



**NDI Quarterly Report: October 1 to December 31, 2001
GEORGIA**

**USAID Award Agreement No. 114-A-00-00-00081-00
Agreement Dates: June 1, 2000 to May 31, 2003**

SUMMARY

The National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) submits this quarterly report on program activities in Georgia for the period October 1, 2001 to December 31, 2001. During this period, NDI conducted programs with the parliament, local governments, political parties and civic organizations. NDI's assistance to the Georgian parliament centered on providing expertise on international experience as the parliament considered reforming parliamentary structures in light of leadership changes. NDI worked with the Councils Association of Georgia (CAG) to advise them on ways to assure local council input into the legislative reform process and to strengthen CAG's regional branches. In the area of political parties, NDI focused on establishing regional networks and assisted with the development of women's initiative groups in the regions, to increase women's participation in political life. In the civic sector, NDI assisted the International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED) to monitor by-elections, improve its internal management and implement public education campaigns.

All of NDI's activities in Georgia fall under USAID's Strategic Objective 2.1 of promoting "Increased, better informed citizens' participation in political and economic decision-making."

BACKGROUND

Georgian Political Situation

Since winning independence from the Soviet Union nine years ago, Georgia has suffered extraordinary upheavals including a coup d'etat, civil war and two long-running conflicts resulting in the secession of two regions. Georgia, nevertheless, earned a reputation as one of the more democratic of the post-Soviet states. In at least a titular fashion, the president and other elected officials have consistently stressed their support for democratic reforms and anti-corruption programs. While there have been setbacks, Georgians face fewer restrictions on freedom of assembly, expression and political activity than do most countries in the former Soviet Union. Far in advance of its neighbors, in November 1998, Georgia held local government elections, which created

more than 10,000 new local council positions in towns and villages across the country. Since gaining independence, Georgia has also seen the growth of citizen-based organizations that are indispensable to a vibrant civil society. ISFED, a nongovernmental, nonpartisan organization formed by NDI to monitor the 1995 elections, has expanded its mandate beyond election monitoring to encompass advocacy projects to promote the growth of civil society.

Unfortunately, in recent years, movement to a fully democratic state governed by rule of law has stalled, and in some cases has been reversed.

The legal framework and administration of elections have become less free and fair. A second round of local government elections, scheduled for November 2001, has been postponed until at least June 2002. Legislators were unable to reach consensus on the local government law, and the opposition boycott of parliamentary sessions for much of the summer. The ruling Citizens' Union of Georgia (CUG) also continued to suffer from internal crises which resulted in President Shevardnadze's resignation from the party's chairmanship in September 2001. Also in late September, months of internal conflict finally led to the dissolution of the CUG-led parliamentary majority faction. Many new factions emerged, none of which was able to form a majority.

NDI in Georgia

NDI opened a field office in Georgia in August 1994. Since then, the Institute has worked closely with the Speaker of Parliament and reform-minded legislators providing a broad range of legislative assistance. NDI programs have contributed expertise to legislative debates by helping lawmakers research, draft, debate and enact legislation on topics including local government, election laws, anti-corruption, secrecy, lobbying and freedom of information. NDI programs have also helped promote dialogue between lawmakers and their constituents, resulting in concrete legislation requiring financial disclosure by government officials, and the creation of a new legislative financial oversight body.

Over the last five years, NDI has worked to strengthen the organizational abilities of Georgia's fledgling democratic parties. The Institute has developed programs to enable the CUG, the National Democratic Party (NDP), and the People's Party (PP) to be more democratic and function within a transparent election environment. NDI has also provided limited assistance to the Socialist, Labor, Union of Traditionalist and Green parties. Initial efforts focused on assisting parties to establish party headquarters and to field candidates for the 1995 parliamentary elections. In 1998 and 1999, programming became more advanced as parties began to understand the importance of developing concrete campaign strategies and direct voter contact programs. Since late 2000, NDI has worked to coordinate a functional coalition of parties and to strengthen regional party structures. In addition to the parties already mentioned, NDI has also begun to work with two relatively new parties. Industry Will Save Georgia, a party founded and led by the popular Gogi Topadze, a wealthy brewery magnate, did remarkably well in the 1999 parliamentary elections, and has continued to attract supporters with its promise of new

jobs. The second, the New Right Party, an early split-off from the CUG in parliament, supports President Shevardnadze and business interests.

