Human rights at local level

10 reasons why
LOCAL LEADERS NEED DATA

As elaborated by the members of the Georgian Forum of Exchange on Human Rights during the Spring School on Human Rights data for evidence-based decision-making at local level

01 To identify a problem and detect discrimination

To define priorities **02**

03 To substantiate and reason political decisions
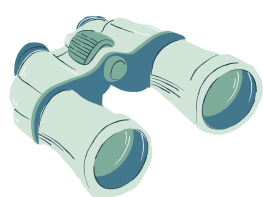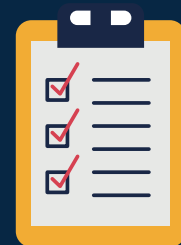
To dedicate budget to vulnerable groups **04**

05 To define target groups of policies

To engage civil society **06**

07 To develop indicators

To assess the impact of a problem or issue **08**

09 To assess and evaluate if objectives have been met

To make the achievements of our municipalities visible **10**

1 - To identify a problem and detect discrimination
To be able to provide effective policies, decisionmakers must be able to identify what problems are there in the municipality. Surveys can be useful for that; other examples may be the availability of an accessible and secure complaint mechanism which collects some basic information.

2 - To define priorities
Data can help to identify what issues are the most urgent. What problem concerns most citizens? What problem concerns the most vulnerable groups? What sections of the populations are most in need of immediate support? Surveys, focus groups, and secondary data analysis can help answer these questions.

3 - To substantiate and reason political decisions
A political decision which is backed by evidence is easier to support. Data can be used to clarify why a certain decision is a better choice for the community than another. The impact of decisions based on evidence can also be measured more easily (see point 7).

4 - To dedicate budget to vulnerable groups
The availability of data helps to identify in which areas it is most sustainable and useful, from a human rights perspective, to allocate budget. Budgeting decisions are therefore not only based on extemporaneous requests, but are based on a study of the needs of the entirety of the population – including those groups that would otherwise be left behind.

5 - To define target groups of policies
Just like for budgeting, policies themselves must be based on the knowledge of the territory and its population. Data empowers decision makers to identify how policies can impact groups that were not originally considered as a target. For example: data can show that women tend to use public transport more. It is important to then ensure that public transportation policies include a gender perspective. What about people with disabilities? Data can support in recognising which groups in the population would be impacted by policies – and let decisionmakers make inclusive decisions.

6 - To engage civil society
Data can be used as evidence to engage civil society in collaborating with the municipality. Moreover, the very collection of data can be an exercise that local authorities do in collaboration with civil society organisations. CSOs, through their privileged access to certain groups in the population (i.e. minorities) can provide a lot of useful data and represent vulnerable groups. What kind of data can local authorities provide to CSOs?

7 - To develop indicators
Indicators are useful instruments to measure whether policies and action plans are effective. Indicators need data, and this could be both quantitative (how many citizens were targeted?) and qualitative (was the target population satisfied with the service provided?). To effectively use the indicators, it is important to have accessible "means of verifications", which are the sources used to respond to these questions (i.e. counting the number of service users; interviews with the population to enquire on their satisfaction).

8 - To assess the impact of a problem
Sometimes a problem can be identified thanks to the complaint of a single citizen, group, or organisation. Such problem should be studied from a human rights perspective, its impact and spectrum (to what extent is this problem of a common nature) should be assessed. For this, further research can be useful: reports from the PDO, from CSOs, and if necessary, further primary data collection can help decisionmakers to understand whether that problem is more impactful than it looks. This permits them not to overlook problems and maintain a sustainable approach.

9 - To assess and evaluate if objectives have been met
Data can help in evaluating whether the objectives which underlie the political decisions have been achieved, and if yes, how. Remember, objectives should be, as much as possible, SMART: specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and timebound.

10 - To make the achievements of our municipalities visible
Data can be useful to report on the local authorities achievements. This is linked to the fact that data can help in evaluating the impact of decisions taken. Well visualised data (with the use of graphs, for example, or creative data visualisation techniques) can be a powerful tool to communicate with the population, but also with the national level, and international donors.