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# WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP AS A ROUTE TO GREATER EMPOWERMENT

GEORGIA CASE STUDY

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## GEORGIA CASE STUDY



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## ACRONYMS

CDM	Christian Democratic Movement
CEC	Central Election Commission
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CEPPS	Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening
COE	Council of Europe
DCHA	Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance
DRG	Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance
EMC	Human Rights Education and Monitoring Center
EU	European Union
FWL	Future Women Leaders
GEC	Gender Equality Council
GEN	Gender Equality Network
GYLA	Georgian Young Lawyers Association
IFES	International Foundation for Electoral Systems
IRI	International Republican Institute
JNGE	Journalists Network for Gender Equality
MSI	Management Systems International (MSI)
NAP	National Action Plan
NIMD	Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy
NDI	National Democratic Institute
NGO	Nongovernmental organization
ODIHR	Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
TIP	Trafficking in Persons
ToT	Training of Trainers
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNM	United National Movement
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WDN	Women's Democracy Network
WIC	Women's Information Center
WiP	Women in Power (WiP)
WWW	Win with Women

# MAP OF GEORGIA



# I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This case study examines the impact of three activities funded by USAID/Georgia to further USAID's understanding of women's political leadership and empowerment, and to identify the main challenges and lessons learned from the activities. The International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and the International Republican Institute (IRI) implemented the activities between 2012 and 2014. During two weeks in July 2014, a three-person team conducted 36 meetings with staff at USAID/Georgia and the U.S. Embassy and individuals who participated in USAID-funded activities or could provide insight into the broader context in which these activities were implemented.

## Georgian Context

The legislative framework in Georgia holds up the principle of gender equality, but many men and women retain traditional views on gender roles. In ethnic minority areas in the country's south and southwest, traditional gender roles are more pronounced. Women play a more subordinate role to men in these areas and their movement, association with others and points of view are often curtailed. In 2013, Georgia ranked 86 out of 136 countries in the 2013 Global Gender Gap Index, which examines the gap between men and women in four categories: economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment.<sup>1</sup> While Georgia ranked high on indicators of economic participation and opportunity (64), it ranked low on educational attainment (89) and political empowerment (97), and very low on health and survival (126) due to the low sex ratio at birth.

Yet the majority does not perceive gender inequality to be a problem hindering the country's development. Rather, officials and citizens regard the concern about gender equality, and women's political participation in particular, as imposed by the international community. Indeed, advocacy from the international community, donor support for women's NGOs, and Georgia's interest in joining the EU have been instrumental in spurring government action to advance gender equality and women's political participation. Notable advances have included passage of the Law on Gender Equality in 2010, development of a two-year National Action Plan (NAP) for Implementation of Gender Equality Policy since 2010 and adoption of a voluntary quota for women's participation in political party lists in 2011. The international community and local NGOs are advocating for the adoption of mandatory gender quotas.

Within the government, the Gender Equality Council (GEC) in Parliament has taken the lead on gender issues and women's political empowerment and has pushed forward relevant legislation and NAPs on gender equality. While the executive branch had contributed to these national action plans under the previous United National Movement (UNM) government, the new coalition Georgian Dream government has pursued the task with more initiative and purpose.

There are more than 200 nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) focused on gender or women's issues.<sup>2</sup> Many took root in the immediate post-Soviet period with donor funding, and a much smaller number are active. Women's NGOs have worked with the GEC in developing national action plans

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<sup>1</sup> The political empowerment figure represents the percentage of women in parliament, percentage of women at ministerial level, and years of a female head of state. See the World Economic Forum website at: <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2013/#>

<sup>2</sup> "Georgia: Beijing +20 National Review of the Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action," May 2014.

and drafting legislation related to gender equality. Women's NGOs have tended not to work collaboratively and have not been able to advance a common platform.<sup>3</sup>

The dominance of men in Georgia's political parties has been an obstacle to women's political empowerment. The development of women's wings or women's chapter in political parties is an important avenue for weakening this dominance and many parties have now created them.

Obstacles to women's political empowerment include their relatively smaller financial resources and leisure time, a lack of affordable childcare and election-related violence. While the Georgian Orthodox Church supports more traditional views, globalization and cosmopolitanism promote a more egalitarian view of gender roles, more prevalent among the younger generation.

## **USAID Programming**

Through its elections and political transitions programming, USAID aimed to further two goals regarding women's political empowerment: to increase the demand for women candidates by political parties and voters and to improve the campaign skills of women candidates. USAID support has fostered women's political empowerment through its regular programming with IFES, NDI and IRI during the 2010–2014 period, but a \$735,000 gender add-on provided significantly more resources for this work over a three-month period leading up to the 2012 parliamentary election.

The IFES program aimed to increase the demand for women candidates by addressing traditional stereotypes associated with women in politics. IFES supported information campaigns as well as development of the Gender Equality Network (GEN), which is a coalition of 35 NGOs, and a Journalists Network for Gender Equality. IFES provided training on gender for members of the Supreme Council of Autonomous Republic of Adjara and advocated their creation of a Gender Equality Commission to match the one in the Parliament.

NDI's program sought to improve female candidates' campaign skills and enhance their visibility. Prior to the 2012 election, NDI consulted with seven female majoritarian candidates, held workshops for campaign staff of female majoritarian candidates and organized majoritarian candidate debates that included female candidates. In 2010, 2012 and 2013, NDI held a Win with Women conference to discuss efforts undertaken by political parties to strengthen women's political participation. In each year of the four-year grant, NDI conducted its annual Future Women Leaders (FWL) program for female parliamentary staffers.

IRI's program goals were to improve the campaign skills of female candidates and strengthen women's leadership in political parties. Prior to the 2012 parliamentary elections, IRI ran a five-day Georgia Women's Campaign Academy with 14 female majoritarian candidates and top party-list candidates from various parties, and a three-day Women's Campaign Communications School for 18 female majoritarian and party-list candidates from four parties. Following the elections, IRI arranged mentoring for female elected officials. In 2013, IRI conducted a Women's Political Skills Development series; in 2014, the institute held a conference of elected women and candidates in the local elections and hosted another Campaign Academy for 29 female candidates from six parties. Prior to the gender add-on, IRI conducted women's trainings for two parties; in late 2012, IRI conducted strategic planning workshops for the women's organizations of four political parties. In 2013, IRI helped UNM establish a women's wing.

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<sup>3</sup> Elisabeth Duban, *Gender Assessment USAID/Georgia*, DevTech Systems, Inc., 2010.

These activities have helped change the landscape of women’s political empowerment in Georgia. Two nationwide civil society networks now operate with some influence. The Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Adjara has established a Gender Equality Commission to adopt policies and action plans on gender equality. More women are in elected office and have a stronger voice in political parties. The combined efforts of activists in the civil society networks, donors and partners in the political parties and government have raised the prospects of pushing the mandatory quota proposal prior to the 2016 parliamentary election.

## Findings

- Given the low percentage of women in politics in Georgia, working on the electoral rules is necessary; addressing attitudes and training needs is not enough. Previous work on voluntary incentives and current interest in a mandatory quota are two ways of modifying rules.
- Strong international leadership, including U.S. diplomatic initiatives, is also important to advance women’s political empowerment in this context. Coordination of donor activities and convening conferences and roundtables also strengthen the platform for international advocacy.
- Developing a strong domestic constituency in support of electoral reforms is a necessary complement to the international community’s advocacy. Broadening the coalition to include more established human rights NGOs that have the respect of the Georgian government is another important contribution to the advocacy effort.
- Working with political parties on their candidate selection — not just supporting women candidates who were selected — is an important programming goal.
- Trainings are critical for candidates, elected officials and party staff.
- Given different attitudes toward gender roles across the population, tailoring media messages to different ages and ethnic groups was identified as a best practice. Coordinating media outreach with related programs in civic education and school curricula is another way to have greater impact on gender stereotypes.
- Efforts to influence the electoral reform process, the skills of women activists and gender stereotypes are not short-term efforts and USAID needs to sustain work across these areas rather than starting work on them just a few months before an election. Like election and political transition work more broadly, best practices in women’s political empowerment include consistent funding support and long-term strategic election planning.

