



INNOVATIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL SOCIETIES

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SCHALKWYK: Today is the 6th of May, I'm with Giorgi Vashadze the head of the Civil Registry in Georgia. So to start with can you tell me about your current position and what your responsibilities are and then also perhaps a little bit about how you came to hold this position?

VASHADZE: *Yes, today I am the head of the Civil Registry Agency. The Civil Registry Agency is a public law entity so we have quite a lot of independence. We're under the Ministry of Justice, but we're an independent organization. We have our own budget, we have our own responsibilities. We are issuing plenty of documents to people and I will speak about our services later on.*

As for me, I started working in this system in 2005. I was head of territory, one of the territorial offices of the Civil Registry Agency. The Civil Registry Agency itself has somewhere around 87 territorial offices today. I was head of one of the offices in Tbilisi. Then I became Deputy Head of Civil Registry in August 2005 and since August 2006 I am head of Civil Registry Agency. So I have started in this system working from quite a low position lets say and now currently I am head of the agency.

What are my responsibilities? I sign all kinds of documents in the agency. I manage the whole agency, all the budgets, like documents which are related to budget like our spendings. Also I hire new staff members. I sign the document which is a contract with them. So let's say that I have all the responsibilities of a director or head of an organization. I also want to underline that Civil Registry Agency is a public law entity. I would repeat it. What it means is that we are like a governmental agency but we have quite big, like let's say, we have some small enhances on business—we are a little bit more constructed as business structure. Why? Because we have our own income as well.

We have accelerated our special services for people and all this money is going to our bank account and then we can spend and invest it in system development itself. So it is some kind of—that is why we are saying we are not like usual governmental agency. We are some kind of mix of governmental and private agencies.

SCHALKWYK: So how much of your operating budget comes from the fees that you raise and how much of it comes from the government?

VASHADZE: *Let's say somewhere 30-40% comes from our income; others are coming from budget. But we are also giving money to the budget and we are giving money back to budget more than budget is giving us back. So what I want to say, for example, for a passport, when you are taking in ten days you should pay 35 Lari. This 35 Lari is going to governmental budget. But if you want to take passport in one hour you are paying extra 170 Lari. This 170 Lari is going to our bank account, our own budget. But in the future we are going to change, we are planning to change this working style and everything will go to our budget and we will not receive anything from the governmental budget.*

SCHALKWYK: When is that planned?

VASHADZE: *For next year.*

SCHALKWYK: Okay, could I ask you a couple of questions about the reforms of the Civil Registry starting from the beginning. When you came in as the head in 2006, what was the state of the Civil Registry and what were the goals for the registry?

VASHADZE: *Let me start from 2005 because I have started working in this system from 2005. Until 2005 there were two different departments, one was under the Ministry of Interior and it was called Passport and ID Card Department. Another civil act registration department was under the Ministry of Justice. So reform had been started at the end of 2004 when these two big systems were united. Civil Registry Department was created in the Ministry of Justice. So from that time our main goal was to create customer-oriented system.*

What it means is that when a person is coming, each person should receive normal service from our system. Another issue was to create Civil Registry unified database in which we will have information about our citizens. Third was to combat corruption in the system. If you will see like exit polls before when reform was started, our system was one of the most corrupted systems in the country. So say all second Georgian were telling you, if you want to take ID card or passport you should pay illegal money. So it was one of the huge problems when we started the reform. But today, just one month ago there were census around like this exit poll around Georgia, around the country. There was only 1% of total population who said that there is corruption in the system. What is most important that this 1% were saying that we had not encountered this kind of examples but we heard that there is corruption. So there was not even 1% who could say that I have paid illegal money for something.

So it is one of the biggest results that we have. But when we started the reform the situation was that in country, what is Civil Registry doing today. Like what kind of documents we are issuing. We are issuing ID cards, passports, we are registering civil entities, birth, death, marriage, name change, divorce, adoption and so on. Plus, from 2009 we are also dealing with citizenship and migration issues. It is some kind, what is connected with the person, everything is united under Civil Registry Agency.

So today, what was the problem in the beginning of the reform that somehow 60-70% of the population did not have ID cards. They had only old Soviet Union passports. Of course, there was not information in the database about these people. So nobody knows who lives in the country. Second problem was that there was not like implemented new technologies in the system.

SCHALKWYK: This was around 2004?

