Approved by Board Meeting dated 31 January 2017

**Transparency Azerbaijan**

**Strategic Plan for 2017-2019**

1. **Introduction**

*Sustainability*

The concept of sustainability refers to continuation of the institutions supported through projects, and continuous flow of the benefits after the end of the project. There are three major aspects of sustainability: p**olitical sustainability,** which is understood asgovernment commitment to support the favorable operating environment for the civil society operations; **social sustainability** orsocial support and acceptability of the NGO programs by the citizens; and the last but not the least, **institutional sustainability** of an NGO, which is described below.

**Institutional sustainability** of an NGO is institutional structure that includes first of all, a clear vision meeting identified needs, and secondly, fundraising strategy and a strategic plan for the long-term solution of problems important for community. Thirdly, it is crucial to establish good communication among members of staff[[1]](#footnote-2),and with external stakeholders**[[2]](#footnote-3)**, anddevelop strategies that are able to gather new staff members on voluntary bases[[3]](#footnote-4). Finally, it is important to have strong government support.

*Purpose of the strategy*

The purpose of TA Strategy 2017--2019 is to provide inspiration, guidance and cohesion to the efforts of TA to fight corruption in the country and to be able to adapt to the changing needs and demands of the political and economic environments that influence the anti-corruption agenda in Azerbaijan. This Strategic Plan is based on the lessons learned from the previous strategic plan for 2013-2016 and provides the basis for the TA and its regional offices to develop and implement their specific anti-corruption programs. It is therefore not a plan of action for the TA, but a broad common basis for the board of directors and management of TA to plan their work.

This Strategic Plan draws from 20 year history and development of Transparency International, both at the TI Secretariat and in the national chapters. However, this Plan indicates how TA will respond to new challenges by using its existing – and developing new – strengths.

This is a long term Strategic Plan for Transparency Azerbaijan (TA) for the period 2017 – 2019. This document serves as a road map for organization’s programming and operationalising our activities over the coming three years. TA has defined its strategy by taking into account definition and analysis of its institutional framework and scope of its -work, analysis of external environment to determine needs of society and current political trends; analysis of internal capability and areas of growth of the organization to effectively accomplish its mission and realize its vision.

**2. SWOT Analysis**

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|  | **Strengths** | **Weaknesses** | **Threats** | **Opportunities** | **Goals** |
| 1 | TA has the knowledge and experience of applying one of the best Transparency International tools – free legal advice centers | TA lawyers get help out only to people who want to defend their rights | The level of resistance of people to corruption is very low | ALACs and LRCs have a good reputation in the country both with authorities and population | Mobilize people at the grass roots level to the against corruption |
| **2** | ALAC mandate does not allow lawyers to go to courts | Dependence of the judicial system on the executive power and poor level of legal education | Strategic litigation and monitoring of court proceedings |
| 3 | 1. TA employs good professional lawyers 2. (b) Funding made available for outreach programs | Lawyers are not easily accessible to rural population | Cooperation from local authorities is required | Reach a broader base of citizens |
| 4 | Lawyers can help people to address their problems | Lawyers cannot prevent those problems | People do not understand technical language of legal materials | Legal materials are easily available | Enhance legal education of people though preparation and dissemination of simplified legal materials |
| 5 | ALACs cases generate a wealth of data on actual misdoings of corruption | Information is available only to lawyers and public agencies involved | People are not aware of successes of other people | Good relations between TA and media | Collecting and publicizing empirical evidence on corruption cases and efforts to combat it |
| 6 | ALACs lawyers have first hand access to legal and institutional vulnerabilities allowing for corrupt practices | TA can not address the institutional and legal vulnerabilities on its own | Public officials abuse the legal loopholes, especially deficiencies of supporting legislation | Public administration system sometimes listens to recommendations provided by the civil society | Designing recommendations for the government |
| 7 | Numerous legal loop holes and especially institutional deficiencies | Strategic Advocacy |
| 8 | TA has a good standing among other civil society organizations | TA advocacy on its own consumes too much time and efforts | Government may not listen to one NGO | Coalition building process is active in Azerbaijan | Cultivate strategic partnerships and design a new strategy of government-civil society relations |
| 9 | TA lawyers do research on certain limited areas | ALAC and LRC lawyers do not have capabilities to research into all aspects of the public administration system | Need to generate a comprehensive understanding of deficiencies of the public administration system in Azerbaijan, especially in financial sphere | TI methodology of NIS study can be used by TA to do research of fiscal transparency and public budget | Increase knowledge production |
| 10 | TA has 4 well established regional centers | Distance management of 4 regional centers is a time and money consuming process | Lack of developed civil society institutions in the provinces | Regional centers serve as training grounds for future civil society leaders in the regions | Working beyond the capital city |
| 11 | Many people wish to report corruption and stay anonymous | TA cannot act on anonymous complaints | Officials will continue to abuse the system if people keep silent about corruption | TA will low barriers for citizens to be active by making use of its cooperation with ASAN centers | A special online platform will be designed to encourage people to report on infrastructure problems |
| 12 | TA has good lawyers able to do research | Legal environment is changing quickly and businesses do not cope to absorb those | This may result in bigger vulnerability of businesses to corrupt practices of public officials | TA has an extensive customer base of representatives of SMEs | Help businesses to better absorb new legal acts |
| 13 | TA staff has good analytical skills | Outside events are beyond TA control | Changing political environment may affect TA work | TA can get adapted and shape its work to attend to new pressing needs | Follow changes in the national policy agenda |
| 14 | TA has a good internal managerial procedures | There is a need for further institutional development | Toughening requirements from the donor and competition for grants | Availability of technical assistance from the BLDC project | Ensure Transparency Azerbaijan institutional development |
| 15 | TA being a chapter of an international organization, has access to international experience network | Partners can not jeopardize reputation of TA | TA partners have less developed internal management practices | Availability of funding to share its institutional development practices with partners and other NGOs | Contribute to institutional development of Azerbaijan civil society |