## II. INTRODUCTION

The Women in Power (WiP) project is a learning activity supported by the Center of Excellence on Democracy, Human Rights and Governance (DRG) in USAID’s Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance (DCHA). Its goal is to further the agency’s understanding of women’s political leadership and empowerment, including the results of selected agency programs. In addition to mapping and assessing the agency’s programming in this area, the project is piloting a new measure of women’s leadership and political influence while providing recommendations for future programming and research.

This work is taking place in three phases spanning October 2013–December 2014: (1) documenting and examining a series of programs aimed at increasing women’s political leadership and empowerment, (2) performing qualitative case studies taking a deeper look at the objectives and



achievements of select programs in five countries analyzed in the desktop review and (3) testing a new measure of women's leadership and power across all formal government sectors (executive, judicial, security and legislative) with data from at least 20 countries, including those examined in the five case studies.

Managed by a four-member DCHA/DRG team, this project is being implemented in partnership with Management Systems International (MSI), whose team includes three leading academic specialists on women's political empowerment. Building on the findings from all three phases, DCHA/DRG will convene a group of other leading international donors in November 2014 to share experiences and consider creating a coordinated global learning agenda around increasing women's political leadership and empowerment.

During phase one, the desktop study examined almost 100 activities in 39 countries dating back to 2008. Three activities in Georgia implemented by IFES, NDI and IRI between 2012 and 2014 formed a relatively successful and innovative country case. This report maps these three activities and their impact to help USAID better understand how these results were achieved, as well as to identify the main challenges and lessons learned from the activity by USAID, implementers, local partners and beneficiaries.

The case study team in Georgia included Phyllis Dininio, a political scientist with Management Systems International; Nana Sumbadze, a Georgian specialist on gender issues; and Lauren Seyfried, a USAID staff member working in the DRG Center. Thirty-six meetings were held: four with staff at USAID/Georgia and the U.S. Embassy, and 32 with individuals who participated in USAID-funded activities or could provide insight into the broader context in which these activities were implemented. Interviewees included IFES, NDI and IRI staff; female members of Parliament; women's groups and other officials in the political parties; parliamentary staff; central election commission staff; an official from the prime minister's office; a deputy minister; a judge; civil society organizations; journalists; academics; and other donors.

The topics discussed during the interviews included:

- Results achieved by the activity, from the perspective of the donor, implementer, beneficiaries and other stakeholders;
- The USAID program's contributions to increasing women's descriptive representation and leadership opportunities;
- The meaning of women's political presence and access to real centers of power; and
- Whether there were missed opportunities or other types of interventions that USAID should consider in the area of women's political empowerment.

A second fieldwork objective was to collect data on the extent to which women have gained top leadership positions in government, beyond elected women legislators, for phase three of the larger study.

The report uses a question and answer format to explore these dynamics.

## III. CONTEXT: KEY ACTORS, INSTITUTIONS, STRUCTURES AND FRAMES

### Contextual Factors

What contextual factors influence women's political empowerment in Georgia?

As a post-Soviet state, Georgia has a mixed legacy of gender equality. The communist period held equality as a pillar of social relations and realized women's educational achievement, workforce participation and representation in public office. However, women often worked in lower-paying professions such as teaching, nursing and the arts and women's political representation was mostly of a token character and was not linked with real power. At home, women still had primary responsibility for domestic work and childcare, while men were responsible for supporting the family financially and women were expected to defer to their husbands. During the transition from communism, economic upheaval and conflict left thousands of men and women unemployed, but women were more flexible and willing to take jobs that did not match their educational training. Many women became breadwinners, challenging traditional gender roles. At the same time, the tumultuous move toward democracy spurred women's participation in street demonstrations and other forms of protest, but members of the political factions that formed to defend their interests and compete for power were primarily men.

Today, the legislative framework holds up the principle of gender equality, but many men and women retain traditional views on gender roles. A recent study of public perceptions on gender equality concludes: "Georgia is still a masculine, patriarchal country where men occupy a dominant position."<sup>4</sup> The study found that 72 percent (66 percent of women, 80 percent of men) believe that supporting the family financially is a man's duty and taking care of the house and family is a woman's duty, and 63 percent (56 percent of women, 72 percent of men) believe that a good wife obeys her husband even if she disagrees with him.

In ethnic minority areas in the country's south and southwest, traditional gender roles are more pronounced.<sup>5</sup> Women are more subordinate in these areas and their movement, association with others and points of view are often curtailed. In some communities, women are not allowed to work and teenage or forced marriages are common. Women's subordination to men is strongest among the Muslim Azeri population, followed by the Christian Armenian population in Georgia.

### Status of Women

In 2013, Georgia ranked 86 out of 136 countries in the 2013 Global Gender Gap Index. This index examines the gap between men and women in four categories: economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment.<sup>6</sup> While Georgia ranked high on indicators of economic participation and opportunity (64th), it ranked low on educational attainment (89th) and political empowerment (97th), and very low on health and

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<sup>4</sup> "Public Perceptions on Gender Equality in Politics and Business," UNDP Georgia, 2013, 4.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Nana Sumbadze's "Looking Back and Looking Forward at Gender Equality: Georgia Country Case Study for World Bank," Institute for Policy Studies 2011.

<sup>6</sup> The political empowerment figure represents the percentages of women in Parliament and at the ministerial level, and years of a female head of state. See the World Economic Forum website at: <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2013/#>.

survival (126th), due to the low sex ratio at birth. Women's representation in Parliament is just 11 percent,<sup>7</sup> lagging behind the 22 percent worldwide average,<sup>8</sup> although this shows an increase from 5 percent in 2008. The percentage of women in executive branch leadership positions is also low, but slightly higher: women ministers comprise 16 percent (three of 19). In the judicial branch, the percentage of women in the Grand Chamber is 21 percent (three of 14); in the Constitutional Court, it is 33 percent (three of nine).<sup>9</sup>

Attitudes partly explain the low rate of women's participation in politics. In a 2013 survey by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), more than half of respondents agreed that politics is more appropriate for men and men are better political leaders than women.<sup>10</sup> In another survey, 47 percent of respondents said they preferred a male candidate, all other things being equal, while only 4 percent preferred a female candidate and 48 percent had no preference.<sup>11</sup> The factors contributing to these attitudes include: the perception that women are weaker and not able to tolerate the pressure of a political job; the difficulty of women carrying out domestic obligations in addition to political work; and the dirty and rough aspect of politics. Yet half of interviewees agreed that the country would benefit from more women in politics.<sup>12</sup>

## Major Changes in Women's Political Empowerment

### Historic political influences

In its transition to statehood, Georgia embraced gender equality in its founding documents and international treaties. The 1995 Constitution of Georgia upholds the principle of equal rights for men and women and the country became a signatory of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1994 and joined the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 1995.

Most Georgians regard such measures as sufficient to support gender equality.<sup>13</sup> The majority do not perceive gender inequality to hinder the country's development, especially in comparison to pressing economic hardships. Rather, officials and citizens regard the concern about gender equality, and women's political participation in particular, as imposed by the international community.

Intensive advocacy from the international community, donor support for women's NGOs, and Georgia's interest in joining the European Union have spurred adoption of several measures to advance gender equality and women's political participation in recent years. In 2010, Parliament adopted the Law on Gender Equality, which includes provisions to improve women's security, political participation and equality in the labor market. It also gives the Gender Equality Council in Parliament a permanent mandate to monitor implementation of national action plans on gender equality. The next year, Parliament adopted a voluntary quota for women's participation in political

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<sup>7</sup> While women won 18 out of 150, or 12 percent, of the seats in the 2012 parliamentary election, two were appointed to the government (minister for foreign affairs and minister for justice) and had to relinquish their seats. One was replaced by a woman and the other by a man, so there are now 17 women in Parliament (11 percent).

<sup>8</sup> Inter-Parliamentary Union available at <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm>.

<sup>9</sup> Melanie Hughes, et al. Report on Diamond Model Data, USAID (forthcoming).

