

Newsletter: Civic Education in Georgia

May 2015

International Foundation for Electoral Systems
IFES Georgia

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Introduction

For a healthy democracy to flourish, citizens must play an integral role. A democracy cannot meet its full potential absent of informed and active citizens. For Georgia, where long-standing traditions of civic may not be as entrenched as in other places, raising awareness of citizens, with a focus on their rights and responsibilities, and ensuring their participation in community and political life is vital. It is particularly important for citizens to understand that while voting is considered to be a central citizen responsibility, it is only one way that citizens can influence outcomes in democratic societies.

Civic Education in Georgia is an electronic newsletter that provides a platform for organizations and institutions active in the sphere of civic education to exchange information and collaborate.

If you have question, comments, or if you would like to be included in subsequent editions, please e-mail your contact information to info@ifes.ge with the subject: Civic Education in Georgia Newsletter.

Thank you!
-The IFES Georgia Team

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Netherlands Fellowships Programs (NFP)

The NFP promotes institutional capacity-building of Georgian organisations by providing fellowships for training and education for mid-career professionals through three sub-programmes for individual fellowships: short courses, Master's degree programmes and PhD studies. In addition, organisations can apply for tailor-made training courses.

Center for Development and Democracy (CDD) – Involving Religious Groups in Strengthening the Rule of Law in Georgia

In order to increase the awareness of the Association Agreement between the European Union and Georgia, CDD in partnership with education system of the Patriarchate of Georgia will conduct lectures and conferences for representatives of the Georgian Orthodox Church, including priests, students of spiritual seminaries as well as teachers and youth from around the country.

GDI/EMC/TDI – Freedom of Religion and Belief in Georgia

The Netherlands Embassy is funding a two-year project on Freedom of Religion and Belief by a coalition of three NGOs: the Georgian Democracy Initiative, the Human Rights Education and Monitoring Center, and

the Tolerance and Diversity Institute. The project contains a few civic education components. The activities that have taken place so far are:

- The School of Tolerance for 25 students from various Tbilisi universities who attended lectures about tolerance, human rights, protection of minorities, secularism and freedom of religion has been organized. The School with the same curriculum will be repeated three more times and for a larger number of students, as well.
- In cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Science and National Curriculum Department, school textbooks of Georgian literature, history and civic education are being revised. Experts will identify the problems concerning the contents of the textbooks, elaborate the agenda how to eradicate existing shortcomings and propose the recommendations to the Ministry of Education
- Discussions with youth from Kutaisi, Zugdidi, Ozurgeti and Batumi on Fighting Xenophobia and Discrimination in Georgian Politics and Media have been held.

IDENTOBA

In the framework of the project LGBT Advocacy through Information implemented by IDENTOBA with the funding of the Netherlands Embassy, five thematic certification programs on LGBT issues are conducted for professionals from the fields of psychology, social work, law, medicine and journalism; the programs are also designed to combat homophobia within the country. These 4-week programs, which are delivered by well-known Georgian experts, have attracted a high level of interest (e.g., 200 applications for 15 places at the School of Journalism).

Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy

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NIMD Democracy Schools

Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD) runs Democracy Schools on a permanent basis currently in four Georgian cities: Telavi, Gori, Kutaisi and Batumi. Democracy Schools offer five-months, intensive training on a number of topics around four essential modules: professional skills, democratic society, democratic government and leadership. Trainings are offered to competitively selected candidates from political parties, NGOs, students and media. Recruitment for the 2015 cohort of participants will run from April to June of 2015.

Democracy Schools operate as networking and activity hubs and engage a broad spectrum of local political and civic society in a set of events throughout the year. "Cities" is the main theme for Democracy Schools in 2015. Two joint seminars of the Schools with the biggest Georgian political parties will be held in March and May to debate urban development, transportation systems, environmental protection, street maintenance and



green spaces across the country. A Democracy Camp – a central component of the Democracy Schools annual convention – is to be held in June and will also focus on the problems and policy ideas for Georgian cities. Finally, the Schools program will undertake advocacy and lobbying campaigns to promote ideas for sustainable urban development and achieve practical commitments on the part of their respective local governments.