In 1995, NDI helped identify and bring together a group of Georgian citizen activists to monitor the presidential and parliamentary elections. Over the past six and one-half years, NDI's continuing partnership with ISFED has led to the organization of numerous town hall meetings and citizen advisory councils, the creation of a newsletter "Civil Society," and increased citizen awareness of their rights as voters and constituents. In 1998, 1999 and 2000, ISFED trained and deployed more than 2,600 domestic election observers to more than 90% of the country's polling stations. In June 2000, after five years of collaboration, NDI and ISFED conducted an in-depth review of their work together and ways to improve ISFED's performance. They determined that NDI could better assist ISFED through the development of stronger, more widespread programs to increase citizen participation and to promote government transparency, in addition to election monitoring.

On the basis of this assessment, in fall 2000, NDI launched an intensive campaign to develop non-election civil society programs, and to strengthen ISFED's national and local structure. In the past year, 26 district branches received small grants from ISFED to support local projects.

Since 1996, NDI has contributed to legislative debates on local government reform and assisted political parties to prepare for the country's first local government elections under the 1995 constitution. Following the local elections in 1998, NDI facilitated the creation of the Councils Association of Georgia (CAG), an association of local councils. Through a grant from the National Endowment for Democracy, NDI assisted CAG in establishing its organization and beginning its work. Following that grant, CAG became a subgrantee of NDI through this USAID Cooperative Agreement.

PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

NDI's programs were conducted against the backdrop of fundamental upheaval in Georgia's government. In the last days of October, attempts by the Ministry of Security to search the most popular independent TV station, Rustavi 2, sparked a major public protest. Thousands demonstrated to demand the resignation of several ministers and the President. The Minister of the Interior and the Minister of Security resigned and President Shevardnadze then dissolved the entire government. Parliamentary Speaker Zurab Zhvania also resigned, in part to quell rumors that he was orchestrating a take-over of the government.

In November, the parliament selected Nino Burjanadze to replace Zhvania. Nominated by the Traditionalist Party, Burjanadze is considered an ally of reformers in the CUG, and has the tacit support of President Shevardnadze. In November and December, the parliament was tasked with approving new executive ministers. The vast majority of the new names came, however, from the previous government. Debates between reformers

and the Shevardnadze administration resulted in pressure for the president to reconsider some of his nominees.

In this period, the President continued to press parliament to consider constitutional amendments that would establish a cabinet of ministers.

Parliamentary Development

Objectives

During this three-month period, NDI's program sought to accomplish the following objectives:

- Assist the parliament in internal reorganization and improving the Rules of Procedure; and
- Enable selected committees to more effectively draft legislation and conduct legislative oversight.

Activities

At NDI's suggestion, on October 2, the Defense Committee held a meeting with NGO representatives to familiarize them with the draft of the civil registry legislation and to solicit their views. The legislation was designed to create an accurate and complete list of all citizens. The NGO community endorsed the registry, but expressed concerns about individual rights and privacy protections. Defense Committee members agreed to consult with the Council of Europe and NDI on how to prevent any abuses or violation of rights. NDI also provided advice to the Foreign Relations Committee on how to organize hearings on allegations of fraud in internal elections of the Georgian Red Cross and the International Red Cross' decision to suspend all assistance to Georgia.