**3. Strategic focus and direction**

To maximize impact of its work TA over the three coming years will focus on 5 main priorities named below:

* policy engagement/monitoring and advocacy;
* information sharing and knowledge production;
* citizen’s awareness and social mobilization against corruption;
* institutional capacity building and sustainability;
* CSOs strengthening and partnering.
* engaging business into anti-corruption.

Despite some progress and achieving success in the fight against corruption, we at TA are keenly aware that significant challenges remain. According to our core values and principles, attaining greater transparency and integrity requires a long-term commitment to change, which is possible with the awareness and support of other stakeholders and, ultimately, societies as a whole. Taking stock of its achievements and challenges in promoting greater transparency, TA has refined its goals for the coming years. These goals reflect the threats and opportunities posed by corruption in Azerbaijan, what needs to be accomplished in the fight against corruption in the coming years, as well as our role as the leading national NGO working in this field. TA therefore identified the following strategic goals to guide our efforts.

**4. Strategic goals and key activities**

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|  | **Goal** | **Strategy** |
| **1** | **Mobilize people at the grass roots level to the against corruption** | **Running ALACs and LRCs** |
|  | To promote the anti-corruption agenda, people shall be mobilized at the grass roots level and equipped with legal knowledge to better understand and defend their rights, once dealing with the public administration system. | Through its ALAC and LRC centers the TA provides and will continue to provide specialized and professional legal assistance to victims of corruption, as well as legal advice to citizens and businesses on other legal issues in Baku and regions of Quba, Ganja, Sheki and Lenkoran. |
| **2** | **Pressurize the judicial system into reforms** | **Strategic litigation and monitoring of court proceedings** |
|  | Judicial system is one of the pillars of any anti-corruption reform and shall serve as an instrument to assist people to defend their rights. However, dependence on the executive power and poor level of legal education of the people unassisted allows for violations in the justice system. | ALAC and LRC lawyers will monitor court proceedings and represent clients in courts in civil cases of strategic litigation. |
| **3** | **Reach a broader base of citizens** | **Arrange public outreach programs** |
|  | Transparency Azerbaijan aims to reach out to a broader base of citizens to engage them into anti-corruption work and thus reducing the way corruption and lack of transparency ruins lives and livelihoods. | ALACs and LRCs will arrange public awareness raising events to reach out to special vulnerable categories, such as women, youth, as well as arrange on-site legal sessions to bring the much needed service to rural residents. |
| **4** | **Enhance legal education of people** | **Produce education materials** |
|  | Level of legal education of people is extremely low, which is one of the reasons allowing the petty officials to abuse the system and extort petty bribes | ALAC and LRC lawyers will continue to produce how-to-guides, explaining legal and administrative requirements in a simplified format and regularly update on |
| **5** | **Collecting and publicizing empirical evidence on corruption cases and efforts to combat it** | **Prepare and publish ALAC success stories** |
|  | Transparency Azerbaijan recognizes the crucial role of providing sound empirical evidence on corruption and the fight against it. ALAC and LRC cases allow us to identify loopholes in legislative and regulatory acts and deficiencies of the public administration system and actively lobby for the change using evidence based cases. | We will collect and regularly public ALAC success stories to encourage other people to resists corruption and defend their rights |
| **6** | **Enhancing legal framework and addressing institutional loop holes** | **Designing recommendations for the government** |
|  | Enhanced of legal loopholes and institutional vulnerabilities are one of the main conditions to effectively reduce the level of corruption | Recommendations will be designed to redress institutional and legal vulnerabilities, i.e. draft and existing laws and supporting legislation, as well as institutional vulnerabilities screened to identify loopholes causing corruption |
| **7** | **Strategic Advocacy** | **Advocacy round tables** |
|  | Transparency Azerbaijan will emphasize the strategic aspect of our advocacy efforts. We will take a proactive approach to setting and achieving advocacy goals, given our accumulated knowledge in the anti-corruption field. | We will arrange advocacy round tables in the four key selected areas (property rights, social protection tax and customs regulation). Through advocacy actions recommendations will be provided to redress institutional and legal vulnerabilities, i.e. draft laws screened to identify loopholes causing corruption; simplified commentaries to newly accept anti-corruption laws, to facilitate their understanding by officials and citizens, prepared. |
| **8** | **Cultivate strategic partnerships** | **Establish a broad anti-corruption NGO Coalition** |
|  | The broadening interest in our work and our contribution to policy change requires that we establish strategic partnerships to maximize our anti-corruption approach in a whole array of public and private sector arenas. Pursuing strategic partners helps us to be better positioned to link anti-corruption to emerging issues in the development, environmental and security agendas. | TA will continue to cooperate with members of the APT NGO Platform and with members of the newly created OGP NGO Platform. society in the new economic realities. |