Democracy Schools offer an integrated development experience to emerging grassroots leaders to fulfill the vision of developing democratic leadership and promoting mutual accountability for achieving flourishing communities. NIMD employs its decade-long experience in the field of civic and political education to foster creation of a growing pool of active citizens with the capacity to be agents of democratic change.

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Students for liberty

Georgian Young Constitutionalists' Association (GYCA)
September 2014 – February 2015

A student-led organization, GYCA, is committed to providing a voice to university students by representing and presenting their interests to the administrative and policy-making bodies of higher education institutions and the Ministry of Education and Science. The project supports engagement of students in higher education reform nationwide, increasing student participation in decision-making processes and educating the public about reform-related processes. Since the beginning of the project, GYCA has conducted a series of meetings with students at the universities across Georgia. In December 2014, a publication titled “Different Models of Student Self-Governments” was released and distributed among students countrywide. By the end of the project, a draft law on student self-governments will be elaborated and presented to the Ministry of Education and Science for review and consideration.

Seminars on tolerance and diversity

Caucasus Institute for Peace, Democracy and Development (CIPDD)
October 2014- February 2015

Increased intolerance towards religious, ethnic and sexual minorities is especially alarming as it is widespread among Georgian youth. Tbilisi State Medical University has the highest number of non-Georgian and non-Christian students and according to the survey conducted



by CIPDD cases of discrimination are not rare. The project aims at promoting culture of tolerance and respect for diversity among the students of Tbilisi State Medical University through a series of seminars and workshops conducted by prominent civic activists, representatives of Georgia's Public Defender, religious leaders and well-known scholars.

Incorporation of multicultural education approaches in teacher education programs

Center for Civil Integration and Inter-ethnic Relations (CCIIR)
November 2014- June 2015

The study “Preparedness for multicultural instruction - teachers' education in Georgia” conducted by CCIIR in early 2014, evaluated effectiveness of teacher education programs with emphasis on multicultural education and managing diversity in the classroom. The study revealed that the academic programs did not encourage multicultural sensitivity in students; did not adequately promote respect for diversity, nor did it provide skills necessary for working in a diverse classroom environment; most of the programs lacked multicultural education course in the curriculum; a majority of lecturers and instructors revealed a lack of sensitivity towards differences; school practices did not take place in a diverse classroom environment; and in general, the environment at higher level educational institutions was not conducive to instilling culture of tolerance and multicultural sensitivity among students. The project aims to improve teacher education and professional development at Gori, Kutaisi and Batumi State Universities with particular emphasis on mainstreaming and promoting multiculturalism. The activities to be undertaken include the following: a) inclusion of multicultural education strategies in education program syllabi; b) development of multicultural education module including syllabi and textbooks; c) professional development of instructors through seminars and workshops; d) organizing events at HEIs aimed at enhancing respect for diversity.

International Center for Civic Culture



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Since 2010 the International Center for Civic Culture is running a web-portal ivote.ge, which contains different types of information about elections in Georgia on both, Georgian and English languages. The site was aimed at raising electoral culture and increasing awareness of voters. In total, web-portal contains more than 3200 different types of information. Also, in 2011 ICCC launched a web-portal lsg.ge, which contains information about local self-governments in Georgia.

Currently ICCC is implementing a project “Supporting Decentralization reform in Georgia” financed by the Open Society Georgia Foundation. Project aims at raising awareness on the process of the reform in different regions of Georgia, through regional media by issuing articles and preparing reports on the topic.



Civic Integration Foundation



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The mission of the Civic Integration Foundation is to integrate ethnic minorities of Georgian into Georgian society, which will strengthen the participation of minorities in the political and economic life of Georgia. The goal of the Civic Integration Foundation is to encourage increasing of civic awareness based on the liberal-democratic values and Implement various activities to respect cultural valuables and to establish tolerant environment in society.

CIF works in the field of civic education and during non-formal education activities participants are pupils and youth, as well adults, the basis of our curriculum is protection of basic human rights and participation in public life. CIF actively cooperates with various organizations. It is a member of the ethnic minority working groups within the Public Defender's Office and the Central Election Commission of



Georgia; the Foundation against of Nationalism, Racism, and Fascism; the European network to support migrants and refugees; the coalition for independent and transparent justice; and the council of public advisers on self-governance. CIF also works with the State Ministry of Georgia for Reconciliation and Civic Equality; the Ministry of Education and Science; the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs; and the Ministry of Culture and Monuments Protection of Georgia.

