



# REVIEW OF ETHNIC AZERBAIJANIANS' NEEDS IN SAGAREJO MUNICIPALITY



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# **Review of Ethnic Azerbaijanians' needs in Sagarejo Municipality**

Social Justice Center

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## Introduction and Methodology

The active work of the Social Justice Centre on non-dominant ethnic and religious minority groups' rights reveals that various groups in Georgia face problems related to political participation, access to vital resources, and social programs. According to the quantitative research conducted by the Institute of Social Studies and Analysis (ISSA) in 2021, ethnic minorities are 15% poorer, and the indicator of higher/technical education among minorities is approximately twice less.<sup>1</sup>

According to the same study, the % of people without complete general education among the ethnic Azerbaijani population of Kakheti is 54%. Preschool education is not accessible for 56% of ethnic Azerbaijanis in Kakheti.<sup>2</sup> It should also be noted that the needs of the ethnic Azerbaijani community in Kakheti remain out of the focus of not only the state but also out of the agenda of various civil and human rights institutions.

For a focused analysis of the needs of the Azerbaijani community in Kakheti, the Social Justice Center conducted a needs survey in villages inhabited by non-dominant ethnic groups: Kazlari, Lambalo, Keshalo, Mughanlo, Paldo and Duzagrami in Sagarejo Municipality. These villages are located in four administrative districts. However, the local population perceives them in one space and names them Garachopi (Iormughanlo) in the Azerbaijani language. One of the reasons can be that there is no physical or geographic dividing line between these villages, and it is even difficult for locals to draw a sharp line between villages.

A significant part of the population in these villages is engaged in agriculture, especially animal husbandry. In addition, an essential part of the rural population is involved in various types of small business and trade. The market is organized at the entrance of Iormughanlo, a necessary space for nearby Georgian villages. The hospital is also located in the village and opened several years ago with funding from residents. There are eight mosques in the village, of which 2 are Shia, and six belong to the Sunni school of Islam.

Despite the low rate of school graduation among Azerbaijanis living in the Kakheti region, since 2010, Iormughanlo youths get the best results every year within the framework of the 1+4 program of the unified national exams, which according to the locals, can be explained by the active work of local teachers.

The given needs assessment research examines the village's political, social, economic, and cultural challenges to demonstrate and advocate before local government authorities and central agencies. To build up a needs assessment map based on local knowledge and experience, the Social Justice Centre applied the following methodology for analysis.

- Questionnaire to reveal the community problems.

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<sup>1</sup> Piranishvili, T, Barbakadze Z, 2023, Social and Economic Exclusion of Ethnic minorities, available at: <https://socialjustice.org.ge/en/products/etnikuri-umtsiresobebis-sotsialuri-da-ekonomikuri-ekskluzia>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

- KWHW<sup>3</sup> analyzing tool (what we know, what should be changed, how it should be changed, and who should change).

This method allows for systemically comprehending local needs with the direct participation of the local population. The questionnaire to reveal local problems aims to study and demonstrate the symptoms of problems in the specific village and its deep underpinnings and root causes. KWHW analysis tool is used to understand locals' opinions during the problem examination process, how they perceive problem solutions, and who is responsible for that. 8 focus groups were conducted during the research process, in which 63 people participated, 26 women and 37 men. Population of different age groups participated in the focus groups, both young and elderly.

The Information is presented below as it was articulated and shared by the local community.

## About Sagarejo Municipality

Sagarejo municipality belongs to the Kakheti region. The municipality includes the city of Sagarejo and 25 administrative units (48 villages in total). According to the general census 2014, the municipality's total population is 51,761 people, of which 33.2% are ethnic Azerbaijanis.<sup>4</sup>

There are 29 kindergartens in the municipality's territory, of which only one is in Yormughanlo. In addition, since 2022, two alternative preschools have been operating in the village of Lambalo. 26 public schools function in Sagarejo municipality, out of which four are in Iormughanlo. Out of these four schools, three have ethnic Azerbaijanian directors.

Davit Songhulashvili is the majority deputy of Sagarejo Municipality in the Parliament of Georgia. The Mayor of Sagarejo municipality is Avtandil Gulikashvili, and the chairperson of the City Council is Aleksii Gilashvili. Only four out of 39 members of Sagarejo City Council are ethnic Azerbaijanis; none are women among them. Azerbaijanian deputies do not hold any position in the City Council nor hold the position of Bureau member of the Council. It should be noted that neither the mayor has an ethnic Azerbaijani deputy or adviser. Also, none of the heads of departments or units of the City Hall are ethnically Azerbaijani. According to the information given by the local community, there are no ethnic Azerbaijanis employed in Sagarejo municipality, except for the mayor's representatives in their villages and a military reporting specialist.