VASHADZE: *In 2004, 2005. It was some kind of starting position. The budget of the Civil Registry was just 3 million Lari plus there was not any database in fact, there was database of passports only and in that database we had information of only about, as I mentioned 30% had ID cards and out of that 30% in database we had only 50% of them. So it means that in database we had only 15% of the population. So 50% out of total issued ID cards and it means that 15% of population. So it means that it was impossible to have any kind of statistical data even, who is living in country or in which cities more people are living.*

Then, also it was biggest problem for elections especially because there was a huge problem of voters' list because everything is created basically from Civil Registry database today and even in old time. What is very interesting, that working style was that when there were elections, everything was done with

hand. So somebody was doing the list with hand. Just imagine. So it was quite hard to deal with that issue.

Plus in the whole civil registry there were only ten computers, ten computers were in the system. Some also exit poll showed that 90% of, 90-95% of the people who were receiving services in Civil Registry, they did not like the service. It was the starting position.

So we divided our reform in two parts. Most important was that people should receive ID cards because otherwise the country could not manage, not only Civil Registry services but also, for example, pension fund or other like poverty projects. Because nobody could identify people. They had only old Soviet Union passports and quite often that passport was falsified. So it was not possible to know if it is really the person who should receive some help from the national government or not.

So in 2005 when we started this reform, quite interesting is that only in one year, in 2005 we had issued more than 900,000 ID cards in one year. Simultaneously we had started working on new software, new technologies and we have started to equip whole system, to have computers in the system. If we would compare today's position with ten computers, we have today more than 700 computers in the system. It means that almost each person who is working in the system has their own computer. Others they don't have because they are working in the archives so they don't need computers.

So if somebody needs a computer, everybody has his own computer. All these computers today are connected in online with a central server and all these computers are working in same software. So you know, what it has to, it gave us, is that our database now is online updated database. Today we have 99% correctness rate in our database, 99%. It is quite high number even if you compare with international like experience. So, plus we have qualified staff members. All exit polls are showing that people who are coming to our offices they are receiving good service and they are quite happy with that. They don't have any kind of problem. And 92, 95% of the population, they like services what they are receiving from our side.

What we have done for the people? Today we have one-stop shop. What is one-stop shop? You are coming to one office and you are receiving in one desk birth certificate for your child, ID card for you. You can get married. You can take passport and go abroad. You can change your name. You can get citizenship. If you are foreigner you can get even get like a residence permit, residence card. Everything is possible at one place; this is one-stop shop, what we are saying. Also we are saying that our system became like customer-oriented. Most important for us is that everybody who is coming to our agency, they should be, should receive high quality service.

From the other hand also important is that we are giving services today, online services to plenty of governmental structures. For example, if you want to take driving license, it is under the Ministry of Interior today. Or if you want to register your car you are bringing the ID card, like operator is typing your personal number and all of the details, including picture, is going from our database. We have scanned old pictures which we had in old archives. So now we have picture database as well.

Plus, we are providing this database to Central Election Commission and they are organizing voters' list. Last election shows that there were only 3%

discrepancies in the voters' list so it is also quite big achievement with what we have.

Our reform was from today's point of view we can divide in two parts. Until 2007, we were dealing with first main issue it was like combat corruption issuing ID cards, equip system to have new softwares. In 2007 we had started second stage of the reform and we created our strategic development plan, 2007-2011. It is quite important document for us. I will share this document with you. Why is this document important? Because we identified our mission statement and it is formation of customer-oriented, unified, secure and continuously updated Civil Registry.

We identified our incorporated values and also we identified main objective on which we were going to work until the end of 2011. It is a very important document for us because in this document you can see how we're going to achieve our goals in everyday—with everyday work in process. We have exact dates when we are thinking to achieve different—like, or implement different new things in our system.

SCHALKWYK: Who was involved in creating this document?

VASHADZE: *In this document creation was involved our top management and then also we have created focus groups from our territorial offices. So it means that almost everybody who is working inside of Civil Registry was involved in this document creation process. Plus, then, we brought this document and would present it to different like actors, like who are interested in our reform. For example, other governmental agencies who should receive that online information, Ministry of Justice of course, donor community. We have gone through this strategic development plan together with them. After that we have finished the working on strategic development plan in 2007 and now we have documented in which we identified our strengths, weaknesses, organizational values, mission statement, objectives, and also timeline plus we also, in this document, here, it is short version is printed here, plus we have full version on CD and also we have wallet version here.*

So in full version you can see not only strategic development plan but also criterias, how we are thinking to check whether we have achieved this objective or not. In each objective we have also timeline, working plans for each objective, for each goal exactly what we have and so on.