On October 19-20, NDI held a workshop on re-organization and revisions to rules of procedures for faction leaders. With the breakup of the majority and the development of new factions, the workshop was intended to create a forum to discuss how parliament would make committee assignments and choose committee, faction and parliamentary leaders. The chairmen and deputy chairmen of each faction attended the workshop, as did the four vice-speakers and then-Speaker Zurab Zhvania. NDI and David Darchiashvili, from the parliamentary research department, presented examples of principles of faction and committee formation from legislative bodies around the world.

Following the seminar, NDI held individual follow-up consultations with faction chairs and deputy chairs from the Traditionalists, Industry Will Save Georgia, Socialists and Majoritarian factions. In these meetings, NDI discussed in detail each group's plans for reorganization, including the number of committees and sub-committees and the representation of factions in the committees and leadership.

In November and December, NDI also met with MPs and faction leaders to discuss NDI's assistance with the dialogue on constitutional amendments, in particular provisions relating to the status of the Cabinet of Ministers. Faction leaders almost unanimously criticized the President's draft on the grounds that it would skew the balance of power between the executive and the legislature and provide the president with undemocratic levels of control over the legislative branch. They stated they would either significantly amend the draft or coordinate on developing an alternative version in the parliament. NDI also met with the chair of the Legal Committee, Zurab Adeishvili, to discuss a possible ad hoc inter-faction parliamentary commission to work on a parliamentary alternative to the President's draft.

NDI had planned a workshop for the parliamentary leadership and a follow-up roundtable on the proposed legislation to create a Cabinet of Ministers. Unfortunately, the schedule of events in Parliament made this impossible. NDI will include this workshop in the period covered by the Institute's next workplan.

Assessment

Did one or more committees welcome NGO input into the legislative drafting process?

NDI provided the Defense Committee, the Foreign Relations Committee, the Legal Committee, and the Culture and Education Committee with advice on structuring committee hearings. These committees conducted hearings on new legislation with the active participation of a range of NGOs.

The Defense Committee held hearings on military budgeting reform and the draft law of the civil registry. The hearings took place in September and October. At these meetings, NGOs raised concerns about safeguards for citizens' rights in the civil registry, the rights of military conscripts, and civilian control over the military.

The Legal Committee held a number of open committee meetings and hearings on amendments to the election legislation with the active participation of NGOs, including ISFED, The Liberty Institute, the Caucusus Institute for Peace and Democracy and the Young Lawyers' Association.

In December, the Culture and Education Committee convened hearings on changes in the system of higher education. Draft legislation was developed with the Open Society Foundation, and representatives of major universities and colleges also participated in the discussion. Ideas raised at the hearing became the basis for a package of laws on higher education that the parliament approved in December.

Did one or more committees hold public hearings that were planned and conducted according to proper procedures?

While public hearings on both legislative and oversight issues have started to become routine in the parliament, few hearings were conducted entirely as required by

parliamentary procedures. The Foreign Relations Committee, the Economic Policy Committee, and the Defense Committee, have, however, taken steps to improve their adherence to procedures. They have increasingly separated hearings on legislation from oversight hearings, and have provided opportunities to hear testimony representing a diversity of views. In addition, procedural matters such as enforcing time limits for witnesses, have improved.

Do the amended rules of procedure provide for fair representation and participation of factions in the committee system and in the leadership of the parliament?

The change in parliamentary leadership provided an opportunity for overhaul of the rules far beyond the amendments NDI anticipated in its proposal. The parliament is still in the process of designing new rules. However, negotiations at NDI's workshop on October 19-20 contributed to laying the groundwork for providing fair representation of factions. At the workshop, leaders agreed to change the number of committees and to expand the duties and functions of the sub-committees and to redistribute the membership of committees and the chair positions between the factions based on their proportional representation. They also agreed to amend the rule of procedures in order to ensure factions' rights to get their issues on the parliament's agenda and set aside time for debate on those issues.

Political Party Development

Objectives

During this period, NDI's political party programming sought to accomplish the following objectives:

- Assist parties in the development of their national organizations by strengthening their regional branches;
- Help parties develop credible messages;
- Improve and institutionalize the internal training capabilities of parties; and
- Provide campaign, candidate, and monitor training for local elections and parliamentary by-elections.