<sup>10</sup> "Public Perceptions on Gender Equality in Politics and Business," UNDP Georgia, 2013.

<sup>11</sup> IRI public opinion poll conducted March–April 2012, cited in Amendment of the Political Party Strengthening in Georgia, Parliamentary Elections Gender component, IRI, 2012.

<sup>12</sup> "Public Perceptions on Gender Equality in Politics and Business," UNDP Georgia, 2013.

<sup>13</sup> Interviews conducted for this case study, July 2014.

party lists. Only two political parties (Christian Democratic Movement (CDM) and New Rights) met the requirement of at least two women in every ten candidates on the party list in the 2012 parliamentary elections, but they did not win any seats in Parliament. Still, the percentage of women in Parliament increased from 5 percent in the 2008 election to 12 percent in the 2012 election.<sup>14</sup>

In 2013, Parliament increased the additional funding incentive from 10 percent to 30 percent for including at least three women in every ten candidates on the party list. The voluntary incentive for placing women on party lists has had some effect in the 2014 local elections. Compared to the 2010 local elections, the percentage of female majoritarian candidates increased from 11 percent to 15 percent and female party list candidates increased from 20 percent to 30 percent. The resulting percentage of women elected to local councils showed a less impressive gain, but still increased from 10 percent to 12 percent, although the percentage in ethnic minority regions in 2014 was under 7 percent. All major parties took advantage of the incentive except the Georgian Dream coalition,<sup>15</sup> which said it was too difficult to engineer in addition to its formula for allocating seats among six constituent parties. Given the small impact that voluntary incentives had on women's participation in the 2012 and 2014 elections, women's NGOs, donors and women activists in political parties intend to push for mandatory quotas prior to the 2016 parliamentary elections.

The government has elaborated a two-year National Action Plan (NAP) for Implementation of Gender Equality Policy since 2010. While the first two NAPs were more declarative, the plan for 2014–2016 is more prescriptive, laying out the goal, objectives, activities, indicators, responsible actors, time period and sources of funding for each of eight areas (further description will follow).

### Political empowerment and other issues

Women's political empowerment is one of several issues related to gender equality in Georgia. Many see domestic violence and trafficking in persons (TIP) as the most pressing concerns for women, and the Gender Equality Council proposed legislation to tackle these issues: the Law of Georgia on Prevention of Domestic Violence, Protection and Assistance of Victims of Domestic Violence and the Law on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings. After their passage in 2006, the government developed corresponding national action plans and the State Fund for Protection and Assistance of Victims of Human Trafficking, which in 2009 expanded its mandate to assist domestic violence victims. In response to more than a dozen murders of women by their husbands, former husbands or partners since the beginning of 2014, a number of NGOs have suggested a link between women's political participation and domestic violence. In June 2014, they urged Parliament to support gender quotas and exercise zero tolerance of violence against women.<sup>16</sup> The government has also endorsed the U.N. Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security for increasing women's role in peacebuilding and conflict transformation, and has developed a national action plan to implement the resolution. Women's economic equality, women's health and social protection and childcare services are other issues that the government, donors and women's NGOs are addressing as part of gender equality. Some note a direct link between women's political and economic empowerment, given that it is difficult for women to run for office without financial resources.

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<sup>14</sup> Inter-Parliamentary Union available at <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm>.

<sup>15</sup> The Georgian Dream coalition includes the following six parties: Georgian Dream, Republican Party, Free Democrats, Conservative Party, Industrials and National Forum.

<sup>16</sup> [http://www.ginsc.net/home.php?option=article&id=29625&lang=ge#.U\\_Xl1fmSygY](http://www.ginsc.net/home.php?option=article&id=29625&lang=ge#.U_Xl1fmSygY)

## Influences on Women's Political Empowerment

### Main drivers of change

The international community and women's NGOs have been the main drivers of change in women's political empowerment. With a broad gender mandate, a gender thematic group chaired by UN Women convenes quarterly meetings of mostly donors and international organizations to share information and coordinate activities. At an October 2012 retreat, the group agreed to advocate jointly for the establishment of the Gender Equality Interagency Commission under the prime minister's office, as well as institutional strengthening of the Gender Equality Council already established in Parliament.

With a more specific mandate on women's political empowerment, NDI chairs a task force on women's participation that brings together local and international NGOs, donors, representatives of selected state agencies and political parties to help generate shared positions. The task force meets as often as once or twice a week prior to an election. Established in February 2014 with funding from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), the task force is now the primary forum for joint advocacy and strategizing for improved political participation by women in Georgia. With 2016 parliamentary elections upcoming, the task force is advocating for the adoption of mandatory quotas.

In addition, the prime minister, U.N. resident coordinator, EU representative, U.S. ambassador and Swedish ambassador have begun meeting annually to discuss key policy issues. At the first retreat in December 2012, the foreign leaders advocated establishment of a gender adviser in the executive branch, and the prime minister agreed to it.

While the international community has advocated for voluntary gender quotas in political parties in the past, many advocate for mandatory gender quotas prior to the 2016 parliamentary elections. NDI's Task Force on Women's Participation has recently agreed to support them, and Georgia's CEDAW review committee in July 2014 recommended adopting mandatory gender quotas and increasing the staff to support the Gender Equality Council.

More than 200 NGOs focus on gender or women's issues.<sup>17</sup> Many took root in the immediate post-Soviet period with donor funding; and a much smaller number are now active. Women's NGOs have worked with the Gender Equality Council to develop national action plans and draft legislation related to gender equality. In 2006, women's NGOs collected 30,000 signatures in favor of mandatory quotas, but the proposition was not even discussed in Parliament, as it had no political support at that time. While many in the last decade have joined coalitions and networks such as the coalition For Women's Political Engagement, the Unity of Women for Peace and the Anti-Violence Network of Georgia, women's NGOs have tended not to work collaboratively and have not been able to advance a common platform.<sup>18</sup> NGOs focused on women's political empowerment are starting to work more with established NGOs that have the respect of government, namely the Georgian Young Lawyers Association, Transparency International – Georgia and the International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy. Beyond these, a number of NGOs that do not specifically focus on gender or women's issues do recognize the issue of gender equality in their work, such as Article 42, Public Movement Multinational Georgia and Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies.

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<sup>17</sup> "Georgia: Beijing +20 National Review of the Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action," May 2014.

<sup>18</sup> Elisabeth Duban, *Gender Assessment USAID/Georgia*, DevTech Systems Inc., 2010.

In the government, the 12-member Gender Equality Council (GEC) in Parliament has been the lead actor on women's political empowerment. The GEC has led adoption of gender-themed legislation such as the Gender Equality Law, directed the development of the national action plans on gender equality and worked on the issue of incentives and possible quotas.<sup>19</sup> In the executive branch in early 2013, the prime minister established the position of adviser on human rights and gender equality issues, although the office has focused principally on human rights issues. In 2013, the government also appointed gender advisers in some ministries and in 49 local governments, although the latter have not been effective mostly because their gender advisory roles were added to their existing responsibilities. Moreover, local government staffs now face downsizing and re-competition for positions scheduled after the local elections of June 2014, so these appointments are in a state of flux.

In summer 2014, the prime minister's office was establishing a Human Rights Council in the executive branch composed of deputy ministers and was hiring staff for a secretariat to the council. The council will include six working groups, one of which will focus on gender equality. NGOs working on gender and human rights issues will be non-voting members of this council, and NGOs working on gender issues elected the Women's Information Center (WIC), a USAID-funded NGO, as their representative in the council. Prior to the council's establishment, the government adopted a human rights strategy in early 2014 and included gender action plans in the strategy.<sup>20</sup> The government has also just established a Gender Equality Interagency Commission at the level of deputy ministers under the prime minister.