SCHALKWYK: Was there any public involvement or civil society involvement in the—?

VASHADZE: *Yes, NGOs, like donor community and also we have made presentation of this document and also in Georgia we are like giving to key citizens Georgian version of this strategic development plan and we are asking them also, it is available on our website and if somebody has comment, they can send us mail. Plus, what we are doing is that we have used these exit polls, like exit poll results. So we are doing that every year and we are focusing—what we are doing is we are fixing what the people want from us. What kind of new services they want. For example, this last interview showed us that people want in our office, to take pictures and not to go outside of office. Now we're buying the special boxes and we will put them in our office so they will be able to take pictures directly in the office. They will not be made to go outside of the office somewhere else.*

So it means that we all the time we're like oriented on new services and we're like providing these new services in order to make more comfortable our services to the citizen.

SCHALKWYK: I wonder if I could ask you some questions about issuing ID cards from 2005.

VASHADZE: Yes.

SCHALKWYK: The goal was to issue ID cards to as many citizens as possible.

VASHADZE: Yes.

SCHALKWYK: How did you go about verifying the information on the cards? I understand—as you said, many passports were forged or—?

VASHADZE: *Yes, we were working in our archives. We have special application forms from old Soviet Union and we were identifying each person through picture which was stamped on that application form. So it was quite hard for process but we were dealing with that. And we have found out many falsifications and also we were checking each person in birth act record. In the birth act, the birth act was created when this person was born. So it is like the beginning of all information, starting position about each person. So it gives you first information about the person. So we were identifying from that. Only, for example, in 2006 we have—in 2007 we have found out more than 6000 examples of falsified documents. Now they are under investigation, many of them are in prison, I don't know. It depends on the law enforcement agencies.*

Also, because of that, unfortunately, even in Soviet Union, it was quite often happening that somebody was changing the birth date especially. Why? Some of them were sportsmen and others were like wives who were lying to their husbands about age. Others were just famous actors and they wanted to change their birth date because they wanted to be younger in that case. So now our new initiative is that now it is under discussion in Parliament that we will give one year to each person who has falsified or incorrect date of birth. They can come, they can declare about that. They will not be punished for that, but after one year, there will be higher penalty for this kind of fraud. Why we're doing that? Because unfortunately today mentality in this case, mentality of the society is changed but in old time unfortunately mentality was different. So quite often it is happening that it is done because, from, for, I don't know, the parents changed in the birth certificate the date of birth. Why? Because they wanted their child to go to school earlier than it is according to the law. So there are many cases in which these people are not guilty. So that is why we wanted to help them and there will be one year amnesty in that case.

SCHALKWYK: What, presumably say for older people or for people living in the regions, there must have been some who didn't have records or—did you encounter situation like that. Then what did you do in that case where records didn't exist or were contradictory?

VASHADZE: *It was one of the highest destinations of our reform that in previous time, when you had not any kind of documents and there is not any kind of records in Civil Registry, you should go to the court and you should prove the birth fact, that you were born on some date, in some conditions, and your parents are somebody. So it was quite hard process. Also it was, there were like price for that. It cost somewhere around 50 Lari in previous time. So what we have done is that first we, we gave ID cards to each person who had at least birth certificate. When we*

finished, and how we were working, we organized like mobile groups. They were going to far villages. They were taking applications. Then they were coming back and they were issuing ID cards. So it was quite long-lasting process. It was not so easy. Our staff members were working days and nights, 24 hours a day. So it was very hard for them to do this sort of thing. But it was very important for the country.

What we have changed in the law, we took these competencies and it is now in the Civil Registry. So if you have not any kind of document you should come today just in the Civil Registry and for free, in one month, you will get all documents, what you need. But of course there should be people who prove like your birth and also there is a person who is a witness, not witness, a person who can confirm your position. So if this person will lie it will be a crime and it will be under a criminal investigation.

So today these people are coming to our offices. Also we have started a special project for these people together with our donor community, together with UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund), UNHCR (United Nations High Commission for Refugees) and all children who don't have birth certificate we have a special project for them. It is happening mostly in ethnic minorities, especially Azerian ethnic minorities. So we have free lawyers for them. They are coming in the village. They are looking for all documents. If there is some document at least from fathers, mothers, or I don't know, local authorities. Maybe there is some small record about the child. Then they are finally found, like looking for people who knew this fact that this person was born. Then they are creating—they are filling application form which is needed for our office. They are coming, bringing all this information to our office. Then we are proving this fact of the birth and we are giving birth certificate and after birth certificate ID card, passport, everything a person needs.