Activities

NDI actively consulted with the headquarters of various parties in the lead-up to scheduled local elections, which were ultimately delayed. These parties included Industry Will Save Georgia Party, the Traditionalist Party, and the New Right.

NDI also offered training to a number of parties as they prepared for the Vake and Baghdati parliamentary by-elections. On October 21, Georgia held two high-profile

parliamentary by-elections in the Vake and Baghdati districts. These elections were held to fill seats vacated when members of Parliament took posts in the Ministry of Justice and Interior.

While candidates in the Baghdati by-election were not interested in NDI programs, several candidates in Vake did request assistance. NDI met with Mikail Saakashvili and his campaign manager several times to discuss the progress of their campaign, and also offered several rounds of candidate training to the candidate from Industry Will Save Georgia, Gia Zhourzholiani, and the Green Party candidate, Gia Gachecheladza. Zhourzholiani and Saakashvili incorporated training from NDI in their campaigns to a great extent, whereas Gachecheladza did so only to a lesser extent. For example, the candidates did door-to-door campaigning, as recommended by NDI.

NDI developed an observer handbook and training seminar for party and candidate observers. Five hundred observer manuals outlining the procedures and laws for the election were published and distributed to observers from each major campaign in Vake district. NDI conducted election monitor training for the Vake by-election for election monitors from the Industry Will Save Georgia campaign, Mikail Saakashvili's campaign, and Joseph Ioseliani's campaign. This training included a detailed discussion of pre-election monitoring and voting day procedures. Over 175 participants were trained by NDI for party/candidate election monitoring for the parliamentary by-elections; 65 from Saakashvili's campaign, 50 from Industry Will Save Georgia, and 65 from Ioseliani.

To encourage increased participation of women in parties, NDI met with representatives from the New Right and Industry Will Save Georgia's women's organizations. The leaders of both organizations supported the idea of cooperating with NDI to enhance recruitment of women. At a seminar for the New Right Women's Club on November 13, the leaders of the New Right spoke about the party's development since its establishment in June. NDI emphasized the importance of message development, the promotion of women within the party and improvements in outreach to women. Further work in this regard will concentrate on each of these specific issues and will take place with party headquarters as well as branches in the regions.

NDI also spoke at a larger women's forum sponsored by the New Right on December 4. NDI and other speakers discussed the importance of women's roles in political parties and politics, focusing on political party outreach to women. They also covered women's roles in preparing to enter political parties and becoming more assertive in internal decision-making. The women's forum expanded on many issues previously discussed during meetings with the party leaders and the Women's Club.

NDI held two trainings with the Traditionalist Party regional branch in Telavi on November 2 and December 7. NDI's strategy is to help the parties build and strengthen some of their regional branches, to serve as models for other branches. The party chose the seminar topics itself, from a list of topics offered by NDI. Party leaders were enthusiastic about canvassing techniques discussed at the seminar and implemented them throughout Telavi during the following month. They reported great success at a follow-

up session with NDI. Twenty-five to 30 party members participated in each session, and the Telavi Traditionalists have requested monthly training from NDI on various themes. NDI also held a preliminary meeting with 20 leaders of the Traditionalist Party organization in Zestaponi to plan seminars to take place in the next quarter. NDI also met several times with the leaders of the Traditionalist Party to plan further events both in Tbilisi and the regions.

NDI made several visits to Kutaisi during this period to look for other opportunities to help parties' regional branches there. NDI Political Party Trainer Scott Kearin met with representatives from the New Right, the CUG, the Socialists, and Industry Will Save Georgia. All party branches were receptive to training from NDI, though the New Right was the most proactive in quickly arranging further events.

On December 13, NDI conducted a message development seminar with the New Right in Kutaisi at their request, continuing a series of trainings with this branch that began last summer. The New Right branch in Kutaisi has also requested a regular series of seminars from NDI, and NDI is planning a session on working with media in the beginning of the next quarter. In addition, NDI met with the leadership of the New Right in Tbilisi for exercises and discussion on message development, one of this new party's self-recognized major needs.

