



IFES Georgia

Overview

Since 1995, the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) has conducted a range of assistance activities to support the development of democratic elections and political processes in Georgia. The work of IFES has improved electoral legislation and election administration; propelled discussions on constitutional and election systemic reform; strengthened civil society and media; supported political finance reform and implementation; increased participation and enfranchisement of vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities and ethnic minorities; introduced a civic education course taught in Georgian universities and institutions of higher learning; increased transparency and women's political engagement; supported a diverse array of civic and voter education projects; and enhanced the accuracy of and confidence in the voter registry.

While the 2012-2014 election cycle demonstrated Georgia's renewed democratic development, several challenges remain that were manifested during the 2016 parliamentary elections and that continue to limit the electoral system's effectiveness and citizens' level of inclusive participation in the political process. To address these issues, IFES is conducting an innovative, multi-year U.S. Agency for International Development-funded project, "Strengthening Electoral Processes in Georgia," which will strengthen democratic institutional change and empower groups across all strata of society. Through a variety of assistance activities, IFES supports the continued development of professional aptitude and equal engagement opportunities for all Georgians, with an eye on the next presidential elections in 2018 and the parliamentary elections in 2020.

Program Highlights

Building Election Administration Capacity

IFES delivers customized assistance to Georgia's Central Election Commission (CEC) by offering comprehensive training and technical expertise. IFES provides technological updates to optimize performance, transparency and efficiency through the electoral period. We work with the CEC to refine its communication and outreach capabilities; develop and implement communication, strategic and operational plans; and assist with furthering the role of women, ethnic minorities and persons with disabilities in election administration through outreach and training. IFES also facilitates discussions between the CEC and local stakeholders to strengthen routine information exchange and inclusivity.

Improving Electoral Legislation

Through a consultative and collaborative process, IFES provides assistance to key stakeholders as they work to improve electoral legislation and procedures. IFES engages the CEC, legal experts, members of Parliament, political parties, media and civil society to encourage inclusivity and transparency as they develop recommendations for reform. One IFES-produced resource for use in this process is its

IFES supports citizens' right to participate in free and fair elections. Our independent expertise strengthens electoral systems and builds local capacity to promote sustainable democracy.

My Story

"People think the government is separate and absolute. Now I understand the government works for the people. For all the people."

-Thoughts shared by a Georgian university student after completing IFES' civics course, *Demokratia da Mokalakeoba*.



Electoral Integrity Assessment, which promotes models of reform and best practice in electoral legislation. Bolstered by IFES' Electoral Integrity Assessment in Georgia, the CEC adopted an Election Integrity Management Plan in 2016, which has underpinned CEC activities and guided conduct of the elections.

Gender Equality and Empowerment

IFES works actively on women's political empowerment activities by supporting the Gender Equality Network and the Journalists Network for Gender Equality, local organizations it helped establish. IFES' efforts increase women's political awareness and lead to greater civic activism via professional training and information-sharing through televised and radio talk shows, public forums and community outreach projects. One such effort to promote women's rights led to the establishment of a body responsible for gender equality under the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Adjara and sparked actions to reform legislation to promote gender equality. Ongoing work in this area includes support to the Task Force on Women's Political Participation where IFES provides skills, training and technical advice on the development of electoral reform recommendations targeting gender equality.

Strengthening Civil Society

IFES aims to develop a strong, vibrant and sustainable civil society in Georgia by building the capacity of local nongovernmental and media organizations. IFES also backs local organizations by supporting implementation of activities critical to Georgia's democratic progress, including IFES' work in media monitoring; televised debates with candidates and stakeholders; monitoring of campaign finance spending and the abuse of administrative resources; and public awareness building projects. Furthermore, IFES continues to work to build cooperation and collaboration between local civil society organizations including opportunities for exchange and skill building through multi-organization trainings and events.

Empowering Youth and Vulnerable Groups

In 2010, IFES introduced 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 da Mokalakeoba* (Democracy and Citizenship), is offered at 28 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 75 university-level educators have completed IFES trainings, and thousands of students have completed the course. IFES works with the Civic Education Lecturers Association, 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. IFES also supports 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.