After registering, with the financial

support of international donor organizations, CIF has implemented various civic education projects, including:

- 2011-2015 – “Strengthening National Integration in Georgia”, which has been implementing with United Nations Association of Georgia (UNAG), with financial support of USAID
- 2014-2015 – “Active citizen: Development critical thinking to promote involvement of youth of the Kakheti region,” which is financed by the Embassy of United States of America.
- 2014-2016 – “Trust Building Program in South Caucasus,”

financed by UNAG

- 2013-2014 – “I am Protected Citizen” financed by Eurasia Partnership Foundation
- 2014 – “Informed Society for Fair elections” financed by USAID and International Foundation of Election Systems (IFES)
- 2013 – “Raising Awareness of voter before elections” financed by USAID and IFES.

With the financial support of USAID and East-West Management Institute, Eurasian Partnership Foundation implemented organizational development program for Civic Integration Foundation in 2014.



Centre for Electoral Systems Development, Reforms and Trainings



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The Centre for Electoral Systems Development, Reforms and Trainings (Centre) was established on December 28, 2009. The Centre has the status of a legal entity of public law and functions within the system of the Central Election Commission (CEC) of Georgia.

The Centre's major objectives are designed to encourage the development and promotion of electoral culture and an environment conducive to the holding of free, fair, transparent and participative elections. To achieve these goals, the Centre carries out education programs covering a number of essential topics, customized for the following target groups: the election administration and other stakeholders (representatives of political parties, non-governmental organizations, mass-media and other groups concerned); voters (general electorate, youth, students, ethnic minorities,

women, disabled people, and those who are incarcerated).

In regards to civic education, the Centre has been actively working in the election and non-election period in two ways to inform and educate voters.

Informing Voters focuses on providing society with information to explain voting procedures and types of elections. In this direction the Centre insures the preparation of various materials (Illustrated brochures; Educational films; Voter E-learning programs) and organizes the informative events (short-term programs for students of universities and general education institutions of Georgia, electoral debate-clubs, permanent information meetings within CEC and Center).

Educating Voters is oriented to increase the awareness of voters on the importance of the elections in the democracy, their fundamental rights



of electing own representatives and to motivate the active participation of citizens in the electoral process. In this regard Centre carries out the following activities:

Educating university students: Based on a memorandum with 19 Universities, the Centre has implemented a modern curriculum for the students of law faculty and faculty of journalism. The education program for students includes intensive theoretical and practical course of the electoral law (I semester), including simulation of electoral disputes, imitation of voting process. In addition, Centre has established Electoral Legal Clinic, which functions directly in the premises of CEC. The training course is delivered directly by the specialists of the Centre. The study in here is mainly focused on practical courses and includes internship in the Centre and other divisions of CEC of Georgia.

Educating youth living at orphanages and other foster institutions: The CEC and Centre has signed a memorandum of mutual cooperation with the Social Service Agency and Association "SOS Children's Villages Georgia". The parties agreed to promote civil awareness of democratic elections and importance of each voter in the process. According to the agreement, signatories will ensure the implementation of educational programs for the youth living at the orphanages and other foster institutions.

Grant competitions: The Centre provides the series of Grant Competitions encouraging the involvement of NGO sector in the process of promoting the voting culture and increasing the electorate activity in the elections. Grant projects include the target groups of voters in common, young voters, voters with disabilities, ethnic minorities and women.

PH International



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The Momavlis Taoba Program (MT), funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), is implemented in Georgia by PH International. MT is supported by the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia. The program is implemented in collaboration with the Center for Training and Consultancy, Civics Teachers Forum and 11 regional Georgian non-governmental organizations. The goal of MT is to promote greater civic engagement of young people; and enhance civil society's role in promoting transparent and accountable governance at the national and local levels by expanding and institutionalizing secondary school civics education curricula and practical applications. MT works with 480 schools across Georgia, which is 20% of all schools in the country.