So it has, we started it like from court. It was, we took this somewhere one year ago and we already fixed more than 3000 of these kind of facts in country and we gave birth certificates and ID cards to the people. Also very important is that birth registration and the ID card issuing is free of charge. Plus to confirm your citizenship is also free of charge. These three services are free because we are saying that it is not only in the interest of the person, but in the interest of the country, of the government. So it should be free. In order to have full information about each person. But, for example, passport, marriage registration, others, everything has fees.

SCHALKWYK: All right. You have offices in the various regions?

VASHADZE: *In all regions.*

SCHALKWYK: Do they provide all the services?

VASHADZE: *All the services. Each office, all offices are providing the same kind of services, same style, and it was one of the problems also at the starting point. Why? Because if you were going in one city, like civil act registration office they were asking you I don't know, five documents. In another city they were asking ten documents. So it was quite hard for citizen to understand exactly which document should be brought in the office. But now we have unified process. Everywhere it is possible to receive all documents which we're issuing, which Civil Registry is issuing. So we have unified services. Also we are saying we have one document, each person should provide maximum one document to receive the document that person needs. So it is ID card or, I don't know, birth*

certificate again. But even if person will not have ID card it is not a problem because we have database, we have archives. So even if you are coming and you are saying "I have lost everything because there was a fire in my house and I don't have any kind of documents." No problem. We're giving you birth certificate, ID cards without providing any documents.

SCHALKWYK: You said that you have photos of everybody—

VASHADZE: Yes.

SCHALKWYK: That you've got all the documents. When you were going out into the rural areas, into the villages to provide ID cards, how did you do the photos there?

VASHADZE: *Quite often where we had our own photo apparatus and we are taking pictures for free.*

SCHALKWYK: And is that digital?

VASHADZE: *Yes. It is digital photo and we can print the photo. So we are doing that for free. But what is most important also, we are doing it now until there is even one person in some far village who doesn't have ID card. Today there are very few left. Others who don't have any kind of document, they don't have document, they didn't have documents even in old Soviet Union. It was quite a big surprise for us because everybody was saying that everything is under control and there were tens of thousands of people who did not have any kind of document in old Soviet Union. Just imagine. But now, most of them they have documents, they have ID cards, we are taking pictures for free. If it is needed, especially we are doing that in far villages, in high mountains were like people don't have money and possibility to take picture and to pay even two Lari for two pictures, we're doing that. Also for example we had special project for IDP (internally displaced persons). We have taken pictures for free for them. But in the future we think that everybody will pay fees.*

SCHALKWYK: So if you had no documents, would you just take people's—you would hear what family members said or you would just believe what they said?

VASHADZE: *No, no, of course there should be at least two persons who will confirm this sort of thing, at least two persons. But only people it is not enough as well. There is some, I don't know, brief information in old maybe papers which are in local authority's offices. So we are looking for all these kinds of documents.*

SCHALKWYK: You said you underwent a process to create a database as well. Can you tell me a little bit about that?

VASHADZE: *The database?*

SCHALKWYK: About the database. When did you start digitizing the records?

VASHADZE: *When we started the reform, first what we had done is we created special software and we have started digitalizing of archives. How we were doing that? We were entering each data of the person from the applications which we had in archives. So we were taking these archives and we were entering this information in the database. But of course in this process we had made plenty of mistakes. Then what we have done, second step, is that we took one more time this application and we checked this application, like we compared application*

and database. Then thirdly what we have done is we gave this data to CEC. They had door-to-door campaign and they fixed, if there were some mistakes in this list.

SCHALKWYK: Who is the CEC?

VASHADZE: *Central Election Commission.*

SCHALKWYK: Okay.

VASHADZE: *So they fixed where there were mistakes. Then what we have done is we, like most important for database is it should be online, updated database. When a person is coming today in any office of Civil Registry all the time you are typing personal number and you have all information on your monitor. So all the time when you are going to get a new passport, ID card, something else, we are checking your details. So it is correcting itself like this work in process. Plus we are sharing this database online with other governmental agencies.*

Of course if there is some mistake, none of them will give service to the person and they will say fix this problem, correct this mistake which is in your details and then we will give you service. It was like a work in process how we have been working with our database. Today it is almost impossible to make some kind of mistake. Why? Because everything is in database, you are not entering one more time names, surnames and so on. You are just typing personal number and all other details are coming from the database. The personal number is unique number. Each person in our database is like, is identified through personal number.

