

Legal, Environmental, and Social Aspects of the Namakhvani and Oni Hydro- Power Plants' Cascades: Discussion in Ambrolauri

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On September 26, EWMI ACCESS organized a meeting between Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and local communities in Ambrolauri, village Tsesi, to discuss the problems that concern residents of this region. CSOs from Tbilisi – *Green Alternative*, *Georgian Ecotourism Association*, and *Georgian Young Lawyers' Association* – made presentations on the following topics:

- 1) Issues related to the construction of the Namakhvani and Oni Hydro-Power Plants' Cascades and their impact on the environment and the local population.
- 2) Public awareness and engagement in the planning process of these projects.
- 3) Ecotourism development perspectives in the region.

Residents of the Ambrolauri, Oni and Tsageri municipalities, representatives of local government, and civic activists attended the meeting.

As of January 2019, EWMI ACCESS was supporting the civic engagement project in the Tsageri and Oni regions to address key problems and public concerns identified through face-to-face meetings with population of these regions. Within this project *Green Alternative* conducted an assessment of environmental, social, and legal aspects of the Oni and Namakhvani HPP Cascades projects. The study revealed that the procedure for issuing state environmental permits contradicted both the Georgian legislation and the obligations of the EU-Georgia Association Agreement. Representative of *Green Alternative* presented the findings of this study at the meeting and discussed the problems in detail.

Following the meetings in Racha, these findings were presented to various audiences in Tbilisi on September 30.







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