## Village Lambalo

### General Information about the village

The villages of Zemo and Kvemo Lambalo are united in the administrative unit of Lambalo. The administrative unit is part of the Sagarejo municipality and is 35 kilometers away from the

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<sup>3</sup> Know, What, How, Who

<sup>4</sup> Results of 2014 Public Census, available at: <https://www.geostat.ge/media/20679/2014-wlis-aRweris-ZiriTadi-Sedegebi.pdf>

municipality's administrative center. Together, 8,934 people live in both villages, which makes this village the second-largest settlement in the municipality after Sagarejo. The village has one public school and a Ministry of Justice community center. There is also one Sunni mosque in the village.

### The needs of village Lambalo:

#### 1. *(Perception) The issues that are perceived by the community as problematic*

**Participation in political and public life:** The conversation with the local community reveals that involvement in public and political life faces substantial challenges. They found bringing their problems to the local self-government authorities difficult. Locals also mention that it is problematic to contact Mayor representatives in the village and share village problems. Structural obstacles to the participation of the local community in the local self-government are created by the fact that minority representatives are not employed in the administration of the municipality, and there are no translation resources in minority languages. Mayor representatives are often the key reason for breaking bridges between the community and the municipality. These systemic challenges create a climate of distrust and hopelessness between the community and the local government, which needs to be understood and changed by the state.

**Drinking and irrigating water:** One of the significant problems in the village of Lambalo is drinking and irrigation water. Residents say they are forced to bring drinking water to their homes by car, cart, or hand. They also say that even though they have been asking the government to solve the drinking water problem for years, and the politicians promised the population during the pre-election period that they would have drinking water, they remain without it. Along with drinking water, irrigation water is also problematic.

#### 2. *(Quantity) The problem that concerns the most people in the community.*

**Preschool education:** The absence of preschool education institutions concerns the most people in Lambalo. In a conversation with the population, it becomes clear that the company "SOCAR Georgia" is starting the construction of a preschool facility in Lambalo. Part of the population welcomes this fact. However, some of the local activists claim that Georgia should take responsibility for the construction of the preschool facility and Georgia should not depend on the goodwill of the neighboring country on this issue.

Several years ago, a school was constructed in the village that **meets international standards**. The locals are grateful for this but say the school already needs renovation. The interviewees also **positively evaluated** the solution to the issue of outdoor lighting.

#### 3. *(Historical) This problem has concerned the local community for a long time*

**Access to agricultural lands:** Access to agricultural land is a historical problem. Agricultural lands are a vital resource for the Iormughanlo community. However, according to the population, rural lands ((arable crops and pastures) have been unfairly and illegally transferred to others for years, and they cannot protect their interest in this process. Land issues concern an important part of the interviewed people. Many families in the village do not have additional rural lands except for the homestead. They

declare that there is no land in the village, even for constructing a new house. According to them, a large part of the population can't engage in agriculture and develop their farm when there is no irrigation system and a large part of the land is privatized and owned by specific individuals.

**Village internal roads:** Per interviews taken in Lambalo, the issues of village internal roads, drinking water, and kindergarten problems are identified as historical problems. Regarding internal roads, they say that roads in a large part of the village are impassable, and it is important to fix them. According to the residents, along with other roads, the access road to the Lambalo cemetery should be repaired first.

4. *(Frequency) The problem that is most frequently met in the community*

**The condition of the entrance bridge to Iormuganlo:** In the entire territory of Iormuganlo and the village of Lambalo, people most frequently talk about the broken bridge entering the village. This issue brings together different interest groups like teachers, religious leaders, youth, activists, women, farmers, etc. The entrance bridge to the village is really in a dilapidated state. According to the Levan Samkharauli National Forensics Bureau, the bridge threatens the population's health, but the work to solve this problem has not started.

A few years ago, one women activist from Iormuganlo addressed the local self-government with an official letter. Young activist groups also started an advocacy campaign to raise this issue at the self-government level and prepared video material. However, according to these activists, their activities were not followed by the proper response from the self-government bodies.