Key Program Activities

PH International will deliver civics supplemental textbooks free of charge to all 480 MT partner schools including Armenian and Azerbaijani language schools. Beyond the supplemental textbooks civics teachers will receive additional toolboxes, containing instructions for teachers to guide them throughout the process of civics club and civics class projects implementation.

Training course will be offered to 480 civics teachers from across Georgia. Beyond this core 4-day training, civics teachers will receive additional trainings focused on the use of social media, supplementary textbooks and toolboxes. Regional Roundtables, Open Lessons, and Critical Friends' Groups will be organized for the professional development of civics teachers.

An annual National Fair-Conference of the Civics Teachers Forum will be held in 2015, 2016 and 2017 respectively. The best civics teachers of the year will



be awarded at the event. Partner NGOs are working in eleven regions of Georgia to facilitate implementation of activities by Civics Clubs that respond to community and school needs. Through the clubs, students are able to participate in internship programs, youth initiatives and civics competitions.

MT offers training to students on the use of social media, including social networking, blogging, and online video, as a means of citizen participation. MT social media trainings help students to build online communities of like-minded youth for offline community projects. MT announces blog competition and online quizzes via its Facebook page www.facebook.com/civicingitiatives to support the learning of civics among youth.

Summer civics leadership camps will host outstanding students and civics teachers. The camps will enable participants to share successes and challenges from their involvement in communities, as well as collaborate on joint projects. Intensive trainings will be held on topics including civic activism, volunteerism and democratic citizenship.

MT's mini-grants online portal www.initiatives.ge provides opportunities for students, teachers and school administration officials to apply for up to \$450 in support of applied learning initiatives that serve local communities. Through the implementation of mini-grants projects, students have opportunity for cooperation with local government officials, non-governmental organizations and private sector, for the benefit of their schools and communities.

www.civics.ge is a civic education web portal with resources for teachers, school administrations and students. The portal features daily news about civics and citizenship, and offers resources and networking opportunities to youth interested in playing an active role in their communities.



Civic Education Teachers' Forum



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Within the civil education support program “Momavlis Taoba’ (MT) implemented by PH International with support of USAID, Civic Education Teachers Forum’s (CTF) role is to ensure civic teachers professional association’s sustainable organizational development, deliver services to civic teachers to promote their professional growth and engage in policy dialogue process with state and non-state institutions.

Civic Education Teachers’ Forum offers range of additional services for teachers, promotes professional development and creates work exchange experience environment.



CTF’s main goals are:

- To support the professional development of teachers through trainings and preparation courses, seminars and other measures;
- To create experience exchange opportunities and promote cooperation among teachers through social media platforms, conferences and meetings;
- To initiate contests, master classes and other supporting measures to implement innovation and novelty in the field of civic education;
- To conduct relevant politic dialogue and advocate visions in order to develop civic education discipline; for that end to mobilize teachers and collaborate with various interested actors;
- To promote the significance of civic education in society and educational system, and take steps to increase civic education teacher’s prestige.

CTF’s ongoing and planned events include:

- Organizing 11 round tables in all regions of Georgia. Round tables are perfect tools for teachers who need broader understanding on certain topics which are part of civic education, such as local government, new legislature law of local elections, constitution, gender or specific methodology for example. Round tables are planned to be held in March 2015.
- Organizing 11 open lessons in 11 regions of Georgia. Those lessons will provide good field and communication tools to share professional experiences and best practices, which promotes to develop, and practice teaching techniques, methodology and teaching programs. Open lessons will be held in April-May 2015.
- Formation of critical friends’ groups in May-June 2015. Implementing and practicing critical friends’ group helps to create environment of trust among teachers and in classrooms, promotes to give and receive feedbacks most effectively and find solution of problem collectively.
- Publishing semiannual bulletin in June 2015, which will sum up CTF’s events and results.