You can change plenty of times your name, surname, but your personal number will be, will not be changed. So it means that it will unify around you all information. Also we created, before 2007, like database was like ID card database, passport database, I don't know, civil—birth certificate database. Now we have created person's database, population database. What it means that we have person who has ID card, passport, birth certificate, marriage certificate, around the person. So you can see all these details. Plus we have the picture of the person.

In years future, we'll also introduce the face recognition system. It means that we will identify each person through the pictures. This boxes which will be, everybody will take picture in the future, it will guarantee the quality of the picture database and if the quality is on the high level of course, we will like, we will be able to identify each person and the person through picture. So it will be impossible in the future to have like, to lie our service. Nobody will—.

SCHALKWYK: And who developed the database? Was it developed by you?

VASHADZE: *By me we have IT team who had developed special software for that, but, of course, it was days and nights when we were sitting and working on this process because if you will not give good plan to IT team they will not be able to do it.*

SCHALKWYK: Can you tell me how the IT team worked with the people in the registry?

VASHADZE: *Yes, we have first of all I want to say we had quite huge support of donor community, especially USAID (United States Agency for International Development) for example, UN (United Nations) agencies, different, UNDP*

(United Nations Development Program), UNHCR, UNICEF, EU (European Union). We had quite big support from that.

In the beginning we didn't have any kind of budget, so it was impossible to pay high salary to IT people. All the time IT guys they are quite high, costly.

SCHALKWYK: When did you struggle to pay for them? What years was that?

VASHADZE: *From 2005 they were paid by donors. Now we have our budget and we can pay to them. Today, if we compare our budget in 2004 our budget was 3 million Lari, today our budget is 19 million Lari, so we are doing that. Also very important was how everything was working. We were making some kind of focus groups. We were brainstorming what we need in software, what kind of software we need.*

SCHALKWYK: Who was in the focus groups?

VASHADZE: *Our staff members, practitioners who were dealing with these issues in our offices, me, by myself, I was sitting there, heads of different departments. So all the time, what we were doing is that we have written down what kind of software we need. Then we have re-checked everything. Then when our guys created the software we were like testing this, everything. Then we were making some changes in software. So it was quite very, like I'll say very complex process, complex working process. What I think today is that Civil Registry today in country is one of the most IT developed organization. I think that one of the main reasons of our success is this implementation of all this IT new technologies like in the system. So we have quite a good IT team now, we have quite long lasted goals in that case. We are now reorganizing our data, software, everything will be service oriented. We have created central server, in several months we will have backup server so everything will be secure. It is quite a huge process and we think that we have quite big destination in that case.*

Also what we are doing today is that we are not doing only our job in IT cases but we are helping other governmental agencies. We are creating some small software for them. For example, our consulates abroad. We have created software for them and they are working online as well with our database. Plus, one of the biggest exams which were passed by Civil Registry was August War. Why? Because in August War as you know we had more than 130,000 IDPs from conflict zone. So they were in need of registration these people and the government told us, Civil Registry, it was not our responsibility, but they told us that no other agency is more developed in this new technology so you should deal with those issues. In twelve hours, our guys, together, everybody, we were sitting at the computers and we created new software which was used for IDP registration. It was like really, in ten days, somewhere, from seven to ten days, we had registered 131,000 IDPs, 131,000 IDPs.

So it was quite huge job but it was done by our agency. Why? Because we were ready for that. What is most important for each organization that you should be very mobile. If there is a need for something you should be very flexible and you should reorganize yourself in order to do some extra job. So we had somewhere 400 volunteers in this process, we involved them. It was very interesting process. We had like best all in our like running in the halls.

SCHALKWYK: In this building?

VASHADZE: *Yes, in this building. We have created mobile groups which left off, they were going to collective centers and they were registering IDPs there and others who*

were living in private sector, they were coming here. On the first day there were huge line here because in software which was created in twelve hours, then we were updating the software every two hours. So at least we needed five minutes to stop the work in process in order to update the software and then we were registering people again.

So what we have done, we put computers in the hall, there were some seventy desk created in this office and when volunteers were coming who wanted to help us, they were ongoing training process. So this volunteer was sitting together with operator. First they were looking like how this operator was working, then this operator was letting this person work and to register several IDPs. After that this person was ready to go and to deal with the registration process separate, independently. Also very important was that this software was using our database. So all personal details plus pictures were taken out of our database. There were some 100 persons who wanted to lie to us that they were IDPs. So through this photo database we identified them and we said that you are liar.