**Waste management:** In Lambalo, the problem of lack of garbage bins is also actively discussed, which the population especially requests in the inner streets of the village. Young people declare that, with some forms of activism and work, such as cleaning work, they try to demonstrate the urgent need for street waste bins before the self-government.

**Public Transport:** According to the students of Lambalo, one of the critical issues they are worried about is transportation. For the part of the local population who do not have their cars, the absence of public transport is problematic for mobility and restricts development opportunities. Students who travel to university must pay high sums for private taxi services.

5. *(Severity) The problem that is most intense and unbearable.*

**Pastures and mountainous valleys:** A significant part of the Lambalo population is involved in animal husbandry. This is the traditional economic activity of the Azerbaijanian population of Sagarejo. Depending on the number of cattle, the people often use summer and winter mountainous valleys in different regions of Georgia. However, land resources and pastures in Sagarejo are essentially essential for them, to. Among the most severe problems is the main challenge of shepherds - the lack of summer and winter pastures. The locals say that land is often leased to people who do not have sheep, and shepherds are forced to sign sub-leases for much higher prices. This is also caused by the fact that the local population does not know the state language, and they do not have access to the information on the lands available for lease because the state does not actively cooperate with local farmers. Animal husbandry is a traditional activity of the Azerbaijanian community of Sagarejo. They often lead a

nomadic life. However, due to the increase in land prices and high prices imposed by middlemen, part of the population abandons livestock farming.

They often lead a nomadic life. However, due to the increase in land prices and high prices imposed by middlemen, part of the population abandons livestock farming. Bank debts are also common, as the population is forced to pay high prices to middlemen for pastures.

**Livestock paths:** The livestock paths problem is also related to the issue of pastures. Residents say that the government has sold the sheep crossing tracks. As a result, the conflicts between the new landowners and the shepherds are frequent. Shepherds are often forced to donate a few sheep to the locals in exchange for free use of the crossing paths during sheep transport, which triggers a sense of unfairness and discontent.

**Fire rescue vehicles:** Focus group participants often mentioned the need for a fire rescue vehicle. According to them, several houses were burnt in recent years, and a fire rescue car went to the place of an accident after everything was finished.

#### *6. (Equality) The problem that violates the right to equality*

**Less attention compared to other villages.** There is a strong feeling among the Lambalo residents that the basic infrastructure problem has been better solved in all other Georgian villages than in their villages. During focus group meetings, residents attributed this inequality to their ethnicity. In addition, the issue of drinking water has been resolved in the villages of Duzagram and Mughanlo, while in Lambalo, they have not even started working on this problem. The Lambalo residents also ask for parks and squares, as in other villages, although they say that there are so many problems in the village that it is impossible to talk about a playground and a square; it is better to prioritize basic infrastructural and social issues.

#### *7. (Gender) The problem that oppresses women.*

**Women's being:** The human rights situation of women in Iormuganlo is characterized by significant challenges. The rights of the absolute majority of women are violated both by patriarchal norms and false traditions established within the community and by systemic discrimination caused by the state's indifferent policies. Women living in Lambalo are mainly employed in domestic farming, which is not considered important work in the community. Girls education is not supported in Lambalo, but there are exceptions. The absence of kindergartens burdens women who are forced to take care of their children apart from the daily household and agricultural work.

The women name early marriage of girls as one of the major challenges in the community over the years. However, this practice has recently been broken, and such cases are rare. The nomadic life puts an exceptionally heavy burden on women, who cannot take care of their health and visit a doctor while they are in the mountains. This is often related to poverty and lack of resources.

## Villages Duzagrami and Paldo

### General information on Duzagrami and Paldo

Villages Duzagrami, Tsitsmatiani (Garabaghlo), and Paldo are united in one – Duzagrami administrative unit. This administrative unit of Sagarejo municipality is 35 kilometers away from the administrative center of the municipality. Three thousand five hundred nine people live in all three villages. There is one public school in the administrative unit. There is one Sunni and one Shiite mosque in the village.

### The needs of villages Duzagrami and Paldo:

1. *(Perception) The issues that are perceived by the community as problematic*

**Internal roads of the village:** The road issue is problematic in villages Duzagrami and Paldo. According to the respondents, the village residents have already gotten used to this problem and do not even name it an issue before respective authorities. But they also see that internal road rehabilitation is frequent in other villages, while they have never had paved roads. Talking on the road, they say this issue equally worries rich and low-income families. Those who own a car spend a significant amount of finances every year to repair their vehicles, while those who don't have a car find it much more difficult to move even within the village.

