



**GREEN  
ALTERNATIVE**

## **Advocating for Environmental and Social Justice**

**Ten Advocacy Campaigns**

**Tbilisi, 2011**

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## FORWARD

This publication describes some of the advocacy campaigns run by Green Alternative together with partner organizations during 2009-2010. In case of each advocacy campaign, firstly development project (or an issue concerned) subject to advocacy campaign is described shortly; project (or issue) related environmental, social and economic concerns are explained next and finally the goals and the results of the advocacy campaign are presented. The latter also contains advocacy tools applied during campaigns. Thus, we believe that this publication will be especially useful for the civil society groups that are making efforts to influence public policies and/or development projects, plans and programmes.

At the beginning three advocacy campaigns on transport infrastructure development projects are presented, those are: Vaziani-Gombori-Telavi road rehabilitation project, Adjara bypass roads development project and Tbilisi railway bypass project. Advocacy campaigns directed at energy development projects are described afterwards, specifically: Black Sea regional energy transmission project, construction of Khudoni hydropower plant in Upper Svaneti region and construction of Oni hydropower plants cascade in Racha region. The campaigns aiming at changing projects and policies on exploitation of natural resources are presented in the following section, notably Chiatura manganese mining project and the results of forest sector monitoring are outlined. In the final part of the publication two advocacy cases (construction of a new sanitary landfill in Adjara and operation of Kutaisi landfill) aiming at improvement of waste management in Georgia are described.

It should be noted that some of the campaigns presented in the publication are already completed, i.e. the goals of the campaigns were reached. In some cases only interim goals were attained and therefore advocacy campaigns are still ongoing.

Green Alternative is highly grateful to all partner organizations and individuals for participating in the campaigns and jointly struggling for achievement of set goals. Thanks are also due to all the Georgian citizens who believed that it is always worth to stand for own rights and took practical steps for defending them. Finally, Green Alternative gratefully acknowledges financial contribution of donor organizations in supporting advocacy campaigns.

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## Vaziani-Gombori-Telavi road rehabilitation project

Donor countries and international financial institutions pledged USD 4.55 billion to help Georgia in post-war recovery following the August 2008 war with Russia. A major part of these funds was earmarked for infrastructure and energy projects. Vaziani-Gombori-Telavi Road Rehabilitation Project was one of those projects, which the Georgian Government submitted for donor funding. According to the Georgian Finance Ministry, it was decided to take a USD 60 million loan from the World Bank to implement the project.

In July 2009 the Georgian Roads Department published Vaziani-Gombori-Telavi Road Rehabilitation Project's draft Environmental and Social Impact Assessment report and announced about the launching the public hearings. According to the project, the road was starting at the Vaziani settlement, running through the villages of Ujarma, Paldo, Otaraant Kari, Sasadilo, Gombori, Kobadze and Tetrtsklebi and ending in the city of Telavi. At a 45 kilometer it was crossing the Gombori Pass at a height of 1620m. The entire length of the road was 66 kilometer. The width of the road corridor was 20 meter, while the road bed – 10.5 meter. The project envisaged the construction of four new bridges with a total length of 348 meter. According to the World Bank project categorization system, the project was granted category A (significant environmental and social impact).

### Problematic issues



Significant social and environmental impacts would be unavoidable in case of the project implementation in its proposed form. In particular, road widening would require involuntary resettlement of several families living near the roadside. At the same time, the compensations offered due to resettlement were extremely scarce and unfair. Furthermore, road widening would also trigger the destruction of a part of forests and other ecosystems, as well as agricultural plots. The proposed project envisaged replacement of the asphalted road by concrete cover that would require extraction of a great amount of inert materials from the river beds.

### Advocacy campaign and its results

Green Alternative studied the project documentation, conducted field visits and studied the project compliance with the World Bank requirements. It was revealed in the process of monitoring that the project was prepared with serious procedural violations (the procedures set for the World Bank's category A projects are meant). Neither was the need of implementing the project in its proposed form justified (road widening, construction of four new bridges, use of concrete technologies).

The project-affected communities had extremely scarce information about the project. They learnt from the representatives of Green Alternative that they had an opportunity to submit their opinions concerning the project. The representatives of Green Alternative met with local population numerously and explained about their rights and the means of protection of these rights. After these meetings locals expressed their willingness to participate in public hearings; although the representatives of local government tried to exert pressure, a part of the local population expressed their opinions and attitude towards the project in written and submitted it in a form of a joint statement to the Georgian Roads Department. Green Alternative submitted a copy of the statement to the World Bank



representatives.

Simultaneously, Green Alternative submitted its own project-related comments to the Roads Department and the World Bank. A series of meetings were held with the representatives of the Roads Department and the World Bank.

Green Alternative had the following position: the project would be acceptable only in case if the road would not be widened on the sections running through the villages. This solution had the following positive sides: involuntary resettlement of the rural communities would be avoided; the need and respectively the amount of compensations would be reduced; the scale of environmental impacts and the volume of eco-compensations would be reduced too. As a whole, the project cost would decrease and road safety would increase on rural sections. It should also be taken into consideration that Vaziani-Gombori-Telavi road passes through geologically very sensitive Gombori Pass, which falls under extremely high risk of geological disasters. Because of difficult character and depth of landslides, surface stabilization is actually impossible there. Thus, the wide road constructed through using expensive technologies would be damaged shortly after its construction because of landslides. In the opinion of Green Alternative, it would be expedient to rehabilitate the road by using the simplest technologies to ensure that annual repairs, which would be unavoidable, cost inexpensive.

The World Bank shared the position expressed by Green Alternative and local population. As a result, the Bank refused to finance the project in its proposed form. The Georgian Roads Department withdrew its project documentation submitted to the Service of Permits and Licenses of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources for obtaining a permit. Later, the Department prepared essentially a new project, under which the road was rehabilitated without widening, through using asphalt technology.

As a result of advocacy campaign, involuntary resettlement of the rural communities was avoided, while the construction had a minimal impact on forest ecosystem. By decision of the World Bank, the amount of a loan for the project was reduced twice compared to the government's proposal and constituted USD 30 million. The quality of the project-related public hearings has to some extent improved.

Thus, duly unveiling of project shortcomings and discrepancies, goal-oriented lobbying and active involvement of the population brought tangible results in terms of improving the project's environmental and social aspects and increasing its cost efficiency.

## Adjara bypass roads development project



In response to the Georgian Government's request, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) expressed readiness to finance the construction of a 48-kilometer Sarpi-Poti highway. The Bank was planning to allocate a USD 118 million loan for the first phase of the project, while the entire project cost was estimated at USD 324 million. The project envisaged the construction of Sarpi-Batumi and Kobuleti bypass roads, which should have provided safe and comfortable traffic flow on the Poti-Sarpi section. The project also envisaged the construction of 25 bridges (with a total length of 3268m) and 5 tunnels (with a total length of 1800m).

### Problematic Issues

In spring 2009 the ADB published draft Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) report; public hearings were also held. According to the project documentation available to public, the highway was running in the immediate vicinity of the Kobuleti protected areas and was crossing 16 densely populated villages of Adjara.