We found ten wanted people, people who were wanted from law enforcement agencies because automatically this software was scanning each person in like wanted list, people wanted list. So it was quite huge job.

Second step of that software was that we had, first we have registered the people. Then we have re-registered the people and we had created families. We have fixed information about family, about collective center, were there windows or what kind of problem, was there problem of electricity, water supply, gas? All this information we have, for example towels even, do they have towels, pillows and so on. So all this information was collected. Plus, then we created this humanitarian aid, like help management software and how we created it. There were warehouses in which, I don't know, 1000 kg of, liters of oil or something else. So each family could receive, each person could receive only 50 gm for example, yes? So software automatically were counting each family how many liters of oil should they receive and for ten days what was their quota. Plus it was working in online. There were several offices like that. If person wanted to take a second time, the same, like for his quota, the software was not letting the operator print the receipt any more. So it was impossible to lie. It was impossible to give this oil or something just to the person who said twice or three times. It was quite good because it was quite a big saving for the government in that working process.

SCHALKWYK: Who were the volunteers typically?

VASHADZE: *Mostly it was from other governmental agencies. We asked them to send us their staff members and they sent us and also usual people who just wanted to be involved in the process. We were checking them, we were like interviewing them. So it was some kind of, just imagine what kind of process we had in August. I was living in this building, like I had not left this building. For fourteen days I was in this building, I had not left this building. There were times when I lost my voice as well. So I called the doctor. It was really enormous working process. But how we were doing that.*

On the third floor we have our human resources department. When somebody was coming, we were registering this person as volunteer. Then we were interviewing a little bit and we were asking whether this person knows computer or not. If he does not know computer it was impossible to use this kind of resource. But if person had car we also needed people with cars in order to bring mobile groups to the collective centers. So we were training them, we were

giving them small direction. They were some kind of two pages in what was described all the working process and how to be organized, what time was. Also we had some meal for them, and what time they could receive meal, everything, all this information.

Then like a human resources staff member they were bringing this person to the operator who was working and these people were trained there and they were starting working. So it was a very nice process. Why? Because even these people they felt that there was war and they were doing quite a big job for the country. It was quite big motivation for them. Also everybody was working without any breaks and so on. So it was very interesting working process.

SCHALKWYK: When you sent the mobile teams out did they upload the information directly to the internet or did they bring it back to the center to upload it there?

VASHADZE: *The first time we have created software which was working offline. Then this data was brought here and everything was online updated, like integrated in our own database. But then we changed our working process and how we were working. We have created software which could work in online through mobile network and laptop. But then even we changed this process and today, even today we have mobile groups for IDPs and how they're working. They have just mobile phone. We have two operators, one is there and another one is sitting here at the computer. The person from there is telling personal number, some digits and everything is checked here in this database.*

Why we have created this kind of process? Because we are controlling that the mobile team member, they really went to the collective center and they really registered people there. They really were in each room of the collective center. So we have supervisor here who is checking all this process. So it is organized like that today.

SCHALKWYK: How did you manage to tackle the issue of corruption within the Civil Registry?

VASHADZE: *I think in that case, one of the most important was our system development and another important thing was human resources management because unfortunately there were people in this system who were not possible to change. They were getting 5000 US dollars per month or maybe 10,000 and it was impossible to change these people.*

SCHALKWYK: From corruption you mean.

VASHADZE: *Yes. So what we have done is we have made, in 2005 we have announced reorganization of the system. We have announced vacancies and all people who were working in the system or others, they could apply for that. They were testing, we have tested each person and then we interviewed each person. Then after interview we have made training for each staff member. There were, as I remember, five or six days training for each group. So each hired new staff members they went through training. Also we created new software.*

This software was giving us possibility to have all the information when the documents were issued because new services, one of the new services we provide, which we provided, one of the new services was accelerated service. So why people were paying extra money, why people were paying extra money? Because they were paying extra money because they wanted passport in one day. We have done, we have changed the law and we said today, person can pay officially that money if you want to get in one hour. Also we reduced the

document issuing maximum time, it was 30 days, today it is ten days, for example, for passport and ID card. Passport is 35 Lari and ID card is for free. Very interesting voice.