### Main institutional influences and obstacles

As noted, the GEC in Parliament has taken the lead on gender issues and women's political empowerment and has pushed forward relevant legislation and NAPs on gender equality. While the executive branch had contributed to these national action plans under the previous UNM government, the new coalition Georgian Dream government has pursued the task with more initiative and purpose. Interviewees noted that new appointees across the executive branch are more cooperative and open to the suggestions of women's NGOs and donors. The Ministry of Justice, for example, was involved in development of the current gender equality NAP for the first time. In response to a June 2014 statement by NGOs on cases of domestic violence, the Ministry of Internal Affairs met with NGOs working on women's issues and promised to create a working group that would meet on a regular basis to monitor and respond to cases of domestic violence.

Men's dominance of Georgia's political parties has been an obstacle to women's political empowerment. A paper by Tamar Bagratia and Medea Badashvili notes, "Because of the dominance of men in political parties in Georgia, they have managed to establish formal and informal rules within the parties. These rules serve as an obstacle to women's promotion in their political careers."<sup>21</sup> Rules include nontransparent criteria for promotion within parties and centralized systems for nominating candidates and forming party lists. The development of women's wings or women's chapters in political parties can weaken this dominance, and many parties have created them.

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<sup>19</sup> Currently, seven of the 12 GEC members support mandatory quotas.

<sup>20</sup> <http://yourhumanrights.ge/about-us/national-human-rights-strategy-of-georgia>

<sup>21</sup> Tamar Bagratia and Medea Badashvili, "Developing Intra-party Democracy from a Gender Perspective," in *Intra-party Democracy and Local Governance*, Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy, 2012.

## Main structural obstacles

A number of structural obstacles explain the low rate of women's participation in politics. One is women's more limited financial resources, as political parties prefer candidates such as businessmen, who can bring additional money to a campaign. Women earn 40 percent of what men earn, placing Georgia 118th out of 136 countries on that front.<sup>22</sup> Women tend to work in lower-paying sectors and in lower positions than men.

Another obstacle is women's limited leisure time, as they tend to have less time to socialize and become involved in politics because they have more obligations in the home than men do. This is especially true in rural areas, where women carry out more time-intensive and isolating work on their farms. By contrast, men have more time to discuss social issues and form connections, which become the informal networks through which men dominate political parties and government offices.<sup>23</sup>

For women who have children, another barrier to political participation is the lack of affordable childcare. After independence, the number of state-funded kindergartens decreased dramatically. The private kindergartens that have emerged in their place do not provide the same level of coverage and are expensive, leaving many families without childcare. Moreover, kindergartens are concentrated in urban areas; few facilities operate in rural areas.

Intimidation and violence were pervasive in past elections, another way women are inhibited from participating in politics. Several women politicians noted that the previous government's use of such tactics to undercut the opposition deterred women from entering politics; they expressed hope that political competition would assume a more structured and less violent aspect under the current coalition government, which would likely encourage more women's participation.

Education does not present an obstacle to women's political empowerment in Georgia. Boys and girls have equal access to education, and girls perform as well as, if not better than, their male counterparts. The enrollment ratio of females to males is .98 in primary education, .95 in secondary education and 1.20 in tertiary education.<sup>24</sup> In the general population, a majority of respondents (72 percent) do not agree with the statement that "university education is more important for a boy than for a girl," although a minority of respondents (26 percent) do agree with that.<sup>25</sup> The main exception to this characterization is among ethnic minority communities, where "parents may place less emphasis on the education of girls and in cases of early marriage, girls could leave school as early as age 13 or 14."<sup>26</sup>

## Main ideological and cultural influences

The Georgian Orthodox Church represents an important influence in the culture that undermines women's political empowerment. Membership in the church has grown in the post-communist period. A 2011 household survey found that 92 percent of respondents belonged to the Georgian Orthodox Church and 94 percent said religion is very important or important for them.<sup>27</sup> The

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<sup>22</sup> <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2013/#>

<sup>23</sup> Interviews conducted for this case study, July 2014.

<sup>24</sup> <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2013/#>

<sup>25</sup> [http://www.ge.undp.org/content/dam/georgia/docs/publications/GE\\_UNDP\\_Gender\\_%20Research\\_ENG.pdf](http://www.ge.undp.org/content/dam/georgia/docs/publications/GE_UNDP_Gender_%20Research_ENG.pdf)

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>27</sup> Nana Sumbadze, "Looking Back and Looking Forward at Gender Equality: Georgia Country Case Study for World Bank," Technical Report on Survey Methodology, 2011, 12.

Georgian Orthodox Church supports more traditional views: men are leaders of the church and women must cover their heads in the church, which is considered a symbol of being under male authority. Contraception is discouraged.

On the other hand, globalization and cosmopolitanism are supporting a more egalitarian view of gender roles. Attitudes toward gender roles are more egalitarian in major urban centers and among the younger generation. For example, 70 percent of young adults disagreed with the statement “it is better for everyone when men work and women look after the family,” whereas only 58 percent of older adults did.<sup>28</sup>

Proponents of women’s political empowerment frame gender equality as part of human rights. Indeed, gender equality was defined by the State Concept on Gender Equality in Georgia as “an integral part of human rights [referring] to an equal presentation, rights, responsibility and participation of women and men in all spheres of private and public life.”<sup>29</sup> Some advocates of women’s political empowerment express concern that framing gender equality this way does not address women’s economic empowerment.

## IV. USAID PROGRAM RESULTS ASSESSMENT

Through its elections and political transitions programming, USAID aimed to further two goals regarding women’s political empowerment: increase the demand for women candidates by political parties and voters, and improve the campaign skills of women candidates.

### Activities and Partners Supported

USAID support for elections and political transitions in Georgia has fostered women’s political empowerment through its regular programming with the Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening (CEPPS) from 2010–2014 period, but a \$735,000 gender add-on provided significantly more resources for this work during three months before the 2012 parliamentary election. The three CEPPS partners divided the additional funds equally. Since that election, all three have continued aspects of the women’s political empowerment programming using their regular funding.

The IFES program aimed to increase the demand for women candidates by addressing traditional stereotypes associated with women in politics. IFES supported public service announcements, talk shows, television and radio programs, newspaper articles, newspaper inserts, leaflets, public lectures, conferences and roundtables in the regions. Through training, strategy coaching and funding, it also supported development of a Gender Equality Network (GEN), a coalition of 35 NGOs with representation in 10 regions and a Journalists Network for Gender Equality. Prior to the 2014 local elections, IFES provided leadership training to GEN activists, met with political parties to promote GEN activists as potential candidates, and encouraged GEN’s lobbying of political parties to comply with the gender incentives.

In addition, IFES provided training on gender for members of the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Adjara and advocated for the creation of a Gender Equality Commission

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> Parliament of Georgia, The State Concept on Gender Equality, 2006, 2. Available at <http://www.parliament.ge/files/gender/Conc.pdf>.



to match the one in the national Parliament. IFES also provided several subgrants to increase the awareness of women's rights and the electoral process among ethnic minority women.

NDI's program aimed to improve the campaign skills and enhance the visibility of female candidates. Prior to the 2012 election, NDI conducted a series of consultations with seven female majoritarian candidates.<sup>30</sup> The institute conducted each consultation with the candidate and one or two key campaign staff members. NDI guided the candidates and their staff through the results of NDI's June 2012 survey (funded by SIDA), which provided customized data for each candidate's majoritarian district. Based on the polling research, NDI helped the candidates identify the primary concerns of the voters in their districts and craft messages aimed at addressing those concerns. NDI also conducted a series of single-party workshops for campaign staff of female majoritarian candidates from the Christian Democratic Movement (CDM) and Georgian Dream focused on messaging, campaign materials, volunteer recruitment, voter outreach and election-day activities. NDI also organized majoritarian candidate debates that included female candidates, which aired on regional television stations.

In each year of the four-year grant, NDI conducted its annual Future Women Leaders (FWL) program, which it launched in 2003. The 10-month training program strengthens the skills of 20 to 25 female parliamentary staffers each year in areas such as team building, organizational management, election organizing, strategic planning, communications and effective public speaking, training of trainers (ToT), project management, conflict management and leadership skills.