NDI also returned to Rustavi on December 19, to visit the local branch of Industry Will Save Georgia for a seminar on message development. Scott Kearin has visited with the leadership of the party in Tbilisi several times to determine where further regional visits could be most effective. Message development and dissemination is also one of the Industry Party's major needs, and the leaders of the party will be meeting with NDI for this discussion in the beginning of the next quarter.

Assessment

Has one or more parties made systematic efforts to evaluate their organizational structure and campaign activities?

A number of parties, particularly the New Right and Industry Will Save Georgia, are currently evaluating the effectiveness of their organizations and campaigns, and this has been the topic of several discussions with NDI. As both parties are relatively new, NDI's discussions focused on how they should present themselves to the voters and develop a credible message. NDI had consultations with Industry Will Save Georgia on September 21 and December 21, and with the New Right on December 20. In addition, for the Vake by-election, the Institute has held campaign training and consultations for Zhorzholiani, Gachecheladze and Saakashvili.

Has one or more parties begun to develop strategies for joining existing coalitions or forming new groupings with a like-minded party(s)?

The Traditionalist Party in particular has been active in experimenting with new alliances, lessening its reliance on the Revival Bloc in parliament and strengthening its ties with both Industry Will Save Georgia and the reformist elements in the current reduced CUG faction. In October, the Party announced the creation of a parliamentary coalition with the Industry Will Save Georgia faction. The Traditionalist faction has also been coordinating its activities with the CUG faction recently. Notably, Nino Burjanadze was nominated as a candidate for the office of the Speaker by the Traditionalists. The New Right is also actively seeking allies inside and outside of parliament by negotiating an alliance with the NDP.

Has one or more party chapters from at least three parties produced and begun implementing plans for improving message, voter outreach and/or organizational structure?

Yes. As described above, the Traditionalist Party in Telavi, the New Right Party in Kutaisi, and the Industry Will Save Georgia Party in Rustavi have all undertaken activities in coordination with NDI to improve voter outreach through canvassing and to refine their messages to their constituents.

Civic Development

Objectives

During this period, NDI's civic programming sought to accomplish the following objectives:

- Improve ISFED's national advocacy;
- Expand ISFED regional branches' capacity to mobilize volunteers and to conduct public education and advocacy campaigns;
- Enable ISFED to address deficiencies in internal organization and management; and
- Strengthen the ability of other civic groups, particularly those focused on gender issues, to build their organizations and to develop strategic plans.

Activities

On October 14, ISFED coordinated a candidate forum for the October 21 Vake district by-elections. The event was co-sponsored by Internews, NDI and Studio Re (one of Internews' Georgian partners). All of the candidates, except for Saakashvili and Sarashvili, participated and about 100 community members attended. The candidate forum was televised twice, in the week before the by-election on Channel 9 and on the Caucasus channel. NDI also met with representatives of a few radio stations to discuss outreach efforts to their listeners with event announcements and press events from

ISFED. As a result of the meetings, the radio stations played, live, the candidates' open introductions from ISFED's forum.

On October 20, NDI held a briefing for international observers on Election Day procedures and possible irregularities that observers might encounter. Later the same day, NDI met with IFES, USAID and IRI to coordinate efforts to cover all 50 precincts in the Vake race. On Election Day, NDI and these other organizations observed the Vake by-election.

ISFED held three observer trainings for Vake observers and two in Kutaisi for the Baghdati race. At these trainings ISFED distributed voter leaflets and copies of the new Election Code. Irakli Sokolovski, ISFED's program manager, worked closely with the Baghdati district coordinator to prepare for the election and observer trainings. On Election Day, 79 ISFED observers were present in all precincts and at district commission meetings. Following the election, ISFED held a press conference, outlining its findings.