**Public Transport:** According to the respondents, these two villages need public transport the most because they are the most distant from the center of Iormughanlo. Young village residents have difficulties moving within the village, within the municipality, or in the direction of the capital.

The population **positively assesses** the solution of outdoor lighting and the placement of bins in the village. However, they say there are no recycling bins in the inner part of the village, and it is necessary to place them in all parts of the village over time.

2. *(Quantity) The problem that concerns the most people in the community.*

**Agricultural land:** Most people in both villages are concerned about the lack of agricultural land. The interviewees claim that the mayor's representative in the village, who owns more than 90 hectares of land, unfairly appropriates the land.<sup>5</sup> Locals referred to the respective authorities on this issue several times. Social Justice Centre studied this issue and referred it to the Prosecutor's Office, but the responsibility of relevant persons has not been established. In the background of a lack of land resources, economic activities are difficult for locals. They often lease land on which it is challenging to get agro-credit. Therefore, they turn to microfinance organizations that provide loans at a higher interest rate. Due to the high-interest rate, people often struggle to pay their bank debts.

**Unemployment:** Although all eight villages are perceived as a single settlement throughout Iormughanlo, the social and economic status of Duzagram and Paldo differs from the rest of the villages. The locals declare that sheep farming is no longer the leading industry in these two villages because a

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<sup>5</sup> The journalistic investigation on this issue is available here:  
[https://ifact.ge/duzagrama/?fbclid=IwAR21dsC6Npj5xG\\_EXQ45fa-57Xhb7ZnZWizqOLM3FaYivh1kknU8B3K0Sa4](https://ifact.ge/duzagrama/?fbclid=IwAR21dsC6Npj5xG_EXQ45fa-57Xhb7ZnZWizqOLM3FaYivh1kknU8B3K0Sa4)



significant part of the inhabitants of both villages moved to Azerbaijan in the 90s, and some could not continue farming because they could not get land on lease or ownership. According to some interviewees, one of the main reasons for the locals moving to Azerbaijan was the socio-economic crisis and chauvinist rhetoric and politics of Georgia in the 90s. Also, for one part of the population, relocation to Azerbaijan was related to access to education for their children. In recent years, the population decided to return to their villages (which, on the one hand, is related to the reforms and strengthening of state institutions in Georgia, on the other hand, due to failure to obtain citizenship of Azerbaijan Republic). However, in conditions where the returned population does not have land resources, this worsens the economic situation of the population of Duzagram and Paldo.

3. *(Historical) This problem has concerned the local community for a long time*

**Preschool education:** The population of both villages declares that the absence of preschool education institutions is the most historical problem. The village population is satisfied with the teachers and village school and **expresses gratitude** towards the government for the school renovation (several years ago). However, they also claim that preschool education is vital for their children. According to them, Mughanlo kindergarten never had a place for the Duzagrami and Paldo kids.

4. *(Frequency) The problem that is most frequently met in the community*

**Entrance bridge to the village:** Likewise, in Lambalo, the residents of Duzagram and Paldo identify the emergency condition of the bridge installed at the village entrance as one of the main problems. As they say, they always fear crossing the bridge, as it may fall and harm their life and health. They believe that trucks are the leading cause of bridge damage. The population says that timely rehabilitation and strengthening of the bridge should be one of the main priorities of the state.

**Drinking and irrigation water:** In Duzagram and Paldo, unlike the rest of the villages of Iormughanlo, drinking water is supplied to the population on a schedule. However, there are frequent cases when the water supply is interrupted for several weeks. The locals complain that they cannot irrigate their homesteads either due to the lack of irrigation canals and appropriate water resources. Therefore, they rely on rain. If it rains, they will grow crops on their homestead land, if it doesn't rain - no.

5. *(Severity) The problem that is most intense and unbearable*

**The arbitrariness of the mayor's representative and his family members:** Residents of both villages name the mayor's representative, Mukhtar Ismailov, as particularly problematic since, according to them, he abuses his position and appropriates village lands, oppresses the most vulnerable residents and does not fulfill his duties. Furthermore, the mayor's representative's son is working in the local police, and when somebody complains about the representative, his son also abuses his authority against this person. State representatives hold "the order" in the village this way. Such a reality deepens mistrust between locals and state institutions.