Using both USAID and SIDA funding, NDI in 2010 organized a conference on women's political participation that drew representatives of 11 Georgian political parties to sign NDI's "Win with Women" (WWW) global action plan (GAP), which publicly committed them to address barriers to women's full political participation in the parties. Following the initial conference, NDI held two events in 2012 and 2013, where the political parties publicly reported on their progress in fulfilling their obligations. NDI continues to work closely with the parties to further build the capacity of their women's wings and assist them in meeting the obligations they undertook under the WWW pledge.

IRI's program aimed to improve the campaign skills of female candidates and strengthen women's leadership in political parties. Prior to the 2012 parliamentary elections, IRI ran a five-day Georgia Women's Campaign Academy with 14 female majoritarian candidates and top party-list candidates from various parties. Topics included campaign management, fundraising, messaging, media relations, public speaking and general constituent outreach. The following month, IRI hosted a three-day Women's Campaign Communications School for 18 female majoritarian and party-list candidates from four parties, giving them an intensive training on campaign messaging, speech and debate rhetoric and media relations. Following the elections, IRI matched graduates of the Campaign Academy with female elected officials from Ukraine, Lithuania and Macedonia to provide mentoring over several months in setting career goals and achieving higher standing in political life. In 2014, IRI hosted another Campaign Academy for 29 female candidates from six parties.

In 2013, IRI conducted a Women's Political Skills Development series, which included five trainings for each of seven political parties. Focused on speech and debate, fundraising and training of trainers, the trainings groomed female candidates for local elections the following year. IRI also held a conference of elected women and candidates leading up to the local elections.

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<sup>30</sup> The seven candidates were nominated by four major parties: CDM (2), UNM (1), New Rights (1) and Georgian Dream (3).

Prior to the gender add-on, IRI had conducted women's trainings for the National Council and Christian Democratic Party. Participants at the National Council training decided to work toward establishment of a National Council women's organization. In late 2012, IRI conducted strategic planning workshops for the women's organizations of four political parties: New Rights, Christian Democratic Party, National Democratic Party and Women's Party for Justice and Equality. In 2013, IRI helped UNM establish a women's wing.

In addition to the CEPPS gender programming, USAID made three awards in 2013 to local NGOs through an Annual Program Statement for Advancing Women and Girls' Political and Economic Empowerment in Georgia. Among these, USAID has funded the Women's Information Center (WIC), which is advocating for temporary quotas for women's representation and training women activists. Prior to the 2014 elections, WIC provided training to women's initiative groups and independent candidates on gender stereotypes, equality and mainstreaming, existing legislation and international commitments, public relations strategy and campaign management. WIC also conducted media monitoring before the election, examining the air time allocated to women, the context of their inclusion and gender terminology used in TV programs. The two other direct grants to local organizations focus on increasing economic opportunities for women and analyzing the legal framework to avoid workforce discrimination.

## **Action by Other Donors**

SIDA has also supported women's political empowerment in Georgia. With SIDA funding, NDI has provided consultations on the establishment of women's wings and the participation of women on the governing bodies of major parties, conducted women's wings trainings for the United National Movement (UNM), CDM, Georgian Dream and New Rights parties, provided individual and group capacity building for women candidates and elected officials and identified women community leaders in two minority regions and provided training for them over several months. SIDA has also provided NDI with funding to conduct gender-focused public opinion research, including national polling and focus groups, to help inform stakeholders about citizens' perceptions on women's political participation.

In addition, SIDA has provided funding to UNDP to train elected female local councilmembers around the country. In the first year, 95 women participated.

The Council of Europe (COE) gave a grant to the Human Rights Education and Monitoring Center (EMC) to provide training on campaigning to women candidates from all parties for the 2012 elections. COE will begin training elected women and is producing a documentary on female political leaders.

The Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD) has conducted trainings on campaigning and intra-party democracy from a gender perspective and published a number of reports on gender issues. In 2011, 2013 and 2014, NIMD, IFES and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE-ODIHR) organized a roundtable on women's political participation in Georgia.

Oxfam has supported WIC and the Central Election Commission (CEC) under its project, "Sustaining gender justice through enhancing women's political engagement." With this funding, WIC developed television and radio programs discussing the importance of women's political participation. Under this project, the CEC also developed a day-long training module for women

candidates on procedural issues, targeting women who were nominated by initiatives groups and not political parties.

OSCE-ODHIR has also been active during this period and recently conducted an evaluation of women's wings in the major political parties in collaboration with NDI. OSCE-ODHIR is using the assessments as the basis to provide further technical support to each party to further strengthen the wings.

The Georgia Chapter of the Women's Democracy Network (WDN) brought together 25 female political party activists to study leadership, conflict management and strategic planning in 2012. The WDN is an IRI initiative to develop a global network of women political activists and increase their political participation.

## Key Accomplishments

### Summary of results

USAID programs in Georgia achieved a number of results related to women's political empowerment. IFES helped establish two NGO networks that are regarded as effective in this work: the Gender Equality Network (GEN) and the Journalists Network for Gender Equality (JNGE). IFES helped them register, coached them in the development of strategic plans, provided training and funded some of their activities.

GEN grew to encompass 45 NGOs and 800–900 activists, making considerable headway with little funding because women were so inspired by its mission. In the 2013 presidential and 2014 local elections, these local NGOs met with leading candidates or their representatives. During these public meetings, candidates explained to local NGOs and the public how they planned to address the challenge of women's political and economic participation after they were elected. This provided a constant reminder to political parties of the importance of gender issues and increased the discourse in society about these issues in the last two years. In June 2014, GEN, WIC and two other NGOs made a joint statement to government institutions in response to increased cases of domestic violence.<sup>31</sup> They demanded support for quotas, ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) and zero tolerance toward violence against women. Subsequently, 29 other NGOs added their names to the statement. This was first time local NGOs got together and demanded change from the government on these issues. In response, the Ministry of Justice signed the Istanbul Convention and the Ministry of Internal Affairs initiated a draft strategy on fighting domestic violence. While GEN is still dependent on donor support, some activism would continue without it.

The GEN network also represents a pool of potential women leaders. Prior to the local elections, GEN proposed nearly 250 of their network activists as potential candidates to political parties. IFES and GEN then provided training for 85 of them. The goal of the training was to improve the communication and leadership skills of women attendees and encourage their participation in the elections as voters and candidates. Ultimately, 68 of the 250 women were elected (though not all of them went through the training).

JNGE includes around 50 women journalists throughout the country who are committed to gender equality and women's political participation. The women journalists underwent training and have

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<sup>31</sup> [http://www.ginsc.net/home.php?option=article&id=29625&lang=ge#.U\\_Xl1fmSygY](http://www.ginsc.net/home.php?option=article&id=29625&lang=ge#.U_Xl1fmSygY)

upheld international media standards in their reporting on gender equality. Women have been eager to speak with the journalists, who are generally well respected and perceived as having leverage. While the women journalists are still writing stories on this issue after USAID funding has ended, publishers and editors are not so receptive, gauging the public interest to be weak. International funding is still needed to get the stories published.

IFES considers the establishment of the Gender Equality Commission in the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Adjara a great achievement. Its gender training for members of the council and the advocacy efforts conducted by GEN with the council paved the way for this development.

The many discussions throughout the country and extensive media outreach supported by IFES likely promoted positive stereotypes of women. The programming was extensive enough in a small country to have had an impact. While public opinion polls before and after the activities could have informed this evaluation, the program implementers did not collect this information.

NDI's trainings of female candidates, campaign staffers and Parliament staffers have improved the skills of women in politics.<sup>32</sup> NDI's work with seven female majoritarian candidates in the 2012 election enhanced their electoral prospects, and may have been instrumental in the three wins from this group. Only one female majoritarian candidate won in the 2008 election. In addition, NDI's leadership of the Task Force on Women's Participation and organization of the Win with Women conference have helped advance policy discussions on the topic and laid the groundwork for proposing mandatory quotas before the 2016 parliamentary election. NDI's work with women's organizations in the political parties has also bolstered leadership on the issue.

Similarly, the trainings offered by IRI to female candidates and party members have improved the skills of women in politics. Two of the 14 women trained at the Georgian Women's Campaign Academy were elected to Parliament from the Georgian Dream coalition. IRI's work organizing women within the political parties has also bolstered leadership on women's political empowerment.