| **9** | **Increase knowledge production** | **Enhancing public budget transparency** |
|  | Transparency Azerbaijan aims to create a research base with high standards that can serve the national chapter and other stakeholders to diagnose and reduce corruption risks and to improve transparency, integrity and accountability in public and private sector governance. Sound, objective and professional analysis will back our policy interventions. | TA will continue its research and focus on public budget transparency, public procurement and other socially important issues |
| **10** | **Working beyond the capital city** | **Regional centers** |
|  | Transparency Azerbaijan recognizes that anti-corruption efforts shall go beyond the capital city of that Regional centers are the core of our work. It is their work – offering local rootedness, creating synergy and dynamism for Transparency Azerbaijan as a whole, and allowing innovation – that enables us to advocate and achieve on a number of fronts. | In the coming years, the Transparency Azerbaijan will continue to focus a significant part of its work on facilitating regional centers’ development. Transparency Azerbaijan will strengthen the institutional and programmatic capacity of its regional centers. |
| 11 | **Call people to report corruption** | **Encourage to actively use social media to report corruption, while making active interaction with community** |
|  | Transparency Azerbaijanwill continue to call for citizens to be actively involved in anti-corruption. | TA will encourage citizens to take a more active civic position by lowering the barriers to get active; i.e. *to produce an open-source online platform* that facilitates direct communication on local problems between citizens of the city of Baku and its suburbs and local executive administration. The platform will receive from citizens video and photo reports on infrastructure problems in the capital city of Baku. This is an adaptation of the open-source [FixMyStreet](http://fixmystreet.com/) [concept](http://www.mysociety.org/projects/fixmystreet) and can also be accessed at [www.fixmystreet.com](http://www.fixmystreet.com). |
| 12 | **Involve businesses into an-corruption** | **Help businesses to become stronger in the fast changing business and legal environment though:** |
|  | The speed of adoption of legal acts regulating business in Azerbaijan today is astonishing. There have been cases when newly adopted laws were cancelled shortly, thus contributing to the general confusion[[4]](#footnote-5). SMEs simply cannot cope with the absorption of the new information, which is more often than not confusing or written in a complicated technical language and/or scattered in several legal acts. | 1. Monitor and analyze newly adopted legal acts;   Conduct needs assessment of ALAC customers from among businesses;  Prepare on need basis and publish on TA website explanatory notes on newly adopted regulations that are applicable to businesses. |
| 13 | **Follow changes in the national policy agenda** | **Ad hoc interview to media, production of analytical papers** |
|  | Changes in the national policy agenda will have an impact on our mission and relevance. | Transparency Azerbaijan will monitor the wider political, social, economic and technological trends that create both obstacles and opportunities for our work and will express its position towards developments in the country through ad hoc media interviews, analytical articles, presentations at various domestic and international conferences and adjust its programs, if need be. |
| 14 | **Ensure Transparency Azerbaijan institutional development** | **Enhancement of internal governance, managerial and finance/administrative procedures** |
|  | In order to keep afloat, make progress and attract further funding, TA shall ensure its institutional development to efficiently compete for grants | We will continue to upgrade our internal managerial capacity through staff training and further development of internal managerial documents |
| 15 | **Contribute to institutional development of Azerbaijan civil society** | **Arrange training program for local NGOs in internal managerial skills** |
|  | Azerbaijan civil society organizations have rudimentary level of internal management and governance standards, many of them even do not produce annual reports or arrange financial audits, whereas TA shall be very careful at selecting its partners | To provide training to coalition members, particularly from the regions and lesser known NGOs to (a) to enhance their transparency and management procedures |
| 16 | **Contribute to development of the government- civil society relations** | **TA will design a new strategy of government-civil society relations** |
|  | The strategy aims to raise awareness among NGOs on the new regulatory regime and explore opportunities or civil society–public sector cooperation in service delivery, public policy making and public administration (through active participation in Public Councils | TA will commission civil society mapping[[5]](#footnote-6) to find out which NGOs stayed in the market after the spring 2014 crackdown; conduct a profound analysis of the new legal requirements regulating CSOs, including registration and re-registration of the organization, changes in managing bodies; registration of grants and other legal matters and hold a serious of consultations with the government to find out the public sector’s needs that can be met by the civil |

