatively long track record and positive results have to be taken into account and exploited for maximizing benefits and further efforts should be made to avoid overlapping or confusion on the way and instruments similar problems are addressed and solved across LGUs for more efficiency.

5. COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES AND VISIBILITY

For STAR project, 2015 had been an intensive year not only for the number of activities implemented but also for the significant processes in support of strengthening local government it tackled and led as part of the territorial reform. STAR has not been the only player in the field; many donors and stakeholders were involved and contributed to the reform and required to be effectively informed about the progress and new cooperation opportunities, for a successful implementation of the reform, and an effective and not overlapping use of funds.

In this regard, the project used different communication channels and tools during the entire implementation phases, to mention here visible and printed media, leaflets, posters, reports, field visits, etc. Recognition of joint support of the pool of donors to the reform and the importance of TAR regarding improving efficiency in service delivery, economy of scale, and development cohesion were clearly spelled out in all the advocacy messages of the project.

Simultaneously, the project continued exploring during 2015, the use of social media for a broader and more cost-effective outreach at any levels. A dedicated web page and Facebook was utilized in a way to complement the traditional means of communication.

The project worked on strengthening the network with journalists to mainstream the issues of territorial reform. National and local journalists have been invited to all the activities organized something which was highly by the journalists to become more aware of the situation of with the reform process. Logos of all the involved donors and the project logo are used in different activities and promotional materials.

(Photos of various activities implemented during 2015, please find on the web page of territorial reform, under photo gallery) www.reformaterritoriale.al
## 6. PROVISIONAL PROJECT EXPENDITURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Human Resources</strong></td>
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</tr>
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<td>Experts Group</td>
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<td>40,290</td>
<td>6,482</td>
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<td>Technical Secretariat + ATL, RCs, Archives Digitalization Specialists</td>
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<td>193,185</td>
<td>327,630</td>
<td>42,742</td>
<td>273</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Project management staff (UNDP)</td>
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<td>35,415</td>
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<td><strong>70,255</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>2. Per-diems / Travel</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>121,754</td>
<td>75,947</td>
<td>37,300</td>
<td>8,060</td>
<td>447</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subtotal Per-diems / Travel</strong></td>
<td><strong>121,754</strong></td>
<td><strong>75,947</strong></td>
<td><strong>37,300</strong></td>
<td><strong>8,060</strong></td>
<td><strong>447</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td><strong>3. Equipment</strong></td>
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<td>107,085</td>
<td>101,378</td>
<td>5,604</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subtotal Equipment</strong></td>
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<td><strong>101,378</strong></td>
<td><strong>5,604</strong></td>
<td><strong>0</strong></td>
<td><strong>103</strong></td>
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<td><strong>4. Transport Cost</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>43,720</td>
<td>10,013</td>
<td>25,018</td>
<td>8,030</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Subtotal Transport Costs</strong></td>
<td><strong>43,720</strong></td>
<td><strong>10,013</strong></td>
<td><strong>25,018</strong></td>
<td><strong>8,030</strong></td>
<td><strong>659</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>5. Maintenance and Operational Costs</strong></td>
<td>168,065</td>
<td>2,542</td>
<td>46,418</td>
<td>74,880</td>
<td>44,098</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subtotal Maintenance and Operational Costs</strong></td>
<td><strong>168,065</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,542</strong></td>
<td><strong>46,418</strong></td>
<td><strong>74,880</strong></td>
<td><strong>44,098</strong></td>
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### 6. PR and Public Awareness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2021</th>
<th>2022</th>
<th>2023</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>PR Contract</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>TV spots production</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>TV spot broadcast</td>
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<tr>
<td>Radio Spot production</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio Spot broadcast</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper spot</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Leaflets/brochures</td>
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<td>1,272</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>1,500</td>
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<td>Guidelines, manuals</td>
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<td>5,271</td>
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<td>Posters</td>
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<td>3,110</td>
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<td>Social media</td>
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<td>15,837</td>
<td>16,371</td>
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<td>TAR awareness campaign wristbands</td>
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<tr>
<td>Printing legislative package (incl. new TAR maps)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Editing and translation costs</td>
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<td>Public consultations through CSOs</td>
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<td><strong>Subtotal PR and printing costs</strong></td>
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### 7. Workshops/Meetings rental costs

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<tr>
<th>Description</th>
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<th>2020</th>
<th>2021</th>
<th>2022</th>
<th>2023</th>
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<td>Workshops/Meetings rental costs</td>
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<td>45,418</td>
<td>43,239</td>
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<td><strong>Subtotal Workshops/Meetings rental costs</strong></td>
<td>88,716</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>45,418</td>
<td>43,239</td>
<td>5,000</td>
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### 8. Transitional support costs

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
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<th>2020</th>
<th>2021</th>
<th>2022</th>
<th>2023</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preparation of amalgamation/due diligence</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Assessment/Due diligence of 2 pilot LGUs</td>
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<td>27,118</td>
<td>69,210</td>
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<tr>
<td>Capacity building/training of new LGUs</td>
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<td>63,394</td>
<td>0</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
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<td>2012</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>2014</td>
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<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
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<td>------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Contract for replication of pilot models at other 59 new LGUs</td>
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<td>243,120</td>
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<tr>
<td>Legal framework and definition of new LGUs borders</td>
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<td>56,270</td>
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<td>Piloting OSSs for service delivery</td>
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<td>9. Subtotal direct costs (1-8)</td>
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<td>10. Administrative/Management Costs (up to 8%)</td>
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<td>11. Total costs (9+10)</td>
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<td>1,250,573</td>
<td>1,939,812</td>
<td>474,773</td>
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