6. *(Equality) The problem that violates the right to equality*

**We are in a worse situation than the rest of Iormughanlo:** Duzagrami and Paldo residents declare that they are in worse social and economic conditions than other Azerbaijanian communities in Iormughanlo. According to the interviewees, the village has no public transport and severe internal roads. The village is isolated, and prices in local markets are respectively higher. So, they are forced to buy more expensive products.

Respondents state that the residents of Lambalo and other villages are more affluent than those of Duzagrami and Paldo. The population of other villages preferred to stay in Georgia in the 90s, and a significant part of the population of Duzagrami and Paldo moved to Azerbaijan. Today, most of these two villages work as daily workers or cannot pursue their small businesses due to high-interest loans.

**Compared to Georgian villages, we live in even more poverty:** In addition to other villages of Iormughanlo, the population of Duzagrami and Paldo perceive themselves to be in an unequal position compared to the Georgian villages of Sagarejo. They state that Georgian villages have paved roads, kindergartens, basic infrastructure, parks, and squares, while their village is in bad condition. In internal talks, they name their village “Siberia.”

#### *7. (Gender) The problem that oppresses women.*

**Women’s being:** According to the participants, the women of Duzagrami and Paldo are more active than the women living in other villages of Iormughanlo. According to the interviewees, one of the reasons why the population of these two villages left Georgia and moved to Azerbaijan in the 1990s was the provision of quality education for girls. Regardless, women's situation is not protected in this village as well. It should be mentioned that during the interviews and focus groups, the women of this village were more involved in the discussion. Rigid hierarchies within the community are firmly entrenched in everyday life at the expense of women's interests.

## Villages Mughanlo and Keshalo

### General information of villages Mughanlo and Keshalo

Villages – Mughanlo and Keshalo are united in Mughanlo administrative unit. The administrative unit is included in Sagarejo municipality and is located 37 km from the administrative center. 6500 people live in both villages. Two public schools function in this administrative unit, and one kindergarten. The village has one Sunni and one Shiite Mosque.

### The needs of Mughanlo and Keshalo:

#### *1. (Perception) The issues that are perceived by the community as problematic*

**The perception of oppression:** The feeling of abandonment and oppression is strong among the residents of Mughanlo and Keshalo. They declare that their village does not have basic infrastructure. The village does not have a road, water, kindergarten, and recycle bins. During the focus group, one participant compared their life to nomadic life (the local population names it “house”) because there is no basic infrastructure in the mountains, like in their village. The public school in village Keshalo is in a severe

situation; it is not enough for children, and the school is forced to lease local houses for the study process.

Residents say everyone asks the same questions about their needs, especially during pre-election. But their being does not change for years. Therefore, it appeared problematic to talk about problems at the beginning of the meeting. They declare that many people go to them to listen to their problems, but nobody solves them, and they feel tired of saying the same thing all the time.

**Access to services:** The residents of Keshalo and Mughanlo faintly feel they can turn to self-government if necessary. All respondents declare that authorities come into power only for their welfare. The hopeless community of Mughanlo even proclaimed that if the state does not take anything from them, they prefer to solve their problems independently. During the focus groups in both villages, the participants stated that they could not go to the municipality and request services because they did not know the state language and needed to accompany someone they knew. Often, they ask to solve the problem who, for their respective “favor,” can solve it. As for the collective problems (like drinking water, recycle bins, roads, and kindergarten), respondents do not even want to deal with them.

2. *(Quantity) The problem that concerns the most people in the community.*

**Drinking and irrigation water:** Drinking water is supplied to Mughanlo residents, but it is still problematic in village Keshalo. People declare in Keshalo that access to drinking water is the problem that concerns most people in their community. Mughanlo and Keshalo are united in one administrative center, and the majority deputy of this administrative unit in the City Council is from Mughanlo. Keshalo residents consider that this person works only for the problems of Mughanlo and leaves Keshalo residents without consideration. On the other hand, the residents of Mughanlo believe that compared to other villages, there are too many problems in their village.

**Public transport:** Students and young people mainly discuss the need for public transport in Iormuganlo. According to the survey, several village private drivers use their minibusses to transport local farmers to Tbilisi who sell agricultural products in several capital markets. However, their schedule is not suitable for students. As a result, most young people are forced to take private taxis to go to the central road, which is an expensive service for them. Transport also cannot come at the main road for hours. Young people often had to walk many kilometers. Also, many families do not support their children (particularly girls) to study due to the absence of public transport.