### Advocacy campaign and its results

Green Alternative reviewed the draft EIA report and conducted field monitoring. It appeared that the documents made public and the public consultations were not in line with the policies and procedures of the ADB. Local population actually was not informed about public consultation meetings, while the project documents were available only in English.

Green Alternative considered especially problematic the issue of likely degradation of the Kobuleti protected areas.

Kobuleti protected areas include Kobuleti Strict Nature Reserve (331 ha) – Ispani I and Kobuleti Managed Nature Reserve (439 ha) – Ispani II. They are located along the Black Sea coast, in the northern part of the town of Kobuleti. Ispani-II is a unique marsh of international importance covered with peat mosses – sphagnum species. Water here disappears only through evaporation and it is exclusively fed by rainwater. Ispani peat looks like a lake lying above the land surface, which is covered by a 25-45 cm thick layer of living sphagnum – white moss. It is never covered with water. Together with water sphagnum, it forms an absolutely smooth dome that raises 4-5 meters over its surroundings. Sphagnum acts like a cloud. It can absorb 25-fold more water compared to its weight. During heavy rains, when everything is covered by water, the dome of Ispani II is dry. The peat contains special, inviolable habitats for biodiversity, which are beyond human impacts. Sphagnum forms amazing “pillows”. Sphagnum imbricatum is the main peat forming species – this is the rarest species of peat moss, which is extremely vulnerable to environmental pollution. Along with the northern plants, which emerged in Kolkheti during the Quaternary Ice Age, we can also meet here *Drosera rotundifolia*, *Carex riparia*, *Menyanthes trifoliata*, *Rhynchospora Alba*, etc. Some species typical for the Kolkhetian flora, such as *Rhododendron ponticum*, *Rhododendron luteum*, *Smilax excelsa* are also grown there. We can also meet here *Osmunda regalis*, *Orchis*, *Rhynchospora caucasica*, *Lycopodiella*. During autumn and spring a lot of migratory or wintering birds gather on the territory of the peat, including *Tringa erythropus*, *Buteo buteo*, *Aquila heliaca*, *Philomachus pugnax*, *Haematepus ostralegus*, *Cygnus olor*, etc. Since 1996 Ispani II has been included in the Ramsar Convention List of Wetlands of International Importance.

Large scale construction might be disastrous for such fragile ecosystem, because it was planned in the immediate vicinity of the protected area.

Green Alternative prepared comments, which were sent to the ADB and were also made public. In the comments Green Alternative indicated about the revealed violations (protected areas, shortcomings in the feasibility study, waste management, public awareness, resettlement plan and compensation, etc.).

As a result of Green Alternative's comments and lobbying efforts, the route of the Adjara Bypass Road was changed and its construction was decided in a safe distance away from the Kobuleti State Reserve (900m from the boundaries of the reserve, the territory adjacent to the central railway station). It should also be noted that project discussions were suspended and it is unknown how it will develop further. Since shortcomings were revealed at the initial stage of the project in respect of public access to information and consultation, it is expected that problems will emerge in respect of resettlement and compensation of damages.

## Tbilisi railway bypass project

In March 2009 Georgian Railway LLC (100% of its shares are state-owned) applied to the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and the European Investment Bank (EIB) to allocate Euro 350 million for financing the Tbilisi Railway Bypass Project.

The main goal of the project is to relocate transit of hazardous good (crude oil and oil products) from the densely populated area outside the capital with the purpose of increasing the efficiency and safety of railway operations. The project envisages the construction of a new railway section bypassing the central area of the capital city and modernization of the Didube and Navtlugi railway stations. According to the project, the redevelopment of freed-up territories will promote the development of the northern part of the capital.

### Problematic issues

The project envisages the construction of 18-20 meter high embankments in the densely populated Avchala district, where the trains loaded with hazardous freights (crude oil and oil products) will be moving. The project does not discuss adequate safeguard measures for the population living along the route. Neither has it studied the negative impact of brake fluid on living conditions in the area.

The minimal distance of the railway project from the Tbilisi Sea is 900 meters. According to the project design, a great part of the railway section will be located in a ditch and in case of oil spill the Tbilisi Sea will be polluted. Even in case of spilling half a cistern, i.e. 30 thousand liters, about 50% of useful capacity of the reservoir will become useless that will leave the population of three districts of Tbilisi as well as about 20 thousand ha of agricultural lands of the Gardabani district without water. Moreover, the proposed railway crosses a number of small and large dry ravines across the Tbilisi Sea; however, the project does not envisage any measures for flood prevention.

The proposed railway also crosses the traditional use and visitors' zones of the Tbilisi National Park that is a violation of the Georgian legislation according to which the construction of a railway does not belong to those activities that are allowed in the National Park.

Several important issues were neglected in the process of project development, such as proper waste disposal and location of the railway-related energy facilities (high voltage transmission lines, transformers, etc.) as well as their possible environmental impacts. The boundaries of the construction corridor have not been determined either. The amount of inert materials needed for the construction and the environmental issues related to their extraction have not been determined either.

And finally, the proposed alternatives of the project route were rejected at an early stage of public discussions. Nevertheless, other alternatives were not studied at any further stages of project development.

### Advocacy campaign and its results

Although, the general project goal – increasing safety and efficiency of railway operations – was acceptable for Green Alternative, because of the above mentioned problematic issues, Green Alternative launched advocacy campaign to prevent irreversible environmental and social impacts.



Along with studying the project documentation, Green Alternative was conducting field visits to the Avchala and Akhali Samgori settlements to provide the project-affected population with the project-related information, on the one hand, and to reveal their concerns, on the other. As a result of effective information campaign, a significant part of the project-affected communities managed to get involved in public discussions and to raise the issues of their interest before the project proponents.

Simultaneously, Green Alternative and CEE Bankwatch Network prepared remarks concerning the project,

where the project shortcomings were thoroughly described. The document was sent to the project proponents and their consultants as well as to the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (a responsible person from the management).

Since the Georgian legislation does not oblige the authority granting environmental permits – the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources - to ensure public participation in the decision-making on permitting, Green Alternative applied to the Ministry with the request to involve it in the administrative proceeding on making a decision about permit issuance. In December 2009, with the help of Green Alternative, 354 residents of the Avchala district addressed a letter to the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources also requesting their involvement in the administrative proceeding on issuing an environmental permit for the implementation of the Tbilisi Railway Bypass Project. However, unlike Green Alternative, the Avchala population was not given an opportunity to get involved in the administrative proceeding. On initiative of Green Alternative a roundtable was arranged at the Aarhus Center in February 2010 to promote the dialogue among the stakeholders; the representative of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development also participated in the meeting.

In April 2010 the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources issued an environmental permit. The remarks submitted by Green Alternative during the administrative proceeding were taken into consideration and reflected in the legally binding conditions of the permit. Later, Georgian Railway hired a new consulting company to meet the permit requirements.