In addition to these direct results, the three organizations have likely influenced other actors in women's political empowerment, most notably the CEC, which is engaged with the NDI Task Force on Women's Participation, has worked closely with IFES on other election issues and has appointed representatives of IFES, NDI and IRI to its training center board. The CEC is a leading actor on women's political empowerment from within the government. Its goals in this area are empowering women voters, candidates and elected officials, as well as women in the election administration. For the first time in the lead-up to the 2014 election, the CEC developed a training module for women candidates on procedural issues. The CEC also identified women's political empowerment as the topic for its small grant competition in the last round. The CEC's training center funded 10 NGOs, one of which made videos of famous women in politics and developed election-related brochures for women in mountainous regions. Going forward, CEC intends to offer gender training to men as well.

### Changes from the status quo

These results have changed the landscape of women's political empowerment in Georgia. Two nationwide civil society networks now operate with some influence. The Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Adjara has established a Gender Equality Commission to adopt policies

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<sup>32</sup> Interviews conducted for this case study, July 2014.

and action plans on gender equality. More women are in elected office and they have a stronger voice in political parties. The combined efforts of activists in the civil society networks, members of NDI's Task Force on Women's Participation, and partners in the political parties and government have raised the prospects of pushing forward the mandatory quota proposal prior to the 2016 parliamentary election.

### Why these changes matter for women's political empowerment

Advancing women's political empowerment requires efforts on many fronts. Increasing the percentage of women in political office is critical, and electoral rules to bring that about — such as voluntary incentives or a mandatory quota for women candidates — provide the biggest aid in this regard. Important corollary measures to create longer-term support for gender equality in political participation include addressing traditional stereotypes of women, a dearth of trained women activists and the organizational basis for continued advocacy in civil society, political parties and government.

### Best practices

Given the low percentage of women in politics in Georgia, stakeholders stressed the necessity of changing the electoral rules, as influencing attitudes and addressing training needs is not enough. Previous work on voluntary incentives and current interest in a mandatory quota are two ways of modifying rules. Another approach that could foster women's political empowerment is “zippered” party lists that require an alternating list of men and women candidates.

Strong international leadership, including U.S. diplomatic initiatives, is also important to advance women's political empowerment. Such measures include the annual retreat attended by the U.S. ambassador, the prime minister and other diplomats; the recent lunch with women MPs hosted by the deputy chief of mission; the ambassador's attendance at women's empowerment events; and inclusion of pro-gender messages in U.S. government talking points with political leaders. Coordinating donor activities and convening conferences and roundtables also strengthens the platform for international advocacy.

Developing a strong domestic constituency in support of electoral reforms is a necessary complement to the international community's advocacy. Two civil society networks supported by USAID funding — GEN and JNGE — are important parts of this constituency. Another key contribution is broadening the coalition to include more established human rights NGOs that have the respect of government.

Stakeholders also identified the importance of working with political parties on their candidate selection and not just supporting women candidates who were selected. GEN's outreach to political parties prior to the 2014 local elections is a good example of this. GEN proactively met with political parties and proposed viable women for their party lists.

Interviewees unanimously found the trainings provided by the CEPPS partners to be useful and noted the importance of training candidates, elected officials and party staff. Best practices for the trainings include combining foreign and Georgian trainers, as foreigners bring in other country experiences and Georgians make the training relevant to the country context. Party representatives also felt strongly that trainers should be women, and training of trainers might be needed for that. They suggested that training just one party at a time is better for organization building, allowing women to open up and network with others from different regions, but more diverse, multiparty training can lead to discussions that are more dynamic and interesting. Some also suggested an

increased attention to ideology in trainings, not just technical skills like messaging and electoral rules. Finally, support for alumni through a Facebook page, gatherings or mentoring was identified as a best practice.

Given different attitudes toward gender roles across the population, tailoring media messages to different ages and ethnic groups was identified as another best practice. Coordinating media outreach with related programs in civic education and school curricula can also have greater impact on gender stereotypes.

Efforts to influence the electoral reform process, the skills of women activists and gender stereotypes are not short-term efforts. Stakeholders stressed the importance of sustaining work across these areas and not starting to work on them a few months before an election. Like work in elections and political transitions more broadly, best practices in women's political empowerment include consistent funding support and long-term strategic planning linked to the electoral cycle.

## **Main Challenges**

A number of challenges impeded progress in women's political empowerment. Inadequate institutional structures in the government, such as a Gender Equality Commission under the Prime Minister's Office, hampered the development and implementation of national action plans on gender. The dual role of the adviser on human rights and gender equality issues in the prime minister's office resulted in most attention going to human rights and much less to gender issues. The weak and uncertain position of gender advisers in local governments undercut their ability to advance this agenda.

The lack of a unified civil society movement also impeded progress in women's political empowerment. National NGOs in the area tended to defend their territorial interests and not act collaboratively. Polarization across political parties has also impeded development of a women's caucus in Parliament or other mechanism to facilitate interparty cooperation on gender issues.

The internal structure and decision-making processes within political parties are also challenges. While many skilled and enthusiastic women are involved in campaigns, a small group of party leaders, mostly men, make the decisions about including them on party lists.

More broadly, patriarchal attitudes, educational curricula and media that reinforce traditional stereotypes, weak civic culture, women's subordinate role in the economy and gender-based violence impede progress in women's political empowerment.

## **Contributions and Hindrances**

The broader international attention to human rights and gender equality has contributed to these successes. The government's interest in joining the EU has advanced anti-discrimination legislation, which covers discrimination based on gender, as well as consideration of gender issues more broadly. While there was no separate chapter on gender issues in the accession agreement, for example, the parliamentary Committee on EU Integration asked for suggestions on addressing gender issues and included some points in the agreement. In addition, the review of Georgia's implementation of CEDAW in July 2014 engaged government officials in a process of examining current practices and facing questions on shortcomings from the CEDAW committee. The government sent a 30-person delegation of members of parliament, deputy ministers and gender advisers to the review, whereas only one member of Parliament represented the government in the

previous review in 2006. At the CEDAW review, the government delegation also held informal talks with representatives of Georgian civil society. Preparation of the report “Georgia– Beijing +20: National Review of the Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action” and attendance at the 58th session of the U.N. Commission on the Status of Women in March 2014 also raised awareness of the issue.

Development of the current gender equality NAP 2014–2016 also has stimulated attention to and support for women’s political empowerment. The GEC asked all ministries to develop plans describing gender equality considerations or activities in support of promoting women’s rights. In contrast to earlier efforts, the ministries under the new coalition government were cooperative and engaged in the process. This NAP focused on: institutional mechanisms for gender equality and gender-sensitive legislation; gender equality mainstreaming and awareness-raising in education; gender equality in the economic field; gender considerations in health and social protection; gender equality in local self-governance policy; increased women’s participation in decision-making; gender equality in environment protection issues; and gender considerations in law-enforcement and penitentiary spheres.

## **Sustainability of Gains**

New legislation, electoral codes, structures in government and women’s organizations in political parties represent sustainable gains for women’s political empowerment in Georgia. The development of civil society networks on gender equality is somewhat sustainable but additional funding is needed to carry out activities. Addressing gender stereotypes through media, curriculum modification, civic education and training women political activists are ongoing needs.

## **USAID’s Ongoing Work**

USAID is currently supporting local NGO WIC’s implementation of a 24-month project, “Women as Agents for Change and Empowerment,” which will continue until 2015. In August 2014, USAID awarded three four-and-a-half-year awards to IFES, NDI and IRI on electoral and political processes that will provide assistance on gender issues. NDI will work with elected women at the national and local level, IRI will work with political party leaders and candidates and IFES will continue assistance to civil society organizations through GEN and JNGE as well as focus on increasing the capacity of women in election management bodies. The mission recognizes the critical role of its assistance in preserving gains to date and pushing gender equality and female empowerment further. Rather than issuing a separate award working on gender issues, they will mainstream gender in their programs and a mission gender adviser will review the work plans each year.