On November 4, Adjara held elections for the parliament and the head of state of the Autonomous Republic. The Adjara election commission refused to accredit ISFED monitors. ISFED released a public statement protesting this decision and filed a suit challenging the ruling with the Adjara Supreme Court. ISFED also filed three petitions to the Baghdati, Vake and Adjara courts alleging candidate misconduct during the October by-election and local government elections, respectively.

In December ISFED completed a comprehensive study of citizens' access to information and released its report. Thirty-six ISFED branches submitted a total of 401 applications asking for information that under Georgian law should be available to the public. Applications were made to a range of public bodies, including the district departments of police and internal affairs (including visa and passport departments), tax departments, social security, educational, financial and medical institutions and city and village governments. ISFED's report, released in December and printed in their widely distributed newspaper *Civil Society*, concluded that fewer than half of the requests were answered in the manner required by law.

ISFED's local branches continued their public education and advocacy projects. NDI traveled to and met with 35 district coordinators during this period to evaluate and assist them with their small grant projects. During NDI and ISFED's visits to the districts, NDI announced the plans for an ISFED General Assembly in February, at which ISFED will consider changes to the charter affecting the composition of the Board of Directors and other key organizational issues. In an effort to get input from the coordinators, NDI and ISFED's national staff distributed copies of the charter. NDI also facilitated meetings among ISFED's strongest district coordinators to discuss ISFED's charter and district-level organization. NDI will continue to facilitate discussions among district coordinators to encourage their active involvement in amending the charter.

In an effort to improve ISFED's press coverage, NDI worked with Tamuna Zhvania, ISFED's press secretary, on developing media advisories and press lists. NDI staff also reviewed past ISFED press releases, made suggestions on improving the newspaper and brainstormed with the ISFED staff on how to improve ISFED's communication with the media.

NDI initiated training for several women's groups in this quarter, in an effort to increase women's political participation. One women's group in Chokhatauri, Guria region, is fighting domestic violence. NDI consultations with them covered fundraising and strategies for changing public policy. This group became politicized through working to highlight women's issues in the 2000 presidential election. It has recently decided to focus on advocacy through the political process, rather than solely service provision to domestic violence victims.

On November 6, 7 and 8, NDI held three one-day trainings on strategic planning and workplan development called "Thinking and Planning Ahead, and Working Backwards to Accomplish It." The participants were representatives of women's groups with whom NDI had had previous contact or working relationships, such as women from the Women's Leadership Association (elected local government council members), women activists in political parties and other civic groups, including the Georgian Women's Political Network. During the course of the three one-day workshops, 42 women participated in the training, with only eight from Tbilisi.

As important as the training itself were follow-up meetings held after the seminar in participants' home communities, where NDI met additional women interested in becoming politically active. NDI traveled to Ambrolauri (Racha region), Alkhatsikhe (Samske Javakheti region), Gori (Kartli region), Signagi/Vakiri (Kakheti region), Ozurgeti (Guria region), Khashuri (Shida Kartli region), and Dusheti (Mtskheta-Mtianeti region).

NDI had three meetings with women in Gori. The first was a follow-up meeting to the November strategic planning workshop, which resulted in a decision to hold a forum on methods to increase women's access to the political arena. Cate Johnson from USAID, Dorothy Rogers from the U.S. Embassy, and Tamuna Tomashvili from the Georgian Young Lawyers Association assisted NDI in facilitating different parts of the forum. Fifty-four women from the Kartli region attended the forum.

In Tbilisi, NDI met with the women's outreach office from the New Right Party, the Georgian Women's Political Network, an ethnic-minority women's group, activists from the OSCE national women's program, and other small Georgian NGOs. The follow-up meetings were designed to assist them in developing workplans and activities, and to meet other women in the region.

Assessment

Has ISFED developed a system of regular communication within the organization through which it follows the activities of regional branches and informs coordinators of the activities of the central office and other regional branches?