Despite a number of unanswered questions and disputable issues related to the project, in May 2010 the EBRD still approved the project. Thus, Green Alternative filed a complaint to the EBRD's Project Complaint Mechanism (PCM) and demanded to investigate the efforts made for addressing the project-related problematic environmental and social issues, in terms of their compliance with the Bank's standards. Green Alternative also helped the project-affected communities to submit two complaints to the Bank.

Presently, three complaints are under consideration. Because of these complaints, the EBRD carried out the project's internal audit to verify whether the project was in line with the Bank's environmental and social standards. It should also be noted that the Bank postponed allocation of the first disbursement to the Georgian Railway company.

## Black Sea regional energy transmission project

Black Sea Regional Transmission Project was one of the largest initiatives planned in the framework of the donors' conference in Brussels on October 22, 2008. The project envisaged the rehabilitation and construction of a 500-kilowatt power transmission line, particularly, the rehabilitation and construction of Gardabani-Akhaltsikhe, Zestaponi-Akhaltsikhe, and Akhaltsikhe-Turkish border sections as well as the construction of a 500-kilowatt substation (with high voltage direct current). Euro 8 million was allocated by the EU Neighborhood Investment Facility as a grant to carry out preparation works. The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), European Investment Bank (EIB) and German Reconstruction Bank (KfW) are planning to allocate a Euro 250 million credit for the construction. The project is being implemented by the state-owned company Georgian State Electrosystem.

### Problematic issues

The construction of the transmission line began during the Soviet times and was terminated in 1992. According to the project design proposed in 2009, the transmission line should have crossed several protected areas: Borjomi-Kharagauli National Park; Ktsia-Tabatskuri Managed Reserve and Gardabani Managed Reserve. The works on the territory of the Gardabani Managed Reserve were conducted during the Soviet times, while crossing of the rest of these territories was envisaged by the planned project. The most serious problem emerged in respect of the Borjomi-Kharagauli National Park. The project offered three alternative routes of crossing the Borjomi Valley. In case of the first alternative, transmission line would have crossed the National Park in an 11.5-kilometer, dense forest areas; in case of the second alternative it would have passed in a 4.7-kilometer treeless areas; as far as the third alternative is concerned, although the transmission line would have bypassed the National Park, it would have crossed the most forested territory and other vulnerable ecosystems. Thus, the project would have had less impact on biodiversity in case of the second alternative.

The administration of the National Park and the consultants hired to study environmental impacts were also in favor of the second alternative. Despite it, the Georgian Ministry of Energy, which was interested in the project implementation, was trying to exert pressure on the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources and through gross violation of law, to use, as they claimed, the cheapest alternative in the process of project implementation, envisaging the greatest impact on the Borjomi-Kharagauli National Park (first alternative).



The project was in contravention of the Georgian legislation, including the Law of Georgia on Environment Protection. According to article 5 of this law (determining main principles of environment protection), particularly according to the Priority Principle, *“an action, which may cause negative impact on environment and human health, can be changed into another action of lower risk (even if more expensive). The priority shall be granted to the latter if its cost does not exceed the costs of compensation for the ecological damage caused by the less expensive action”*. The Law on Protected Areas would also have been violated, as the towers and high voltage lines would have been located in the visitor's zones and traditional use zones of a protected area; forests should have been cut on the entire perimeter of the transmission line; species would

have been disturbed in the process of construction, while upon completion of the construction a danger of forest fires would have increased and the landscape would have been polluted visually. Because of visual pollution, the National Park would have become less attractive for tourism that would have had a negative influence on the National Park's incomes. Thus, besides the violation of legislation and impact on biological diversity, the project would have had long-term negative social and economic consequences.

The Borjomi-Kharagauli National Park is the first National Park in South Caucasus, which was established with the financial support of the German Government and the KfW. This area is continuously protected under different regimes for over a century. This is the single National Park in the region included in the international network of national parks – PAN-Parks. The national park covers over 1% of the Georgian territory. Pristine and virgin ecosystems have been preserved here. A number of endemic, relict and endangered species protected by national and

international law can be found in the national park. In Georgia Caucasian deer has been preserved only in three areas: Lagodekhi Protected Areas, as well as the project-affected protected areas – Gardabani Managed Reserve and Borjomi-Kharagauli National Park.

### **Advocacy campaign and its results**

In May 2009 the Georgian Ministry of Energy published the draft report on project's environmental and social impact assessment and in June 2009 it held public hearings on this document. Green Alternative published its comments concerning the report and submitted them to the Ministry. At the same time, in order to reduce the impact of the Black Sea Regional Transmission Project on the Borjomi-Kharagauli National Park, the Green Alternative launched an active lobbying campaign and involved international organizations (Pan Parks Foundation; WWF Caucasus PO; CEE Bankwatch Network) as well as local non-governmental organizations. The organizations involved in the campaign applied to the directors of the project donors: EBRD, EIB and KfW. In frames of the campaign a roundtable meeting was held in the office of Open Society – Georgia Foundation, where Green Alternative submitted an acceptable solution to the project implementation. Green Alternative justified that the route, which would cause less damage to the national park, would simultaneously be most acceptable from economic point of view in a long-term perspective, because of lower operation costs and increased safety in respect of emergency situations. The governmental officials, donors, civil society representatives and scientists participated in the meeting.

As a result of the campaign initiated by Green Alternative, the donors conducted additional field researches; alternative routes were studied additionally, from technical point of view. As a result, the representatives of the European Commission announced that if the Georgian government made a decision in favor of the environmentally-sound alternative offered by Green Alternative, the commission would have covered the difference in costs. Ministry of Energy accepted this proposal. Eventually, the European Union allocated additional Euro 3 million to Georgia as a grant, while the construction of the transmission line began via the safest route for the Borjomi-Kharagauli National Park, offered by Green Alternative. Later, the route was slightly corrected, though in favour of environmental protection.

## Construction of Khudoni hydropower plant in Upper Svaneti

The Khudoni Hydro Power Plant (HPP) project is a Soviet-old project. Its construction began in 1979, but was terminated in 1989 as a result of strong resistance from environmental and national liberation groups. Apparently, a real reason for halting the HPP construction was disintegration of the Soviet Union and suspension of funding.

The decision on resumption of the Khudoni HPP construction was made by the present Georgian authorities. In 2005 the Georgian Government commenced negotiations with the World Bank on the construction of the Khudoni HPP. In February 2006 the Bank allocated a USD 5 million technical assistance grant to the Georgian Government, approximately USD 1.75-2.35 million of which was earmarked for the project preparation. According to the World Bank, the project aimed at utilization of new hydro energy resources through Khudoni HPP, which would apparently generate more than 10 percent of annual consumption and make about 20 percent of existing energy resources. This, as the Bank said, would improve Georgia's energy security.