3. *(Historical) This problem has concerned the local community for a long time*

**Keshalo village school:** Keshalo school was in a problematic condition for years. Although the school building has been repaired and renovated, it cannot fully accommodate the village's children. Due to the limited number of classrooms, the school administration is forced to lease the rooms built next to the school from the villagers. The population is satisfied with the knowledge that the school teachers expose to their children. However, as locals consider, the school infrastructure is a problem.

**Preschool education facility:** As in other villages of Iormughanlo, residents of Keshalo and Mughanlo also demand preschool education facilities. While the kindergarten is in Mughanlo village, it can accommodate only 30 children. Therefore, the residents claim that it is not enough for the whole village, and the kindergarten is mainly attended by their children, who have acquaintances and connections. The inhabitants of Keshalo positively evaluate the construction of a kindergarten in the village by the company "Socar."

4. *(Frequency) The problem that is most frequently met in the community*

**Entrance bridge to the village:** The condition of the entrance bridge is critically important for the Mughanlo and Keshalo communities. They claim that the bridge has expired, but no one pays attention. According to one part of the population, there is frequent traffic of trailers and trucks on the plot of land purchased by a foreign businessman near the village. They say that these trucks caused bridge damage and need urgent rehabilitation.

5. *(Severity) The problem that is most intense and unbearable*

**Agricultural lands:** The problem of agricultural land relates to both Keshalo and Mughanlo. Keshalo locals declare that they do not have land for the house construction. Still, regardless of this, City Council Members and the Mayor's representative to the village continue to appropriate the village lands informally. Mughanlo community also states that the state illegally purchased their lands years ago, and the village is now left without lands.

6. *(Equality) The problem that violates the right to equality*

**Comparison of their village to others:** The respondents declare that they see the general poverty and unemployment everywhere. It is difficult to see something exclusive to their village. However, according to Mughanlo and Keshalo population, the difference between Georgian and Azerbaijanian villages in Sagarejo is still very noticeable. According to the, except for electricity and gas supply, they have nothing. Locals state that as Georgian villages, they also need parks and squares, youth centers, sports gyms, etc.

7. *(Gender) The problem that oppresses women.*

**Women's being:** The being of women in Keshalo and Mughanlo is particularly severe. Most women in these villages are involved in family work and childcare. For these women, going out of the house is even problematic. Consequently, they spend most of their time at home. There is no gathering space for women. Patriarchal norms are influential in the community, according to which women cannot even work in public areas. Support for girls' education is fragile in these villages. However, one local activist of Keshalo creates a significant experience for the community and works for community empowerment. She and her friends from Iormughanlo started the "Iormughanlo Community Center" in 2022, which works to advocate for local women's and farmers' needs. Also, the Community Centre holds Georgian language teaching courses for free, including for women. All infrastructural problems, such as the absence of squares and parks, kindergartens, and drinking water, burden the local women.

## Village Kazlari

### General information on village Kazlari

Village Kazlari, along with village Tulari, is united in the Tulari administrative center. Kazlari is included in Sagarejo municipality and is located 40 km away from the municipality administrative center. 1500 people live in Kazlar. The village has neither a school nor a kindergarten. One Sunni Mosque is in the village.

### The needs of Village Kazlari:

1. *(Perception) The issues that are perceived by the community as problematic*

**Village internal roads:** The village roads are the biggest problem for a significant part of the Kazlari population participating in the focus group. According to them, they never had a paved road. Locals believe that the problem of internal roads needs to be solved first. They declare that the road problem is also related to the transport problem. Since there is no road, public transport does not work in the village, which harms local youth. The locals say they are happy to leave the village since other villages have paved roads.

**Medical center and pharmacy:** The interviewees say that it is necessary to set up a pharmacy and a small medical center in their village since they are forced to walk for kilometers to measure blood pressure or to buy medicine in conditions of off-road and no transportation. As they know the road situation, they often don't even ask their family members to take them to the pharmacy or the doctor. As they say, if they had a pharmacy or medical center in the village, it would be easier to care for health.

2. *(Quantity) The problem that concerns the most people in the community.*

**Agricultural land:** Almost all families in Kazlari have problems with agricultural land. This issue is named as a major problem among the Kazlari community. Also, as respondents declare, village lands are unfairly appropriated by authorities, and ordinary citizens, while they need it, are left without land resources.