## **V. WOMEN’S POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT BENCHMARKS**

This section reflects on the data collected for the Diamond Model study on the percentage of women in various branches and at different levels of government. It explores the meaning of the quantitative data, notably how women attained their positions and what kind of influence they have.

## Most Influential Institutions

The executive branch of government is the most influential institution in government. The prime minister's office is the most powerful office in the executive branch, especially since power shifted from the president's office to the prime minister's office at the end of former President Saakashvili's administration. There are some women in the leadership of the executive branch. Women represent 16 percent of ministers (three of 19) and 23 percent of deputy ministers (14 of 61). In all ministries, they represent 24 percent of department heads and 26 percent of deputy department heads. There are no female mayors. Of 59 gamgebelis (municipal executives) in Georgia, only one is a woman.

The legislative branch is weaker than the executive branch and the speaker of Parliament has much less power than the prime minister. For many years, the speaker of Parliament was a woman, who served as acting president for two months during the Rose Revolution in 2003 and another two months in 2008 after Saakashvili stepped down to run in the presidential elections. Today, women make up 12 percent of parliamentarians (18 of 150) and only 7 percent of committee chairs (one of 15). The GEC chairperson, who is also vice speaker of Parliament, is a woman.

For many years, the judiciary played a subordinate role to the executive. According to the Georgian Young Lawyers Association (GYLA), judges did not reject a single motion by public prosecutors between October 2011 and October 2012.<sup>33</sup> After the October 2012 elections, the court started to reject motions by public prosecutors. In 2013, judges rejected the prosecutor's motion on imprisonment in 22 percent of cases and changed the amount of bail requested by the prosecution in 71 percent of cases.<sup>34</sup> A major priority of the new government is to make the judiciary independent from the executive and the government has made some legal reforms in this direction. The public has perceived improvements in the court system, with 46 percent of survey respondents agreeing that the courts work much better or somewhat better since the 2012 elections, while only 5 percent believe they have worsened.<sup>35</sup> Women are equally represented among lower-level judges, but make up a smaller share of the leadership positions in the judiciary. They represent 21 percent of judges in the Grand Chamber (three of 14) and 33 percent of the Constitutional Court (three of nine).

The security sector does not represent an independent source of power within the government and women hold a small percentage of leadership positions in security institutions. Women represent just 1 percent of the leadership of the armed forces, but 29 percent of the leadership of the Civil Office of the Ministry of Defense. Women hold 4 percent of high-level police positions (six out of 145), 5 percent of midlevel positions (76 of 1,402) and 13 percent of lower-level positions (4,591 of 36,219).

## Types of Women Represented

It is difficult to generalize the types of women who are represented in leadership positions throughout the government, but the team was able to discern some patterns among elected officials. The stronger women in elected office tend to come from the NGO sector, political families or wealthy families. The current vice speaker of Parliament and chairperson of the GEC, Manana

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<sup>33</sup> GYLA, *Monitoring Criminal Trials in Tbilisi and Kutaisi City and Appellate Courts* – report #3

<sup>34</sup> GYLA, *Monitoring Criminal Trials in Tbilisi and Kutaisi City and Appellate Courts* – report #5

<sup>35</sup> CRRC, *Attitudes to the Judiciary in Georgia: Assessment of General Public, Legal Professionals and Business Leaders*, May 2014. Will be posted on JILEP website in mid-September.



Kobakhidze, for example, is the former executive director of the NGO Article 42, and MP Tinatin Khidasheli directed GYLA. The former speaker of the Parliament, Nino Burjanadze, is the daughter of a wealthy businessman, who financed her political party.

There are also women in elected office who do not have independent standing and owe their position on party lists to the party leadership. They tend not to act independently or take initiative on gender issues. This is particularly true of several female members of Parliament who attained their positions through former Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili.

The team heard less about the personal backgrounds of women in executive branch leadership positions, except that they were professionals who had demonstrated their competence, such as the minister of justice, the minister of education and the deputy minister of energy.

Few ethnic minority women are represented in leadership positions in government, due primarily to traditional gender roles in those communities.

## **Factors Influencing Women's Promotion**

Some elected women officials had independent standing and resources to secure their office, but others attained their position through party leadership placing them on party lists. In the executive branch, the female ministers' status is best credited to competence. The minister of justice, for example, was elected as a majoritarian to Parliament and was then appointed to her position. The minister of education had served as the deputy minister of education and became minister when her predecessor became president.

### **Support from men**

Men's attitudes are not uniform. Some men in government are supportive of women's political empowerment, while others are not. Interviewees noted that, overall, men were as enthusiastic as women about the development of the gender equality NAP. In particular, they noted that the male deputy minister of justice is a strong advocate of gender equality. However, leadership on women's political empowerment in government comes primarily from women.

### **"Glass ceilings"**

The main glass ceilings in Georgian politics are in the prime minister's office and the leadership of committees or ministries traditionally considered the domain of men, like internal affairs. No women have run for prime minister. As former speaker of Parliament, Nino Burjanadze twice became acting president, which was an important step in weakening the glass ceiling for that office.

## **Informal Power**

Power lies primarily in formal structures, but there are informal sources of power. One is a network run by the former prime minister and billionaire Ivanishvili, who used his wealth, connections and public support to pull together the Georgian Dream coalition to defeat UNM in 2012. He is responsible for putting many people in office, and they are still beholden to him even after he resigned from office.

Informal power is also located in the Georgian Orthodox Church. The patriarch is considered the most respected public figure in Georgia.

Women are not influential in informal institutions.

The international community is also influential in Georgia, especially the U.S. government. Messages delivered by U.S. government officials always receive attention from the government of Georgia and every interview of the U.S. ambassador is widely broadcast and reviewed by the public and politicians.

## **Impact of Women's Presence on Institutional Policies and Culture**

The presence of women in formal institutions has had some impact on the policies they have formulated. In Parliament, for example, MP Khidasheli introduced legislation to establish free kindergarten, which will help women with small children take part in political and economic life outside the home. Although it passed, women in the opposition did not vote for it because of partisan politics. The women's wing of the Free Democrats met with every candidate prior to the parliamentary election and demanded a commitment to gender issues. After the election, the party advanced progressive legislation on maternity leave and free delivery of babies. While the GEC has been instrumental in bringing about legislation on gender equality, that is due to both male and female MPs on the committee.

In the executive branch, several female leaders have championed gender equality, notably in the development of the gender equality NAP. The CEC chairperson and justice minister are clear examples, although men have also shown leadership on gender issues. The justice minister was also active in advocating changes to the labor code for women, which contributed last year to the increase in maternity leave to up to six months.<sup>36</sup> Due to the efforts of the female deputy defense minister, the Ministry of Defense has a strategic plan for gender mainstreaming, has appointed gender advisers in each department and will undertake a gender audit this fall funded by UN Women.

There is no evidence that a judge's gender affects court rulings. In mediation rulings, however, women judges tend to help the parties reach more consensual agreements, at least for civic cases.

Women's presence in government has had some impact on the culture of the institutions. In an interview with the research team, for example, Deputy Minister of Defense Tamar Karosanidze reflected that women in the ministry probably feel more empowered and supported because of her leadership role, and many come to her to share their concerns.

### **Symbolic impacts**

It is hard to gauge the symbolic impact of women in leadership roles in government. What seems more important than their numbers is the strength and initiative of individual female officials. One of the most popular and best-known politicians is a female member of Parliament, Eka Beselia, who is the head of the Human Rights Committee and an advocate for political prisoners. As noted, more than half of interviewees in a UNDP survey expressed that politics is more appropriate for men and men are better political leaders than women, although more men feel this way than women. It is possible that this opinion would shift if more women like Beselia were involved in politics. Despite the low numbers of women in leadership positions, survey data show that women are as interested in politics as men are, but these data do not examine women's attitudes toward government.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Unfortunately, this well-intentioned law has a negative side. Many businesses, especially those that are small and medium-sized, are reluctant to hire women of childbearing age, or they hire them on a temporary basis to avoid this provision of the law.

