



## SUCCESS STORY

# Getting a Political Head Start

### **USAID support helps Georgian women take their place in politics**



[[Photo: USAID/Georgia]]

*With USAID support, Georgian women are encouraged to share information, develop action plans, and implement change as democracy takes root in their country.*

***Through USAID and partner activities in Georgia, women realize their potential as participants in the political process and make a local and national impact on the Georgian political system.***

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Nani Chanishvili, Irene Pkhovelishvili, and Maya Beitrishvili are making a difference for women in the Republic of Georgia.

All three participated in USAID's Strategic Technical Assistance for Results with Training (START) program, and they're using what they learned to encourage and enhance the political participation of other Georgian women. Chanishvili drafted an appeal—currently before Parliament—to promote quotas for women on political party lists. Pkhovelishvili ran for Parliament in the 2003 elections. And Beitrishvili received a grant to establish a voter education program in the Signagi district.

Since 2002, USAID and its START partners have implemented capacity building and advocacy training programs—critical components of Georgia's transition to democracy, especially when aimed at increasing women's political participation. In 2002 and 2003, nearly 35 percent of program participants were women.

With USAID assistance, four women from Georgia attended the 2002 Global Summit of Women in Barcelona, which focused on advancing gender integration, promoting women's empowerment, and expanding women's roles and participation in decision-making processes. As a result of their participation, the four women developed action plans to form a women's NGO working group and promote civil society training to inform women of their rights.

In 2003 USAID and implementing partner World Learning launched a "Women in Politics" program in Tbilisi. The program included a one-day international conference and three days of related training. The program encouraged Georgian women to vote and promoted women's participation in Georgia's Parliamentary elections by helping women highlight their issues on political party platforms and run effectively as candidates. Over 120 women attended this international conference, including women representatives from local and international NGOs, Parliament, political parties, advocacy organizations, and international missions to Georgia. Seventy local women attended the training component and discussed topics ranging from advocacy and lobbying to fundraising and strategic planning.



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At the completion of the training portion, participants drafted personal and group action plans and presented them to the larger group. The plans were ambitious: forming a women's education center, creating a rehabilitation center for victims of trafficking, conducting civic education seminars for women, informing women about the election process, raising awareness about trafficking, and decreasing election fraud.

The program has had far-reaching impact, prompting USAID to support a second "Women in Politics" program, implemented by USAID partner National Democratic Institute, to convene regional meetings of women political leaders. With more than eight meetings held since June 2003, the program has gathered momentum, and the number of women interested in the political arena has grown throughout the country. Through USAID and partner activities in Georgia, women are beginning to realize their potential as participants in the political process and are making a local and national impact on the Georgian political system. USAID and its partners continue to develop and implement innovative ways to promote women's political involvement.