**5. External communication strategy**

Transparency Azerbaijan is using communication through the participation of citizens to develop advocacy and program priorities. We believe it is really an innovative approach - integrating communication into the program development stage instead of an add-on consideration at the end. Therefore, Transparency Azerbaijan continues on participatory development and empowers further dialogue, positive linkages and social mobilization. See more details in External Communication Strategy Attachment 4 to Organizational Management Policy.

**6. Adapting to changing environment**

Changes in the national policy agenda will have an impact on our mission and relevance. Transparency Azerbaijan will monitor the wider political, social, economic and technological trends that create both obstacles and opportunities for our work and maintain its reputation of an independent and neutral NGO, that both challenge and work with the government. Our credo is constructive criticism and cooperation.

**7. Monitoring and evaluation**

Monitoring and evaluation of TA activities, as well as benchmarks, targets and indicators are set forth, collected and reported to the board and other stake holders, including donors, in individual project program documents, in line with the TA Monitoring and Evaluation Template.

**8. Conclusion**

TA will spend the next three years capitalizing on its best practices in advocacy, justice and good governance. Through realizing the planned strategic priorities, the TA will effectively fulfill this role, deepening awareness of society, enabling broader amount of citizens, creating wider anti-corruption partnerships and promoting transparency in the country. By strengthening and expanding the activities of the TA will be a more powerful and efficient in combating anti-corruption. TA will strengthen its ability to demonstrate and communicate results concerning the impact of its work, so what its work is better understood and more attractive to potential supporters.

1. Please see TI Az Internal Communication Strategy, Attachment 3 to Organization Management Policy [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Please see TI Az External Communication Policy, Attachment 4 to Organization Management Policy [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Please see TI Az Volunteer’s Manual [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Thus, Presidential decree dated 22 October 2015 on Simplification of Some of the Inspections Pertaining to Customs’ Oversight increased the cost of goods imported for personal consumption, exempt from customs’ dues from $1,000 to $10,000, however, on 13 January 2016 a presidential decree reducing the threshold back to $1,000 was published. No explanation was provided and, amazingly, the last decree is dated 24 December 2015. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. See Mapping Civil Society research by TA, 2013, [www.transparency.az](http://www.transparency.az) [↑](#footnote-ref-6)