Thus, it was decided to construct a 201-meter arch-gravity dam at a height of 2100 meters above the sea level in the western mountainous region of Georgia, particularly in Samegrelo-Upper Svaneti Region. According to the government's calculations, the construction works will last for 4-5 years, while the cost of the construction will amount to USD 500 million (according to the latest data, the cost of the construction increased up to USD 800 million). The capacity of the planned Khudoni HPP is 700 megawatt and it will generate 1.7 billion kilowatt/hour of electricity per year. The project envisages the construction of a 10-kilometer length reservoir with the capacity of 230 million m<sup>3</sup>. Moreover, the construction of several more HPPs is planned above the Khudoni HPP Dam, upstream the

Enguri River (Tobari HPP with 600 megawatt capacity and Nenskra HPP Cascade with 87 megawatt capacity).

It should be noted that the beginning and halting of the Khudoni HPP construction in the 1980s had a destructive impact on Upper Svaneti. The mountains were drilled for tunnels; mountain slopes became saturated with water that triggered frequent landslides and respectively caused damage to the population and local infrastructure. In the 1980s, because of construction of Khudoni HPP, the population living in the villages subjected to flooding was resettled to other regions of Georgia. Later, a great part of them returned back because of halting the construction and the difficulties related to adaptation to new environment. People, who had once faced resettlement and returned back, do not want to pass the same road.

### Problematic issues

Svaneti is a unique region of the Caucasus, where medieval villages and towers are still preserved that is mostly conditioned by a long isolation and cultural peculiarities of this region. The region is populated by the Svans, who are the representatives of a group of Kartvelians (Ibero-Caucasian group); but simultaneously, their life-style significantly differs from that of other Georgian groups. The Svans have their own unwritten language (Kartvelian language family), traditions, architectural peculiarities; their ancient traditions still determine their life-style. In 1996 Upper Svaneti has been included in the list of the UNESCO World Heritage.

The implementation of the Khudoni HPP project will cause inundation of the Khaishi village known as the gates of Zemo Svaneti as well as deserting of other villages, including Tsvirmindi; Nankbuli; Vedi; Zeda Vedi; Gagma Khaishi; Datari; Idliani; Kukhi; Tobari; Jorkvali; and Makhani. Therefore, the residents of Upper Svaneti believe that the



construction of the Khudoni HPP and “accompanying” HPPs (Tobari HPP and Nenskra HPP Cascade) contains a threat of destruction of Svaneti, as a geographical and cultural unit.

The project implementation will intensify the process of loss of forests, natural habitats and river habitat species as well as cause degradation of headwater areas in the upstream of the Enguri River. The areas adjacent to the upstream of the Enguri River are famous for their endemic biodiversity, which includes various rare and endangered species of flora and fauna. The existing Enguri HPP and planned Khudoni and Tobari HPPs will have a serious impact on water quality, natural flood regime and status of populations living in river habitats.

As far as the project’s economic aspects are concerned, it is expected that along with huge investments in the energy sector, electricity tariff will increase by connecting Khudoni HPP to the energy system. According to the World Bank documents, the major expenses of the Khudoni HPP project amount to minimum USD 780 million; generation tariff will be 4 cents per kW/h, while economic return will be only 5%. Respectively, the Khudoni HPP will trigger the growth of current electricity tariff (7.6 – 9.5 US cents) in Georgia that already represents a heavy load for a great part of the Georgian population.

Moreover, the construction of Khudoni HPP will have a negative impact on the opportunities of attracting investments for rehabilitation and/or construction of small and medium HPPs and other energy facilities, since the entire attention will be focused on raising necessary funds for the completion of the Khudoni HPP construction.

### **Advocacy campaign and its results**

Since 2005 Green Alternative and CEE Bankwatch Network have been running advocacy campaign to stop the Khudoni HPP project. In spring 2006 the World Bank agreed to conduct Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for the Georgian energy sector as proposed by these organizations. Unfortunately, this assessment was done not before but in parallel the Khudoni HPP project preparation.

The organizations paid several visits to Upper Svaneti and studied the existing situation. Several studies were prepared as a result of meetings with the project-affected communities, interviews with experts and consultations with foreign experts and other stakeholders. A series of articles were published in media, which provided information to the society about possible negative consequences of the Khudoni HPP. Permanent meetings were being held with the project’s working group, as well as with the experts hired by the World Bank; the organizations involved in the campaign had constant communication with the World Bank officials involving meetings with them too.

In summer 2008 the Ministry of Energy of Georgia made available for public two documents prepared in frames of the World Bank technical assistance grant: Strategic Environmental Assessment of Georgian Energy Sector Development and Khudoni - Preliminary Environmental and Social Screening final report. At the end of July 2008 the Ministry of Energy held public hearings over these documents in Samegrelo-Upper Svaneti and Tbilisi. Green Alternative widely disseminated information about public hearings and monitored the process of holding the meetings; it also informed the government and the World Bank about the concerns of the local population. The organizations also prepared a critical assessment of the documents under consideration and submitted it to the Ministry and the Bank.

It should be noted that the local population’s attitude towards the idea of resumption of the Khudoni HPP construction project was rather negative. The population was expressing concerns over the sustainability of the dam as well as expected negative impacts of the reservoir on micro-climate and human health. A great part of the Upper Svaneti population, and especially the Khaishi residents, were against flooding of villages and resettlement of the population. The Svans were especially concerned about the fact that the decisions about existence of their villages were made by others in the capital city, while the opinions of the locals were ignored.

After initial public hearings held in summer 2008, the work over the Khudoni HPP project slowed down because of external factors, particularly the August 2008 armed conflict between Russia and Georgia. It should be noted that during that period Russian forces occupied the village of Khaishi too; nevertheless, the Georgian government was still insisting that the Khudoni HPP would be definitely constructed.

The World Bank’s diminished interest towards the project should also be considered as an external factor affecting the Khudoni HPP project development process. Along with other reasons, that was apparently caused by promoting other large HPP projects by the Georgian government. In the Needs Assessment document developed under the World Bank and UN aegis, construction of Khudoni HPP was discussed as a priority project. Through May 2009 the World Bank was continuing its work over the project’s Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) document;

though, finally, the Bank did not publish it. The bank's 2009-2011 strategy did not mention the Khudoni HPP project at all.

Strategic Environmental Assessment of the Georgian Energy Sector's Development, despite numerous shortcomings, has made it clear that Khudoni HPP is not a necessary project to provide the country's energy security.

Today international financial institutions do not consider the Khudoni HPP construction project to be a priority.

## Oni hydropower plants cascade construction project

In 2009 the Georgian government announced its plan for construction of a three-stage cascade on the Rioni River in Racha. The total project cost was estimated at about USD 664 million. The project on construction of a 282-megawatt HPP cascade also envisaged the construction of a 115 m X 739 m dam in the Oni district.

A tender was announced in 2009 on a technical design of the Oni HPP Cascade project. According to the project documents, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and the European Investment Bank (EIB) were ready to allocate a loan. The Georgian government and the Norwegian company Econ were interested in the project implementation. The latter is an adviser hired by the Norwegian government for the Georgian Energy Ministry.

In the information delivered to Green Alternative in April 2009, Econ explained that terms of reference for environmental and social impact assessment of Oni HPP Cascade project had been developed and approved by the EBRD Environmental Department. In July 2009, the EBRD's President denied this information and explained that the Bank was not considering the Oni HPP Cascade project at all.