International Foundation for Electoral Systems



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Democracy and Citizenship – Civic Education for Georgia’s University Students and Beyond

In 2010, through USAID’s Increased Trust in the Electoral Process project, IFES developed an innovative, fully-accredited university-level civic education course that introduces Georgian students to fundamental concepts of democratic citizenship, systems of government, civic participation and human rights; the course, "Demokratia do Mokalakeoba" (Democracy and Citizenship), is offered at over 22 universities. It incorporates theoretical material, interactive teaching methodology, and encourages students to identify and address problems within their own communities through civic action projects. More than 50 university-level educators have completed IFES trainings, and thousands of students have completed the course. IFES now works with the Civic Education Lecturers Association (CELA), a group it helped found, to continue improving course curriculum and refining IFES course material, engaging with university students, developing capacity of university-level educators, and ensuring quality of course implementation.

Parallel to this, IFES is connecting civically active Georgian youth with their peers in different countries through facilitated video conference calls; conducting public seminars at universities on civics themes ranging from gender equality to freedom of information; and is working to strengthen university student self-governments throughout the country. Four years after



"In Georgia, with our history, we have the feeling that we served government. Now, I realize how many rights I have and what I can do."

- Georgian university student enrolled in Democracy and Citizenship

the introduction of the course, the study of civics has been enshrined in most Georgian universities and colleges, with local educators leading the project and affirming its sustainability through the establishment of CELA, an officially-registered non-governmental organization with responsibility to oversee the continued growth of civics as a priority course of study for students in Georgia. Parallel to this, IFES continues to support Georgia’s vulnerable and disenfranchised groups by encouraging active citizenship and participation in electoral processes. Activities include civic and voter education initiatives that target ethnic minorities, internally displaced persons, persons with disabilities and students.

IFES conducts comprehensive course evaluations, incorporating pre- and post-tests focus group and individual interviews with course alumni. These tools provide an in-depth look at the alumni’s views of the course, their conceptions of citizenship and the actions they have taken since the course. The research findings support the conclusion that the intended goals of the course are being realized among alumni. These findings are indicative of promising long-term impacts of the course. The findings strongly indicate that course alumni: benefitted greatly from the practical experiences offered through class activities and the student action project; found knowledge associated with human rights and the role of government and the citizen in a democracy to be most meaningful; apply skills developed through course experiences to academic, professional and civic endeavors; experienced positive transformation in their perceptions and understandings of the rights and role of persons with disabilities and minorities; are inclined to be leaders and role models of civic virtues and engagement; possess a strong sense of efficacy toward their ability to affect change; and are committed to the realization of the principles of democracy for all citizens of Georgia.

As the global leader in democracy promotion, IFES advances good governance and democratic rights by providing technical assistance to election officials; empowering the underrepresented to participate in the political process; and applying field-based research to improve the electoral cycle. Since 1987, IFES has worked in over 135 countries, from developing democracies, to mature democracies.

Civic Education Lecturers Association



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The Civic Education Lecturers Association (CELA) represents over 50 experienced civic educators who are teaching an International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES)-developed university-level civic education course - Democracy and Citizenship, at over 22 universities throughout Georgia. CELA works to establish Georgia's tertiary educational institutions as hubs for civic innovation, scholarship, and action. CELA's mission is to grow and maintain a network of IFES-trained civic education lecturers and civics course alumni; further develop IFES' university-level Democracy and Citizenship course; strengthen civic competencies among students; and offer services and support in the field of civic education to interested parties in Georgia and the wider region.

Within its ongoing project supported by USAID through IFES, CELA provides professional development opportunities to university-level civic educators through trainings and academic conferences/journals; organizes civics-themed discussions and extra-curricular workshops, conferences, and trainings for university students to promote greater civic engagement; and ensures the quality and sustainability of civic education at

Georgia's tertiary institutions for years to come. CELA regularly provides information on and coordinates civics-related activities in Georgia, sharing course materials and expertise with members and other academicians, students, and the Ministry of Education. Parallel to this, CELA is also working with the Zurab Zhvania School of Public Administration (ZSPA). The latter partnered with CELA to promote civic competencies and awareness among public administrators who are studying at ZSPA. CELA is also supporting a student-led civics-themed electronic journal titled CIVICUS. CIVICUS is designed to: increase civic consciousness; inform citizens about basic principles of democracy, democratic values, human rights and responsibilities; and share success stories, challenges in civic education as well as best practices of encouraging citizen participation. The CIVICUS writing, graphic design and editing staff is comprised of university student volunteers.





Netherlands Institute for
Multiparty Democracy
South Caucasus Representation



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