<sup>37</sup> "Public Perceptions on Gender Equality in Politics and Business," UNDP Georgia, 2013.

## VI. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR USAID PROGRAMMING

Most people with whom the team spoke with stressed that international support and pressure are critical to secure the gains made to date and keep this agenda moving forward. In its CDCS and current programming, the mission affirms the importance of its continued support for women's political empowerment. In this work, the mission should continue to coordinate its activities with the U.S. Embassy to maximize the impact of diplomatic initiatives on this issue. The attendance of the ambassador and deputy chief of mission at conferences and other events and the inclusion of pro-gender messages in their talking points with political leaders helps reinforce the impact of USAID programming. Through the donor gender thematic group, USAID is also well placed to continue coordinating its programming in women's political empowerment with SIDA, COE, NIMD, Oxfam and other donors.

The advancement of women's political empowerment in Georgia requires domestic advocacy as well, and USAID has an important supporting role. The NDI Task Force on Women's Political Participation and two civil society networks supported in the past — GEN and JNGE — are important parts of this domestic constituency and USAID should support their advocacy and engagement with government through activities such as roundtables, discussion forums and talk shows. Bringing male leaders into these activities could extend their reach. Broadening the coalition to include more established human rights NGOs, such as GYLA, Transparency International and the International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy as well as think tanks and media outlets, is a strategic direction that the task force should continue. Since many interviewees noted that NGOs working on women's empowerment tend not to collaborate, USAID could also provide support on the condition of collaboration, or provide coaching to help them work effectively on shared objectives.

Interviewees also noted that parties need qualified candidates, and training for women candidates, to increase the number of women in politics. As Burjanadze emphasized, if you bring a woman who is not qualified and silent into Parliament, you're damaging the image of women. The biggest need is for training programs in the regions, and minority regions in particular. USAID should concentrate training for female candidates and campaign staff in the regions well before the 2016 parliamentary election, and offer training to recently elected female officials.

Interviewees also identified the importance of working with political parties on their candidate selection and not just supporting women candidates who were selected. GEN's outreach to political parties prior to the 2014 local elections is a good example of this and a best practice that USAID programming should continue ahead of the parliamentary election. USAID should also incorporate gender issues into training provided to men and women in public office and party leadership, continue support for roundtables and conferences on gender issues, support the work of women's wings in political parties, and consider study tours for party leaders to better understand the value of promoting women candidates.

To address traditional attitudes toward women in politics among the general public, programming should use different messages for different ages and ethnic groups and highlight positive female role models. Coordinating media outreach with related programs in civic education and school curricula is an important corollary measure to have greater impact on gender stereotypes. Gender equality, human rights and responsibilities, discrimination and tolerance should be included as topics in civic education programs.

Programming should also support civic education more broadly. A number of interviewees referenced a poor understanding of politics as an issue for participation generally, and not just women. Ideally, civic education could foster women as voters as well as their broader participation in politics.

As noted, the Task Force on Women's Political Participation in Georgia is pushing for mandatory quotas prior to the 2016 parliamentary elections, since voluntary incentives have not adequately increased women's political empowerment. If quotas gain sufficient support in Parliament to warrant legislative drafting, USAID should provide technical guidance to ensure that the legislation incorporates best international practices and prohibits abuses such as parties putting forward wives, sisters and daughters of male politicians.

## VII. INTERVIEWS

### Tbilisi

#### Individual Interviews

Berikashvili, Nana, International Center on Conflict and Negotiation

Beselia, Eka, Chairperson, Committee of Human Rights and Civil Integration, Parliament of Georgia

Burjanadze, Nino, Chariman, Democratic Movement – United Georgia

Dolidze, Nino, Assistant Program Officer, IRI

Futkaradze, Nineli, Head of Women’s Wing, Free Democrats

Janiashvili, Natalia, Human Rights Secretariat in PM’s Office

Jorgoliani, Gvantca, Head of Legal Department, National Forum

Kaaman, Peeter, SIDA

Kacitadze, Tamar, Journalists’ Network for Gender Equality

Kechaqmadze, Mikheil, Election Project Officer, Council of Europe

Khidasheli, Tinatin, Member of Parliament, Republican Party

Khorbaladze, Irakli, Republican Party and Member of Commission, Central Election Commission of Georgia

Kobakhidze, Manana, Head of Parliamentary Gender Equality Council, Chairperson of Georgian Dream and Vice Speaker of Parliament

Kuprava-Sharvashidze, Maia, Coordinator of the Gender Equality Network

Letodiani, Natia, Head of Regional Services, Republican Party

Makharashvili, Ketty, Component Manager, UNDP

Mchedlidze, Ketevan, Chief of Staff, United National Movement

Mchedlidze, Nana, Gender and Human Rights Consultant

Nachyebia, Manana, New Rights Party

Putkaradze, Nineli, Regional Coordinator, Chancellery of the Government of Georgia

Rondeli, Alexander, President, Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies

Rusetskaia, Maya, Director, Women’s Information Center

Sabedashvili, Tamar, Gender Adviser for Georgia, UN Women

Stepanian, Arnold, Chairman, Public Movement Multinational Georgia

Sumbadze, Nana, Professor of Psychology, Tbilisi State University

Zambakhidze, Tamar, Judge, Tbilisi Appeals Court

## Group Interviews

Haykin, Stephen, USAID Mission Director

Morris, Thomas, USAID Deputy Mission Director

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Chitanava, Khatuna, U.S. Embassy

Taylor, Victoria, Chief of Political and Economic Affairs, U.S. Embassy

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Khvichia, Khatuna, Project Management Specialist, USAID

Panteleva, Lina, Project Management Specialist, USAID

Stonehill, David, Deputy Director, DG Office, USAID

Tabatadze, Rusudan, Project Management Specialist, USAID

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Gorzelska, Monika, Acting EG Office Director, USAID

Kerashvili, Lela, Acting Program Office Chief, USAID

Khechinashvili, George, Health Program Management Specialist, USAID

Ormotsadze, Rezo, Senior Financial and Commercial Sector Adviser, USAID

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Navarro, Luis, Country Director, NDI

Sartania, Tamara, Senior Parliamentary Program Officer, NDI

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Mkervalishvili, Vladimer, Gender and Outreach Project Manager, IFES

Nisic, Nermin, Chief of Party, IFES

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Gabisonia, Tamar, Executive Director, Organization “Article 42 of the Constitution”

Gioshvili, Maka, Chair of the Board, Organization “Article 42 of the Constitution”

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Azarashvili, Ekaterine, Spokesperson, Central Election Commission of Georgia

Jikia, Natia, Adviser to the Chairperson, Central Election Commission of Georgia

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Gogorishvili, Khatuna, Member of the Parliament of Georgia and Head of Women’s Wing, United National Movement

Mchedlishvili, Natalia, Assistant International Secretary, United National Movement

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Bagratia, Tamar, Consultant, National Association of Local Authorities of Georgia

Melua, David, Executive Director, National Association of Local Authorities of Georgia

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## Marneuli

### Group Interview

Azizbekova, Zemfira, NGO “Tolerance”

Endeladze, Olga, Project Manager, Society of Democratic Women of Marneuli

Gabaidze, Nana, Member of Marneuli Women Club

Khudieva, Shakhnabat, Member of Marneuli Women Club

Samkharadze, Mariam, Coordinator, Marneuli Center for Civic Engagement

Talibova, Sabina, Democratic Union “Mtredi,” also Coordinator of Taso Foundation

## **Washington, D.C.**

### **Group Interviews**

Boyer, Anthony, Senior Program Manager, IFES

Nelson, Mellisa, Program Officer, IFES

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Fliegal, Jessica, Assistant Program Officer for the Women’s Democratic Network, IRI

Govatski, Sondra, CEPPS Director, IRI

Lindler, Preston, Program Officer for Georgia, IRI

Ruedy, Liz, M&E Director, IRI

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Kemp, Susan, Senior Program Officer for Women’s Political Participation, NDI

Perry, Elisa, Senior Program Officer for Georgia, NDI

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