It should also be noted that according to the project documents, it was planned to gain incomes not only from the sale of electricity, but also through using Clean Development Mechanism, from selling greenhouse gas emissions.

### Problematic issues

The Oni HPP Cascade construction project proved rather problematic both from environmental, as well as social and economic points of view. The project was posing a threat to the population, environment and biodiversity of Racha.

Since Racha is highly seismic<sup>1</sup>, because of the construction of the HPP cascade and in case of any incident, the city of Oni, the villages of Ghara and Utsera as well as the settlements located in the downstream of the Rioni River (Ambrolauri, Khvanchkara and Kutaisi) would have appeared under constant threat.

Besides seismic threats, the planned project implementation would have had a negative impact on a number of villages in Racha, while the village of Chiora would have been flooded. A great part of the population of the land-scarce region would have been deprived of their land plots. The water mirror, which would have increased as a result of flooding of 455 hectares of agricultural lands, would have caused change of micro-climate and respectively, change of agricultural practices.



The Racha population remembered well how the construction of a 38.4 megawatt HPP and Shaori reservoir on the Rioni River, as well as the construction of the Tkibuli reservoir has changed local micro-climate and posed a threat to architectural monuments, among them Nikorstminda. Hence, the population was afraid that the new HPP cascade would have a significant impact on the Shovi and Utsera resorts and would pose a threat to the region's unique mineral waters and virgin forests.

The project's economic viability was also rather doubtful. Along with supporting the construction of the Oni HPP Cascade, the Georgian government was also expressing its interest in some other large HPPs (Khudoni HPP, 700 megawatt capacity, USD 800 million; Namakhvani HPP

Cascade, 450 megawatt capacity, USD 540 million; Mtkvari HPP Cascade, 128 megawatt capacity, USD 460 million). The world experience has showed that simultaneous implementation of similar projects is problematic from financial and technical points of view, as well as in terms of human resources. There was a huge probability that the construction of Oni HPP Cascade would have cost much expensive (according to the study of the World Dam

<sup>1</sup> The Racha-Java earthquake, which occurred on April 29, 1991, is believed to be the greatest natural disaster observed in the region. The earthquake of MS=7 was even stronger than the earthquake, which occurred in Spitak (Armenia) in 1989 (MS=6.9). About 200 persons died and about 100 000 people lost their homes as a result of that earthquake. About 46 000 houses, as well as about 1000 enterprises and other facilities were destructed and damaged.

Commission, average overspending per HPP construction is about 57%), that put the project's economic viability under doubt.

### **Advocacy campaign and its results**

The Georgian government, as well as relevant state agencies (the Ministry of Energy and Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources) did not show any willingness to hold public discussions on the planned project at an early stage – this was largely due to weak legal framework related to public participation in the decision-making processes. Tender documents, which were posted on the website specially designed to advertise the Oni HPP Cascade construction, was the only document available for public.



Nevertheless, wide discussions started due to joint efforts of non-governmental organizations, public associations and opposition parties. The representatives of different stakeholder groups, including scientists and political associations gathered at the House of Free Opinion on June 18, 2009 and at the Cinema House of 26 June, 2009 to express their protest against the planned construction of the Oni HPP Cascade. Residents of the capital city as well as the local population of Racha participated in the meetings. Environmental and other civil society organizations launched an active media campaign.

During a meeting with Green Alternative in July 2009, the representative of the Econ expressed surprise at the increasing resistance from the society towards the project and expressed readiness to provide the involvement of the project-affected population and non-governmental organizations in the decision-making processes. Respectively, it was agreed that environmental organizations will be given opportunity to take part in the consultations planned under the aegis of Ministry of Energy in September 2009.

Green Alternative and CEE Bankwatch Network prepared the analysis on planning and implementation of the energy projects in Georgia. Based on this analysis, appeals were sent to the presidents of international financial institutions, where these organizations were criticized for supporting large HPP projects (World Bank – Khudoni HPP; European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and European Investment Bank – Oni HPP Cascade; Development Bank of Japan – Namakhvani HPP Cascade) under conditions of absence of the state energy sector development strategy developed through broad public involvement. Finally, in their response letters all international financial institutions openly admitted that the negotiations over construction of Oni HPP Cascade as well as other projects have not been launched with the Georgian government.

It should be noted that when the issue of construction of Oni HPP Cascade was especially acute, a strong earthquake (MS=6.2) hit the Oni district on September 8, 2009 with the epicenter in immediate vicinity to one of the planned dams.

Talks over Oni HPP cascade construction have actually suspended since late September 2009. In December 2009 the Georgian government continued promotion of other large HPP construction projects. In the 2010 action plan of Ministry of Energy prepared for implement the EU-Georgia Action Plan, Oni HPP cascade project was still included in the priority list, though no relevant actions have been taken since then.

Thus, the goal of the advocacy campaign – not to allow the construction of large HPPs in Racha – was achieved. However, the final goal of Green Alternative and other non-governmental organizations – to ensure complete termination of construction of large HPPs in Georgia and to promote development of renewable energy resources - has still to be achieved.

## Chiatura manganese – source of wealth or misfortune

Manganese extraction in Chiatura began in 1879 on initiative of Akaki Tsereteli, a prominent Georgian poet and public figure. Some local and foreign businessmen appeared in the eighties of XIX century, trying to seize the ore-containing lands through leasing or purchasing. During the Soviet epoch, Chiatura was supplying manganese to the entire Soviet Union as well as steel-producing plants of Eastern Europe. Despite extensive manganese extraction, according to various expert assessments, Chiatura holds the largest manganese reserves in Europe amounting to about 215 million tons.

In 1993 Chiaturmanganumi JSC was established on the basis of the industrial association Chiaturmanganumi. After numerous unsuccessful attempts to privatize and rehabilitate Chiaturmanganumi JSC, by decision of the Chiatura regional court, an act of bankruptcy was issued in 2005. As a result of the tender held at the Ministry of Environment Protection and Natural Resources in November 2006, the assets of Chiaturmanganumi JSC were sold along with the permit to extract minerals from the Chiatura manganese deposit. The auction was won by its single participant - Georgian Manganese Holding Limited. According to the official data published as far back as during the sale of assets, the winning company was affiliated with British Stemcor UK Limited, but as it turned out later, a real owner of Chiaturmanganumi is the Ukrainian Privat Group.

### Problematic issues

It is over a century already that the Chiatura population suffers from extremely negative impacts of manganese extraction and refining (dust, noise, vibration, air, water and soil pollution). The damage caused to the environment and human health as a result of exploitation of mines and refineries in Chiatura has become a subject of numerous researches, however, nothing has been done till now to improve the situation. Since 1997 the enterprise has not undergone any significant reconstruction, technical and technological rehabilitation. The monitoring of compliance of Chiaturmanganumi's activities with the requirements of environmental legislation has had a formal nature for years already that was clearly reflected on the state of environment in Chiatura.



