



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
Mission to Georgia

Project: Information Support Project for Youth Voters 2004

Project Purpose/Objective(s)

Georgian voters between the ages of 18 and 30 are especially passive; on the other hand, it must be noted that, according to a survey conducted by the International Republican Institute, this age group is most easily influenced by special events in which celebrities are participating.

The promotion of electoral activity and awareness raising on electoral issues will be more effective if supported by well-known and popular people (successful public figures, sportsmen, actors, singers etc.). It must be explained to the voters that failing to participate in the elections will have immediate negative influence both on their private life and on national issues – i.e. a non-legitimate or a less legitimate government is unlikely to solve social problems, problems of territorial integrity etc.

Project Goals and Objectives are:

- Providing information support to the electorate
- Raising electoral activity for the upcoming presidential elections
- Awareness-raising on electoral issues
- Informal approach to the promotion of elections

Background:

Implementing Partners:

The International Republican Institute (IRI) was established in 1984 as a private, non profit organization dedicated to advancing democracy worldwide. IRI conducts a wide range of international programs to promote and strengthen democratic ideals and institutions. IRI programs are individually structured to meet the needs of the participants in the host country. These programs range from technical assistance in developing political parties and running election campaigns to civic education and training, legislative process training, constitutional reform, coalition building and communications training.

IRI is a non profit organization based in Washington, D.C. with more than 20 offices overseas. IRI has conducted programs in over 75 countries and is currently active in over 40 countries. IRI's programs are non partisan and adhere to the fundamental American principles of individual freedom, equal opportunity and the entrepreneurial spirit that fosters economic development. IRI is not part of the Republican Party.

IRI Georgia began in 1998. For the last 5 years, IRI has worked with all of the major Georgian political parties to enhance their competitiveness by assisting them with such issues as message development, message communication, research, fieldwork and building political networks. IRI works with the political parties through both private consultations and through a campaign academy system, in which IRI trains political party operatives in a seminar setting. IRI Georgia also conducts Get Out The Vote (GOTV) programs to raise public awareness concerning upcoming elections, especially among young voters. IRI has successfully completed three GOTV programs, which involve tactics such as radio and television Public Service Announcement's, posters and promotional concerts. IRI Georgia also helps facilitate free and fair elections by training partisan election observers and instructing them in how to protect their party's interests by combating fraud. In addition, IRI works with other international NGO's to form non partisan election observation missions to help ensure a fair election process. IRI is committed to empowering women and youth in particular and has conducted many successful programs to involve these two groups in the Georgian democratic process.

IRI is planning to engage National Council of Youth Organisations of Georgia (NCYOG) to implement activities under this project.

National Council of Youth Organizations of Georgia (NCYOG) was created in 1995. NCYOG is an acting structure, uniting nongovernmental youth organizations of Georgia. Its activities are aimed at the development of the nongovernmental youth move. NCYOG was founded with the purpose of creating favourable environment and conditions for development, cooperation and coordination of nongovernmental youth organizations, leading to increase of participation and social activity of young people. Working of NCYOG is based on the voluntaries; transparency and openness; cooperation on the basis of principles of democracy. The aims and objectives of the organization are: mobilization of the community for elections, voters' education, establishment of ideas of tolerance, democracy and pluralism in young people; support of the development of the nongovernmental youth move; protection and representation of interests of nongovernmental youth organizations in Georgia; establishment of the open civic society in the country.

NCYOG carried out several projects and activities dedicated to the elections. One of the most important from them was the youth action "Choose your Future" - dedicated to the Presidential Elections of 2000. Major goal of this action was to actively involve youth in elections and increase their understanding of the subject. In the framework of this action, meetings, where young people were provided with the necessary information on elections, were organized in different regions of Georgia. Ten concerts with participation of popular Georgian musicians and the most popular theatre "Teatraluri Sardapi" were delivered in different cities of the country.

NCYOG also was the partner of the project "GOTV" program "We are coming to elections" which was conducted by IRI Georgia.

NCYOG has the well organized and experienced network of the regional organizations that unites over 1,000 activists in the different parts of Georgia.

Project Background:

After major political chaos and upheaval, the people of Georgia will go to the polls in January 2004 to elect a new president. As the last parliamentary elections in Georgia painfully showed, the democratic election process in Georgia is far from being impartial and transparent. Indeed, this was the main cause of the “flower revolution” that swept President Shevardnadze out of office.

Georgia now has a unique opportunity for political and social renewal with the upcoming presidential elections. IRI and NCYOG look forward to continuing to assist Georgia with democratic development in the lead up to the presidential and parliamentary elections, which will be held quickly.

The conducting of civilized, democratic elections in Georgia is significantly hindered by an insufficient availability of information on and about elections. Lack of information is felt especially in the regions, the more so among the non-Georgian-speaking population. The society is not adequately informed on voter’s rights or on electoral legislation. Many voters get acquainted with their rights directly at the polling station, which makes it easy to cheat them. It is significant that many such cases have been reported during past elections.

An indifferent attitude towards elections and the lack of public awareness on electoral issues induces low electoral activity of the population and creates a high risk of undemocratic influence on the electorate from different political groups.

Approach:

The International Republican and National Council of Youth Organizations of Georgia will carry out the Project jointly in 29 rayons of Georgia.

IRI and NCYOG will organize meetings of Georgian celebrities with the population. Popular public persons (namely: actors of the Cellar Theatre, the “Modi-Nakhe” Theatre studio, and the Pa-Séance TV Show; writers, poets, sportsmen, as well as organizers of the project and lawyers) will attend the meetings. The duration of each meeting will be between 1.40 and 2 hours. Creating an informal atmosphere, public persons, program organizers and lawyers will discuss electoral procedures and other electoral issues with the population. The second part of each meeting will be a show performed by creative teams who support the project; the latter will aim at awareness raising on electoral issues as well as public entertainment. The meetings will take place in halls of regional culture centers.

Project activities will be held in the following sequence:

- Recruiting the work teams
- Meeting preparation
- Show rehearsal
- Booklet and poster production
- Booklet and poster dissemination
- Meetings in regions and universities

The timetable for the rayon events is as follows:

December 20, 2003

- Telavi
- Akhmeta
- Khvareli

December 21, 2003

- Gurjaani
- Sagaredo
- Dedoplis
- Lagodekhi

December 22, 2003

- Rustavi
- Bolnisi
- Marneuli
- Tetrtskaro
- Dmanisi

December 23, 2003

- Mtskheta
- Dusheti
- Gori
- Khashuri

December 24, 2003

- Borjomi
- Akhaltsikhe
- Akhalkhalakhi

December 25, 2003

- Zestafoni
- Tchiatura
- Khutaisi
- Terjola

December 26, 2003

- Tskaltubo
- Ambrolauri

December 27, 2003

- Lantchxuti
- Ozurgeti

December 28, 2003

- Foti
- Senaki

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Budget: 19,000 Euro