Also how is our software working? When you are receiving application, you should give priority when person wants to take passport, in ten days, in five days, in three days, in two days, in one day or the same day. So it means that software will not let you print passport until there will not be issuing date. So, but—if you will print earlier there should be receipt with the application in which receipt from, check from the bank office, that the person has paid extra money. So all the time when our head office is going inside of the office, we're checking where there is, everything is paid, we are checking database, we are checking application, so we have full information. So today it is impossible and also we have changed the mentality of the people.

We have raised their salaries. In old times the salary of usual staff member was 30 Lari.

SCHALKWYK: A month?

VASHADZE: *A month, just 20 dollars, 18 dollars, just imagine. Today minimum salary in our system is in Tbilisi 650 Lari, in regions somewhere 550 Lari. Plus they have also bonuses like every year or if there is some fests and so on. So it means that today we have changed the motivation. We have changed staff members. We have trained them. Plus we have created new technological controlling system of the corruption. And we have also you are telling yourself staff member that you should not take money, but another is that they should receive normal salary in order not to be made to take like illegal money. So we think that maybe it is not high salary, 600, 700 Lari, but it is normal salary to Georgian's conditions and at least person can live with this salary. In the future of course we want to raise this salary but of course it depends on new incomes. We are going to make new services, to introduce new services. For example for bank offices. Then we will have new income and maybe our salaries will become higher.*

SCHALKWYK: Have you had difficulty getting people, qualified people to work in the offices outside of Tbilisi?

VASHADZE: *Yes, of course. We had huge problem. We have problem even today in that case. Sometimes we want to change some staff member because we don't like their work, but it is quite hard to change them because they have not—there is not qualified resources in the regions. Today, maybe it is not directly connected with Civil Registry, but I want to say is that today quite often people are saying that there is huge unemployment in country. It is one of the biggest enemies of country, unemployment. But I think that one of the biggest enemies of unemployment is uneducated people. Because it is quite hard to find high qualified staff member. Quite often there are plenty of vacancies but it is impossible to find person who can fit all needs which you have in that vacancy.*

SCHALKWYK: Have you done anything to try and attract people say from Tbilisi to go and move to—?

VASHADZE: *Yes, yes, there for example, I can give you example of Marneuli. It was a place, a city where mostly Azerian population live. We have changed our team there three times. First two times we were hiring local people there. Again in six months we had same problem of corruption. Now what we have done is last, third time, what we have done is 80% of staff members there are from Tbilisi, from other regions.*

Why it is good, because they don't know each other. Like a person who is coming in the office, they don't know a staff member personally. So it is quite hard to have personal contacts in that case. Also we see today that when we are bringing a person from a different city to another city, we have much better position in that case. Not all the time. Like for example, in some cities we have local, mostly local servants, but many, many—and they are quite successful. Of course it depends on the people.

But if we have problem of qualified people in some regions, of course, we are asking what kind of human resources management system we created. It is also very important for organization development, like human resources management. Otherwise, it is impossible to have any kind of success if you will not manage this human resources thing correct way. What we are doing is that if person wants to start working in Civil Registry, first we have internship for six months. Then after internship we have exam. Everybody who will pass this exam they will be in reserve, in staff reserve. If there is vacancy we are asking them do you want to work in, I don't know, Marneuli, in Mtskheta, in other—maybe person was living in Tbilisi but we're asking them, do you want to go to Mtskheta for example. Many of them they agree with that. We are bringing this person in the region.

SCHALKWYK: What is in the exam? What does the exam test?

VASHADZE: *Exam test is law test, second is computer test. If you want to start internship in Civil Registry first you should pass exam. So first is law, in legal fields and also our organizational chart and so on. Second is like computer and third one is interview. Then you are starting. If you will pass all three of them you are starting internship in our system. After six months you have another exam, again.*

SCHALKWYK: Is the internship paid?

VASHADZE: *No. No. It is unpaid. Just we will have exceptional case for IDPs. They will have paid internship this year. But it is financed by UNHCR and UNICEF. Then what we are doing is they are again passing exam in law but now they have much more, not so much easy, more difficult test. They are passing this test and if they will pass test again they will have interview, they will be interviewed, and then if they pass the test and interview they will be in reserve.*

Then after that they should wait for vacancy. But it is happening that if there is vacancy in mid, while the person has internship, this person—we are interviewing this person and if he or she is ready we are like, they are starting work in our territorial office or head office. Also interesting and very important is that for example, in 2008 we had internship and internship has started 250 persons and only 80 of them passed final exam. Out of that 80, 60 is already working in our system. So it is our statistics.

