

Local Government Reforms in Armenia: How Relationships and Governance Shape Success

Abstract

This study explores the impact of local government reforms in Armenia, particularly focusing on the municipal amalgamation and decentralization processes implemented between 2014 and 2022. These reforms aimed to enhance the capacity, efficiency, and autonomy of local governments, with the overarching goal of improving service delivery, fostering local democracy, and increasing citizen participation. The research examines how these outcomes are shaped by two key intervening factors: politico-administrative relationships and multilevel governance (MLG) frameworks. Using a qualitative approach, the study incorporates in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with community members and local authorities from various Armenian municipalities.

The findings reveal that while there were notable improvements, the success of the reforms was uneven, especially in regions where politico-administrative tensions or weak MLG structures hindered the effective implementation of reforms. This study highlights the crucial role that strong politico-administrative relationships and well-functioning MLG frameworks play in ensuring the success of local governance reforms. The paper offers valuable insights for policymakers, particularly in post-Soviet states, aiming to implement similar reforms in their local governance systems.