According to the license acting since 2006, the area at 3 566.16 hectares was allotted under manganese extraction. However, according to the license issued by the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources in 2006, this area increased up to 16 430 hectares. Presently, the area also covers previously unexploited deposits. It should be noted that these territories are populated and along with starting active exploitation of the deposit, over 3 000 families will be forced to leave their homes. A license holder was even permitted to extract manganese in Chiatura city.

Along with environmental problems and harm caused to their health, the Chiatura population today suffers from a huge material damage caused to them. As a result of manganese extraction in Chiatura for years, thousands of people have suffered a loss or damage of their housing, pastures, agricultural lands, plants, cattle and other property. During years local residents have filed thousands of lawsuits against Chiaturmanganumi to court. As a rule, because of statute of limitation the court was rejecting the lawsuits. There also were some cases, when the affected people were duly addressing the court and the court was ruling in favor of the plaintiffs, though Chiaturmanganumi was not fulfilling most of the court decisions. As a result, the execution (ten-year) term has already expired in respect of the majority of court rulings. The practice of neglecting the local population's interests and rights has not changed even after the enterprise was transferred to a new owner. Moreover, according to the local population, after transferring the enterprise to Georgian Manganese, environmental impact has increased, while those people, who suffered as a result of its activities, actually found it impossible to protect their rights.

## Advocacy campaign and its results

Since 2005 Green Alternative has been carrying out advocacy campaign to protect the public's environmental, social and economic rights in the process of making decisions about privatization of large pollutants and to increase the transparency of the process.

In frames of advocacy campaign Green Alternative is monitoring the privatization of several large facilities, including Chiaturmanganumi, as well as the process of amending the regulatory legislation of this sphere. Monitoring has revealed that the entire cycle of making privatization decisions – starting from putting the facility on privatization list, and ending with selecting a particular buyer and making a decision on imposing various obligations on the latter – is closed for the public.

In 2007 Green Alternative published its first report “Aggressive State Property Privatization Policy or “Georgian-Style Privatization”, which described the history of privatization of Chiaturmanganumi, Green Alternative's efforts (administrative and court disputes) to obtain official information about privatization of Chiaturmanganumi's assets and issues related to environmental compliance. In 2010 Green Alternative published the another report “Aggressive State Property Privatization Policy or “Georgian-Style Privatization- 2”, which, along with other issues, discussed the results of monitoring over the fulfillment of conditions by the Chiatura mining refinery imposed by the environmental legislation and environmental permit.

In the process of monitoring Chiaturmanganumi's activities, Green Alternative revealed that besides the weak environmental enforcement, unfortunately, in most cases the issue of responsibility of an extracting company is not adequately strengthened by the requirements of national legislation. Under such conditions, it is essential that local population is aware about what kind of extracting works are underway or planned near their housing; what kind of impacts such works will have on the environment and human health; what particular obligations the extracting company shall have before them; what particular legal problems (for example, expropriation of their property) and threats they may face.



In order to increase public awareness about their rights and the company's obligations, in 2010 Green Alternative prepared and published a special toolkit for the population affected by the activities of the manganese extraction and refining enterprise in the Chiatura district. The manual describes those threats, which are posed by the manganese extraction and refining practice existing in Chiatura. It also describes the obligations of manganese extracting company to improve the existing situation and the possibilities



to protect local population's rights and interests. With the help of the Kutaisi Information Center, the manual was disseminated not only in the settlements affected by the manganese extracting and refining company, but also on those territories, where the company has gained the right to extract manganese, though has not launched its activities yet.

In partnership with the Kutaisi Information Center, Green Alternative continues to monitor the activities of manganese extraction and refining company. A new report is planned to be published in autumn 2011, which will describe the results of monitoring the environmental and social impacts of the ongoing activities of the Chiatura mining-refining enterprise.

## Monitoring of forest sector of Georgia

Green Alternative has been monitoring the forest sector of Georgia for years already. Georgia's forest sector development is one of the most controversial areas, which goes beyond the environmental problems. The current situation and problems persisting in the sector can be characterized as follows:

- There is no national forest policy and strategy;
- Current forestry legislation is not in line with sustainable forest management principles; the laws adopted in various periods contradict each other;
- Institutional system of forest sector is flawed and fails to provide protection and sustainable management of forests;
- No forest inventory has been conducted in the most part of the State Forest Fund over past 10 years. The state authorities has no information about the state of forest fund, i.e. about 40% of the country's territory;
- The existing system of forest categorization is unclear and incompatible with the modern principles of sustainable forest management and ecosystem approach;
- A significant part of forests of a high conservation value has no protected status; number of protected areas in the country is not sufficient;
- Forests have not been transferred to local self-governments;
- The state still remains the only owner of forests, though it lacks financial, human and technical resources to manage forestry;
- Nothing is being done to meet international obligations undertaken by the country and to fulfill the recommendations;
- Public participation in the decision-making processes is restricted;
- The current practice of forest use hinders the establishment of healthy competition among the businessmen engaged in the forest sector; it creates problems to meeting primary needs of local population; environmental impacts are not taken into account that can ultimately trigger degradation of forest ecosystems as well as man-made ecological disasters.



As a result of the above-mentioned, since the 90s of the last century, Georgian forests suffer irreversible degradation as a result of illegal and/or non-systemic exploitations (logging, pasturing). In order to eradicate these negative tendencies, the sector needs fundamental and urgent reforms – at political, legislative and institutional levels.

### Advocacy campaign and its results

In the process of monitoring the forest sector, Green Alternative was applying the following advocacy instruments: meetings with decision-makers, organization of public discussions, publishing of researches, articles, press releases and position statements, involvement of like-minded individuals / groups and partners in various campaigns. In certain cases it became vital to use such methods as filing administrative complaints and lawsuits, organizing protest rallies. All these actions at different time have exerted certain influence on the government's forest policy and its decisions.

- In August 2006 and May 2007 20-year logging licenses were sold in the forests of high conservation value. As a



result of advocacy campaign, new license applications (four more auctions were announced in the consequent period) did not contain forests of high conservative value any more;