Locals are **satisfied** that the outdoor lighting problem was solved. Recycle **bins are located** in the village entrance territory but also need them inside the village.

3. *(Historical) This problem has concerned the local community for a long time*

**The school and preschool education:** There is no school or preschool facility in the village of Kazlari. The locals state that they had no educational facilities even during the Soviet period, so they are used to such a situation. However, it is noteworthy that the village has substantially grown since the Soviet period, and it has more than 400 families. Since there is no kindergarten in all Iormughanlo, this resource is also unacceptable for Kazlari kids. Kazlari children get a school education in the village Tulari public school. They use school transport for this purpose, but as locals explain, this is also problematic. Twice more children sit in one car than it can ordinarily fit; parents claim this violates safety norms.

4. *(Frequency) The problem that is most frequently met in the community*

**Drinking and Irrigation water:** Drinking water is supplied according to the schedule. However, locals state that the water supply is often closed, and they must bring water home with cars and carts.

5. *(Severity) The problem that is most intense and unbearable*

**The entrance bridge:** Even though the village Kazlari is most distant from Sagarejo, the village bridge is also critically problematic for the locals. They declare that every time they use the bridge, they fear something wrong might happen. This issue is often discussed at the village gathering, and they often raise it before the mayor's representative to the village, but they do not have a hope of its resolution.

**The issue of privatization of the sheep bypass road from Kazlari:** The locals declare that the privatization of the sheep bypath road from Kazlari is one of the severe problems. A foreign investor with other village lands purchased this. They complain they must go through the long road to transfer the sheep to the mountains.

6. *(Equality) The problem that violates the right to equality*

**We are most oppressed in Iormughanlo:** The Kazlari community believes that they are most oppressed among Iormughanlo communities. Nothing developed in their village, and they have a sense of total negligence. There is no infrastructure, road, school, or kindergarten in the village, but locals consider themselves and the village very hard-working, and they say that they still do not live much worse than other villages. However, they ask for basic infrastructure.

7. *(Gender) The problem that oppresses women.*

**Women's being:** Women living in the village of Kazlari often do not talk directly about their problems. Elderly women who actively participated in the focus groups often raised the issue of internal village roads, Iormughanlo Bridge, and sheep bypass roads. One of the participants also explained that because of the absence of roads, women even do not ask their children to take them to the pharmacy or medical center. Most women in the village ask for kindergarten and school since childcare is an immense burden. They also declare that girl's education is vital for them, but because of the absence of road and transport, they cannot achieve this goal.

Women's being in Iormughanlo is severe. In recent years, some families have supported girls' education, but in all eight villages, patriarchal beliefs are strong about women's role and their participation in public life. Regardless of reduced statistics, early marriage is still an important challenge.

## Summery

The population living in eight villages of Iormughanlo represents more than a third of Sagarejo Municipality's population. However, the vast majority of these villages do not receive the necessary resources and services from the municipality and the state, and basic infrastructure, such as drinking water, roads, kindergartens, schools, etc., are still unavailable to the population living in these villages. The villages have common problems: the lack of land resources, pastures, and the entrance bridge to the village, which requires a systemic and timely response from the state. Amongst them, the alleged



appropriation of lands needs to be effectively investigated by the state, and in case of violation, the population should get the remedy. At the same time, in almost every village, we encounter specific issues that violate basic human rights.

The sense that their problems and needs are not the priority for local self-government is strong in the community. The gap between the local self-government and the population is striking and strong. The representation of ethnic minorities is weak in the City Council, and no one from Iormughanlo is employed in the administration of the City Hall. There are no translation resources in the City Hall, which would allow its residents to participate in the local self-government activities. The only link between the population and the City Hall is the mayor's representatives in these villages. However, it becomes clear from the conversation with locals that they are often involved in corrupt activities and mostly act with personal interests.

In the context of lack of access to services and basic infrastructure, the population sees that the situation in the neighboring Georgian villages and their being are significantly different, which increases nihilism and frustration among the population.

Iormughanlo Community Center operates in Iormughanlo which was founded by local youth working to advocate the needs of their community. The organization works in different directions. Among them, in 2022, they petitioned Sagarejo Municipality to construct a preschool institution. Along with the Iormughanlo community center, the village has an alternative education center, "Bright Future," founded by local teachers to educate young people. The self-organization and activity of young people raise the hope that they will be able to increase the accountability and responsibility of the local self-government. They can raise local acute needs, concerns, and interests in the political agenda with collective action.