Today we have more than 900 staff members. From time to time we are training them. We have for example now, special trainer in service providing and this trainer will go from region to region and to train each of our staff members.

SCHALKWYK: Is that trainer local?

VASHADZE: *Local.*

SCHALKWYK: Local trainer.

VASHADZE: *Tbilisi.*

SCHALKWYK: Funded by normal budget?

VASHADZE: *From our budget yes.*

SCHALKWYK: You mentioned bonuses, are bonuses based on performance of staff members?

VASHADZE: *Yes, how we are giving bonuses. If we have money, enough money for bonuses, we are looking for territorial office job, what have they done in the last month. Quite often, for example now, we have special project for our, like we have project of school pupils. We are registering all of them around the country. For example if a territorial office will finish earlier than it was scheduled by us, they will receive bonus for that. But unfortunately in the beginning of this year, we don't have enough money for bonuses, but at the end of year we will have much more money and we will give money to them.*

SCHALKWYK: In terms of promotions, how are promotions decided? Do you make the decision about people getting promoted?

VASHADZE: *Promotion?*

SCHALKWYK: People moving up to higher positions.

VASHADZE: *Yes, all the time when we, for example, if head of territorial office will move to another job, we are firstly looking in that territorial office if somebody is good enough to work as head of territorial office. For example also we have plenty of exam, all the time, like main positions, higher positions is occupied by people who have experience of working on lower levels. If you will take for example head of different departments, divisions, which are in the Civil Registry today, all of them are coming from territorial offices. Some of them, like me, were working as head of territorial office, some of them were working as, just usual staff member, we just like this person and we like gave them higher position. So it is most important. We are trying not to bring people outside of the agency in the higher position. Why? Because we think that if you don't know what is happening on lower level, it is quite hard for you to understand how these people feel in the territorial offices.*

SCHALKWYK: So to finish up the interview—.

VASHADZE: *We have statistics, we have three main departments in the central office. First is like passport and ID card, population registration department and head of this department was usual staff member in one of the territorial offices. Second is citizenship and migration department and head of that office was also working in the region as usual staff member. Third one is civil act registration department and head of this department was just usual staff member in the department in previous time.*

My deputy, one of the deputies was just head of one of the, head of accounting service and now is deputy and is working with all the economic issues. Another head, deputy head, was head of the territorial office and now is deputy head of the agency. So this gives motivation I think to other staff members. If you will be good and you are good enough, you will get higher position in the system.

SCHALKWYK: The last question I'd like to ask is if you were to go back now to 2005, what would you do differently in the reforms and what do you think worked very well?

VASHADZE: *It is quite hard to say what we would do differently because why do I think that our reform was successful? One of the main issues was that first we were planning everything and then we were implementing. So I think that it is quite hard to find anything to change in previous time.*

When we were starting this reform and we were speaking about our goals and we were saying that in three years or in two years we will achieve something, many internationals, locals, they were saying that it was impossible to do that kind of job in such a short period. But today we, everybody, like for example, for USAID, all the time, just several days ago there was some reception in US Ambassador's house and I said to one of the new embassy representatives that I was running the Civil Registry and he said that oh, it is one of the success stories in the country. But it is very good when we are hearing that.

Of course I think that maybe if we have the same experience that we have today maybe we will do something from the starting point in different way. For example, first we have started entering of the information centralized entering of the information, all data in the database. Then we equipped all territorial offices with computers and printers in order not type like filled with hand these old documents. I think that it would be much better, it could be much better if first to give this equipment and then to enter this information locally and not centrally. So there will be—of course, we have some experiences which could be changed for us, but not many of them, because for us, most important was that first we were planning and then we were implementing. First we were discussing.

Also, one of the successes is that even if local staff member has some idea to change some work in progress like Civil Registry, this local staff member can send information and can come to me directly and we will implement that and this person will get bonus for that if it will be good idea. So it is one of the main reasons why these people are motivated. That is why I am saying that our reform is not done by one person; our reform is done by the team. This team, on the top management is quite, may be small but when we're going to territorial offices it is becoming big and big. Maybe it is not team anymore, it is group of the people, but all of them are involved in the process and strategic development plan for us, why it is important that all of us, all these 900 people know what we are going to achieve in 2011 and in which way, in which direction we are going today. So that is why we think we are successful today.

SCHALKWYK: Thank you very much for your time.