- The auctions announced in February and December 2008 through violation of Georgian legislation were cancelled; the most large scale issuance of 20-year logging licenses (on approximately 150 thousand hectares) was planned during those auctions;
- The World Bank financed Forest Sector Development Project was cancelled because the Georgian government numerously violated the terms of the agreement, did not approve national forest policy and rejected to carry out forest inventory; simultaneously, it planned to use the funds allocated under the project for other purposes;
- Use of forest fund lands and forest resources for individual consumption (except for timber and wood products, as well as non-timber resources subjected to licensing) has become free of charge for the local population;
- Extraction of timber and wood products for individual consumption has become legally possible for the local population. Certain rights were delegated to the local self-government bodies, in respect of delivering timber to the local population. It should be noted that this procedure needs further improvement;
- By the end of 2008 the government changed its vision in respect of forest sector: it refused to issue logging licenses in future without carrying out forest inventory; it started to carry out forest inventory; simultaneously, the government made a decision to implement a pilot project and test a model of forests managed by the state; in this regard, it can be said that the governmental policy related to forests changed in the positive direction at that stage (beginning of 2009);
- Local capacity building and promotion of the establishment of civil values in the society can be considered the most important result of the forest sector monitoring. The population of Mestia and Lentekhi, the entire society of the region, local and regional authorities jointly expressed their position and managed to protect their own interests and change an illegal and hasty decision of the central authorities on holding a long-term logging auction on December 11, 2008. As a result of joint efforts of the Tbilisi-based non-governmental organization and the region's population, it became possible to thoroughly change the Georgian government's forest-related policy;
- Amendments were made to various normative acts, including amendments were made to the Law on Licenses and Permits, to which licenses and permits on use of some non-timber resources were added;
- In August 2009 amendment was made to the forest use regulating act<sup>2</sup>, which enabled public participation in making decisions on selling forest use licenses at the auction (an obligation on using the rule of public administrative proceeding was imposed). Simultaneously, in July 2010 similar amendments were made to articles 35 and 36 of the Forest Code of Georgia and similar norm providing public involvement was included in the Forest Code.

Unfortunately, it should be noted that as a result of structural changes carried out in the Georgian Government in spring 2011, institutional system of forest sector has actually changed. It is unknown so far in which direction Georgia's forest sector will develop now, but it is already clear that active advocacy campaign will still be necessary.

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<sup>2</sup> Decree No 142 of the Government of Georgia dated August 11, 2009 "On approving the regulation on the rules and terms of issuing forest use licenses" on making amendments and additions to decree No 132 of the Georgian Government dated August 11, 2005.

## Landfills – current challenges

Among other environmental issues, waste management remained one of the most neglected sectors in Georgia until recently. There is no waste management policy and strategy in Georgia; legislation is extremely weak and fragmented – the law on waste, which would have determined the major types of waste and the agencies responsible for their management, has not been adopted so far. Although some cases of recycling of certain waste streams (paper, plastic) have been observed, landfilling still remains the most widespread form of waste management in Georgia.

There are 63 reported official landfills in Georgia and unknown number of spontaneous dumpsites. The majority of these sites dated from the 1960s', 70s' and 80s' and threaten public health and environment because of inappropriate sitting, inadequate design or improper operation. In some cases, when the landfills are filled to capacity and/or it is impossible to carry out measures for improvement of operation, the municipalities plan closure of the landfills and opening up new ones meeting modern standards. This process is ongoing under conditions of weak legal framework and through using inconsistent practice. Respectively, numerous environmental, economic or social problems emerge. The issue of public participation in the process of making landfill-related decisions is also rather problematic.



To improve waste management in Georgia, Green Alternative and its partner organizations are advocating for the introduction of such policy and practice, which will promote the resource-efficiency and waste prevention and reduction, on the one hand, and separate waste collection, reuse and recycling, on the other.

In respect of landfills, the advocacy campaign has the following goals:

- To reduce and/or eradicate harmful impact of the existing landfills on human health and environment;
- To avoid harmful environmental and social impacts as much as possible while planning new landfills;
- To give due consideration to the opportunities of introducing the schemes for separate collection, reuse and recycling while planning new landfills (thus promoting the disposal of less waste in landfills as well as safe disposal of hazardous waste);
- To ensure that decisions are taken with maximum participation of the public, especially the landfill project-affected communities;
- When decision on closure of landfill is taken, to ensure that landfill is properly closed, capped and remediated and further environmental pollution from the site is prevented.

Below the advocacy campaigns aimed at achieving the above mentioned goals are described. The first case is related to opening up of a new sanitary landfill in Adjara Autonomous Republic and another one concerns operating landfill in Kutaisi.

## Construction of a new sanitary landfill in Adjara

Planning a new, modern landfill in Adjara is one of the components of a broader project envisaging the improvement of solid waste management in Adjara. Besides this component, the project envisages: the closure of Batumi and Kobuleti landfills and remediation of the sites after closure; development of solid municipal waste collection and transportation system; and creation of a new waste management company, which will operate a new landfill. The project cost is Euro 7 million with the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) having allocated Euro 4 million as a grant and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) – Euro 3 million as a credit.

Since the project's key component was planning of a new sanitary landfill, environmental impact assessment of the project was oriented just to this issue. During 2008-2009 the project consultants conducted environmental and social impact assessment and as a result the territory adjacent to Chakvi settlement (32ha) was selected as the preferential site for the new landfill. This site borders with Chakvi, Khali and Chaisubani settlements and is in a kilometer away from the Black Sea coast.

### Problematic issues

The site selected for the new landfill was the most problematic issue related to the new Adjara landfill project. The project consultants were claiming that six alternative sites were selected at the stage of project planning and environmental and social impact assessment. According to them, comprehensive assessment was conducted on the selected sites as a result of which the preferential site was selected - the territory adjacent to Chakvi settlement. As it was revealed later in the process of analyzing the project-related documents, the project consultants, while selecting the six possible sites, did not conduct additional researches and relied on previously conducted research, which was imperfect in itself. Chakvi residents were opposing the construction of a new landfill site near their homes<sup>3</sup>; they had the following arguments:

- The existence of a landfill near the settlement would have a negative impact on the incomes of local population, for whom leisure and tourism-oriented business is the key source of income. The population explained that the immediate proximity of a landfill would make the nearby settlements unattractive for tourists and holidaymakers;
- The existence of a landfill would also have a negative impact on the price of real estate located on the adjacent areas that would significantly aggravate the economic status of the population;
- Construction and operation of a landfill will trigger negative consequences for human health and environment. The Chakvi residents believed that there were no guarantees that the project would be implemented properly, the landfill would be managed properly and negative consequences would be avoided.

Along with other problems related to the construction of the new landfill, the following issues were also being discussed: (1) the project envisaged collection and flaring of gasses (methane and carbon dioxide) emitted as a result of landfill operation – the project consultants were not discussing the possibility of converting gasses into electricity; (2) the project did not envisage the promotion of introducing modern waste management methods along with the construction of the new landfill; and (3) the project impact on waste collection service tariffs was not studied and respectively, no measures were developed to mitigate the project impact on socially vulnerable groups.

Later, one more problematic issue emerged – it was decided to implement a new project in Adjara, particularly, Adjara Bypass Road Construction Project. The project is financed by the Asian Development Bank. According to this project, the bypass road should run in 30-35 meters away from the planned sanitary landfill in Chakvi. The problem is that the cumulative impacts of these two projects (landfill and bypass road) on the population and environment had not been studied. Respectively, no preventive and/or mitigation measures had been determined.

### Advocacy campaign and its results

From the very beginning Green Alternative was monitoring the project development process, analyzing publicly available or otherwise obtained project-related information. It conducted a number of field visits to the project site

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<sup>3</sup> In July 2009 the Chakvi population sent a joint letter to the President and the Parliamentary Chairman of Georgia expressing their negative attitude towards the construction of a new landfill on the territory adjacent to their residential places.

and held meetings with the project-affected communities in order to inform them about the planned project, to identify their concerns and acquaint them with those means/mechanisms, which would enable them to protect their own rights and interests. The project proponents and consultants did not try their best to ensure that the project-affected communities had sufficient information and possibility to express their opinions about the project. During 2008-2009 the effective participation of the project-affected communities in public hearings in Adjara was made possible only as a result of the public information campaign launched by Green Alternative.