District coordinators submit reports on their local public education and advocacy projects to the central office every two weeks. In this quarter, the ISFED central office revived an old practice of compiling an internal bulletin of district activities that it distributes to branches throughout the country. Irakli Sokolovski, ISFED's Program/Project Manager resumed the monthly bulletin in October, and it has continued each month. Although information is flowing into Tbilisi, many members in the regions remain unaware of the central office's activities. ISFED will discuss improving center-to-regions communications at its February General Assembly.

Have ISFED regional branches developed proposals for civic participation and advocacy activities and implemented these plans?

ISFED administered its second round of the small grants program, beginning in August. Twenty-nine proposals were submitted, and 19 received grants. Grants were awarded for citizen monitoring of the budget process; advocacy for campaigns for public services and efforts to stem corruption by improving public knowledge of rights to have property privatized, to receive a passport or medical services,

In NDI's December visits to the districts, the projects appeared to be going well.. In this quarter the Vake ISFED branch successfully used a letter writing campaign to stop the illegal construction of apartment buildings. The Rustavi branch was able to get information on the activities of the local government that had previously been withheld. In Senaki, ISFED published booklets detailing government officials' failure to pay their property taxes. In Khobi and Chiatura ISFED's investigations reversed illegal refusals to offer medical services or issue passports.

Many projects are midway through advocacy and public information campaigns. Eleven branches organized public meetings with heads of town councils or local executive departments at which the government officials were asked to report on their progress in resolving a problem. All of the 19 branches attracted new volunteers through their local projects. Many published newsletters or public information booklets.

Has ISFED created plans for improving internal management?

ISFED, in consultation with NDI, is in the process of redrafting the organization's charter to reflect the organization's growth from an election-monitoring body run from the top down to a membership-driven organization addressing government accountability and political participation between as well as during elections periods. Meetings of district coordinators facilitated by NDI allowed ISFED to involve its leading local activists in the organization's decision-making process. As a follow-up, each district coordinator was

asked to submit ideas for the next meeting in January on changes to the organization of district branches

The ISFED staff is now beginning to operate according to job descriptions laid out earlier this year. It is considering an annual staff evaluation process for the next quarter.

Has NDI further developed relationships with NGOs focused on gender issues, and assisted them in developing and implementing a strategic plan for program and organizational development?

One group of women from Tbilisi seems very promising. These women, formerly associated with the Georgian Women's Political Network, are currently involved with OSCE's national women's training of trainers program and participated in NDI's November strategic planning/work plan training. They have identified two towns, Alkhatsikhe and Poti, where they believe they can identify and train women civic organizers. Their plan appears aggressive and challenging, yet realistic, and can be implemented with limited support from NDI. NDI helped these women plan a meeting with a women's group in Alkhatsikhe in mid-January and another meeting in late-January in Poti.

The women's group in Gori that organized a forum on women in politics decided to restart a Women's Council that was dissolved after the parliamentary elections in 1999. NDI facilitated a goal-setting exercise at the first meeting of the Council, leading to the group's decision to create a legislative action committee. Their areas of legislative interest are healthcare, children's issues, education, ecology and human rights (domestic violence). Several trainings on how to analyze legislation are scheduled for January.

In Guria, in follow-up meetings from the November strategy and planning workshop, NDI assisted with the creation of a regional women's action group, *United Women for Democracy*. The action group hopes to identify and educate 10,000 women throughout the region to prepare them for the upcoming elections. The action group has established committees and assigned members to villages to recruit members, devise a public relations strategy, develop a questionnaire to better understand what services the group needs to provide to their targeted constituency, and create an active membership for the group.

Local Government Development

Objectives

During this three-month period, NDI's local government program was designed to accomplish the following objectives:

- Assist CAG regional branches in internal and external communications, organizational capacity and the development of local government legislation;

- Improve the leadership skills of female council members of CAG.