Furthermore, Green Alternative was sparing no efforts to ensure that the project developer, its consultants, donor organizations, permit issuing agency and top decision-makers were informed about the above mentioned problems in order to take them into consideration while working and making a decision on the project. A number of meetings were held; comments on various versions of project documentation were prepared and sent to the relevant persons; statements and position documents were disseminated; articles were published and various stories were broadcasted on local and national televisions. In October 2009 Green Alternative and 1078 residents of Chakvi applied to the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources, with the help of Green Alternative, demanding their involvement in the administrative proceedings on making a permit issuance decision.

As a result of the advocacy campaign, all problematic issues pushed by Green Alternative were taken into consideration at the later stages of the project development, except for one, which also triggered the local population's deep concern – the landfill site. Currently, the situation looks as follows: the project developer has not yet applied to the Ministry of Environmental Protection for receiving an environmental permit. Respectively, Green Alternative and the Chakvi community are waiting for the launch of administrative proceeding at the Ministry of Environmental Protection in order to raise the issue of changing the planned landfill site again.

## Kutaisi landfill

The Kutaisi landfill has been functioning since 1962 and serving the city of Kutaisi, as well as the Baghdati and Tskaltubo districts. Similar to other landfills in Georgia, all types of mixed waste (including hazardous waste) are disposed there without any treatment. The landfill is located in the immediate proximity to the city, particularly in 500 meters away from the Nikea street residential area.

### Problematic issues



In 2007 the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources conducted waste inventory on the territory of Georgia. According to the inventory report, the term of landfill operation has expired, while the existing situation is deplorable: the site is partially fenced that allows free movement of people and cattle; open flaring is taking place; landfill is not covered and it represents a serious hotbed of anti-sanitary and pollution.

Negative consequences (air, soil, water pollution, risks posed to human health and life) of the Kutaisi landfill operation have numerously triggered the local population's concerns. During years this issue was numerously covered by various media outlets. However, the problem still remains unsolved

– the landfill continues operating; it causes a significant impact on the environment and poses a threat to human health and life.

### Advocacy campaign and its results

In 2010 the Kutaisi-based non-governmental organization Kutaisi Information Center and Green Alternative launched a campaign aimed at reducing harmful impact of the Kutaisi landfill on human health and environment and its full eradication eventually. At the initial stage the two organizations studied the legal background of landfill operation and revealed that the landfill operator should have conducted environmental audit of the landfill before January 1, 2010; moreover, it should have developed a plan of measures for mitigating environmental impacts and should have obtained the environmental permit on this basis. As it turned out, the landfill operator had not met these legal requirements. The latter had also failed to meet the obligations determined by the agreement concluded with the Kutaisi Mayor's Office.

The Kutaisi Information Center and Green Alternative applied to the relevant agencies of the local and central authorities in written and demanded taking of efficient steps to improve the situation on the Kutaisi landfill. The two organizations also launched an active media campaign, as a result of which numerous articles were published and a number of TV stories were broadcasted concerning the landfill-related problems and the ways of their settlement.

On initiative of Green Alternative and the Kutaisi Information Center, a meeting was held at the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources in November 2010 with the participation of the representatives from the Ministry and the Kutaisi Mayor's Office in charge of waste management and law enforcement monitoring. During the meeting the representative of the Kutaisi Mayor's Office took a commitment that within the nearest months, after terminating the agreement with the landfill operator, the Mayor's Office would implement such measures, which would at least slightly improve the existing landfill management practice. The participants also stressed the necessity of conducting such assessment, which would made it clear whether the Kutaisi landfill, in case of improved management, would be able to receive more waste and whether there was any necessity for opening a new landfill in the near future.



One more important systemic problem was revealed in the process of campaigning on the Kutaisi landfill: like in case of the Kutaisi landfill, none of the landfill operators acting in Georgia (except for several newly opened ones) managed to meet law requirements and to obtain environmental permits duly. In such case, the agency responsible for law enforcement should have implemented relevant measures against the owners/operators of all (including Kutaisi) landfills, though it did not do so. Instead, shortly after the above mentioned meeting the Ministry of Environment Protection and Natural Resources developed legislative amendments envisaging the postponement of the obligation for obtaining an environmental permit for operating the landfills until January 1, 2014. This legislative amendment was soon approved by the Parliament of Georgia.

Thus, the obligation of the Kutaisi landfill, like other landfills operating in Georgia, to conduct environmental audit, to make a plan of mitigation measures and to obtain an environmental permit have been postponed until January 1, 2014. Since the self-government bodies have limited resources to meet such obligations, apparently, they will fail to meet them until January 1, 2014. Taking this reality into consideration, the Kutaisi Information Center and Green Alternative are still continuing advocacy campaign on the Kutaisi landfill and are simultaneously lobbying the implementation of such measures, which will help Georgian self-government bodies meet law requirements before January 1, 2014.

Association Green Alternative is a non-governmental, non-profit organization founded in 2000. The mission of Green Alternative is to protect the environment, biological and cultural heritage of Georgia through promoting economically sound and socially acceptable alternatives, establishing the principles of environmental and social justice and upholding public access to information and decision-making processes. We organize our work around six thematic and four cross-cutting areas. Thematic priority areas include: energy – extractive industry – climate change; transport sector and environment; privatization and environment; biodiversity conservation; waste management; water management. Cross-cutting priority areas include: environmental governance; public access to information, decision-making and justice; instruments for environmental management and sustainable development; monitoring of the lending of the international financial institutions and international financial flow in Georgia.

Green Alternative cooperates with non-governmental organizations both inside and outside Georgia. In 2001 Green Alternative, along with other local and international non-governmental organizations, founded a network of observers devoted to monitoring of development of a poverty reduction strategy in Georgia. Since 2002 Green Alternative has been monitoring implementation of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline project, its compliance with the policies and guidelines of the international financial institutions, the project's impacts on the local population and the environment. Since 2005 the organization has been a member of the Monitoring Coalition of the ENP (European Neighbourhood Policy) Action Plan. In 2006 Green Alternative founded an independent forest monitoring network.

Since establishment Green Alternative is a member of CEE Bankwatch Network - one of the strongest networks of environmental NGOs in Central and Eastern Europe. Green Alternative closely cooperates with various international and national organizations and networks working on environmental, social and human rights issues; Green Alternative is a member of the Coalition Transparent Foreign Aid to Georgia founded in 2008. In 2010 on the initiative of Green Alternative Georgian Green Network was established. This is informal association of civil society organizations and experts dedicated to protecting environment, promoting sustainable development and fostering principles of environmental and social justice in Georgia. In 2004 Green Alternative received the Goldman Environmental Prize as the recognition of organization's incredible work for environmental protection, social justice and equity.

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