Activities

NDI, in cooperation with CAG/Racha, conducted a two-day seminar in Ambrolauri and Tsageri for council members from the four rayons in the Racha region. A total of 100 people attended the training seminar. NDI, a representative from the Ministry of Finance and CAG's lawyer were panelists at the training. Participants received information on new budgetary regulations outlining the division of taxes between local and central budgets, budgetary issues, consultations on legal issues and guidance on strategies for increasing budget transparency. The Ambrolauri council has expressed its interest in conducting public hearings on the budget and asked NDI for future consultations.

NDI advised the Women's Leadership Association (WLA), an association of women council members NDI helped to form, on future projects and on establishing regional chapters. In this period, the WLA established relationships with Tbilisi-based NGOs.

NDI also facilitated several trainings in the regions, at which WLA representatives met with other women activists in the area. These are described in detail in the civic section. During these trainings, WLA was able to recruit more women into the Association. The WLA board elaborated plans to establish regional chapters and has begun to develop a workplan, which will be discussed and adopted in different regions of Georgia.

On December 3, NDI, in cooperation with CAG/Shida Kartli and NGO "Democrati," conducted a training for Khashuri and Gori council members and local NGOs. The seminar covered two topics: budgetary planning and transparency. Speakers taught council members and NGOs how to increase citizen involvement in the decision-making process at the local level. Twenty-five participants from Gori, Khashuri and Surami attended the seminar.

On December 4, NDI, in cooperation with CAG/Samtskhe Javakheti, conducted the same seminar for the six rayons in the Samtskhe Javakheti region. NDI, a representative from the Ministry of Finance and CAG's lawyer led the training. In addition, representatives from the State Chancellery and Parliament served as co-trainers. The training used local budgetary problems as examples to demonstrate how to address budgetary issues. NDI conducted a session on citizens' involvement in budgetary processes. At the end of the meeting, CAG/ Samtskhe Javakheti conducted a board meeting and elected new board members.

As explained in the workplan, NDI plans to choose five or six regional CAG branches to receive up to \$7,000 each through a competitive proposal process. NDI developed the terms for the small grants projects for CAG branches and selected the regions that will be eligible to apply for grants. The criteria for the selection of regions was the following: the existence of a Councils Association branch, no other donor involvement, the branch's productivity over the past two years and the willingness of the chair of the Association to cooperate. On December 14, NDI invited 11 rayons to submit proposals to the small

grants program. Local associations received information on NDI's future plans and participated in a training on how to write a project proposal. NDI explained the guidelines for proposal writing and distributed samples during the training. Throughout December, NDI consulted CAG branches on their project proposals. Eight local branches submitted proposals to NDI for evaluation.

Assessment

Did regional branches of CAG begin to hold regular board meetings?

Yes, branches such as Samtskhe Javakheti, Kakheti and Racha conducted board meetings in the month of October and November and discussed local problems.

Did CAG regional branches communicate more effectively and regularly with the central office? Are they informed of the activities of other CAG branches?

The board meetings had functioned as a conduit for information between branches. NDI and CAG are searching for a mechanism for interbranch communication to replace these meetings. Those branches that will receive small grants will have some joint training/seminars to share experience among each other.

Has the network of women politicians expanded and continued to assist women councilors?

WLA recruited eight local activists in Signagi, 10 in Ambrolauri, six in Akhaltsikhe and five in Gori. In the near future, WLA will begin formal procedures for these prospective new members and get signed application forms from each new member asking to join. In addition, WLA recruited a new coordinator in Khashuri. The WLA board is drafting its workplan and has made plans to establish regional branches in different regions of Georgia in 2002.

PERSONNEL

For the term of this quarter, the Tbilisi office was directed by Mark Mullen, who also continued as civic trainer. Dawn Le served as Program Officer. Scott Kearin worked with political parties. Georgian nationals Ketik Khutsishvili and Khatuna Khvichia served as parliamentary program officer and local government program officer, respectively. In addition, the office retained local staff members who provide interpretation, translation and office and program support. All programs were developed in consultation with NDI's Washington staff.