



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Mission to Georgia

Project: Community-based Voter Education in Eastern and Southern Georgia
Implementing Partner: Mercy Corps

Project Purpose/Objective(s):

- The Objective of the Community-based Voter Education (CBVE) project is to inform citizens about the nature of the forthcoming presidential election, its importance, correct voting procedures and (if finalized) the process for correcting voter lists.

Background:

- Following the abrupt resignation of President Eduard Shevardnadze on Sun Nov. 23rd 2003 the interim president (Nino Burjanadze) was obliged by the constitution to call new presidential elections within 45 days. Despite difficulties in adhering to the candidate registration requirements (50,000 signatures) a total of 14 different candidates are registered from among whom voters will choose on Jan. 4th 2004.
- Mercy Corps implements a substantial Community Mobilization activity across Eastern and Southern Georgia with the underlying aim of getting citizens to engage more actively both in their own development and with their government. Active participation in elections is an important expression of both their rights and responsibilities. The involvement of more and better-informed citizens in these elections fully supports mandate of the OSCE Mission to Georgia.
- In addition to experienced advisory and support staff based in Tbilisi, Mercy Corps has a substantial field-level infrastructure across Eastern and Southern Georgia, enabling it to both directly implement (Kvemo Kartli) and monitor (Shida Kartli, Samtskhe-Javakheti, Kakheti, Mtskheta-Tianeti, Kvemo Kartli) sub-grantee voter education work.
- Despite significant efforts on the part of a number of actors (including Mercy Corps) in the run-up to the parliamentary elections of Nov. 2nd 2003, there is a widely held consensus that voter education is an important factor in ensuring the forthcoming presidential election produces a representative result and is viewed by Georgians as being credible, fair and open. This CBVE proposal compliments voter education being carried out with Azeri communities by NDI, communities in Western Georgia by CARE, and elsewhere in the regions of Georgia by IFES.
- The target group for this proposal is voting age citizens in the targeted communities (see below for detailed list) with an emphasis on involving those who would be less inclined to exercise their civic rights/responsibility in a national election. The beneficiaries are the same group. Mercy Corps will be partnering with the same seven local NGOs (see below) with which it worked during voter education activities for the Nov. 2003 parliamentary elections.

Approach:

- *Activities:* The key activity undertaken by both Mercy Corps and its partner NGOs will be a **significant number of public voter education meetings** to inform the electorate about the forthcoming presidential election, voting procedures and revisions to the electoral lists. Those who attend meetings will be able to distribute printed

information to their wider community (especially in Kvemo Kartli where there were region-wide difficulties in the Nov 2003 parliamentary elections and ignorance remains widespread).

- *Results (Outputs):* The results of CBVE will be an informed and active electorate in targeted areas who turn up on 4th January 2004 and ensure that they can exercise their right to vote in a manner which is consistent with stated procedures/protocols.
 - Election day observation of the turnout and voter knowledge of the correct procedures, along with their active insistence on these being followed in instances of mal-administration are the main indicators of success. The sources of verification will be polling station monitoring. A secondary source of verification will be final reports from both NGO partners and MC staff concerning the voter education meetings conducted.
- *Quality factors*
 - The key aim of this project is to ensure civic participation in an important national political event. Mercy Corps core agency values centre on civil society and the engagement of citizens in their own affairs. Few things are more important expressions of this than national elections, especially in the current Georgian context where, arguably, Georgian civil society has, unexpectedly, been revived in the wake of November's mis-managed elections.
 - The interim government has every incentive to ensure the presidential elections, are accepted by all as being legitimate expressions of the will of the Georgian people.
 - This intervention is time-limited and focused on the Jan 4th presidential elections. However, a longer-term benefit is the raised awareness of, and interest in, national elections which will contribute towards a successful re-run of the 2004 parliamentary elections whenever they are finally scheduled. However, additional voter education, specific to the 2004 re-run of parliamentary elections will need separate funding.
 - Mercy Corps, in co-operation with NDI and ISFED is ensuring region-wide coverage in Kvemo Kartli as a consequence of its great ethnic diversity.
 - All voter education initiatives are targeted to include all citizens of voting age, irrespective of gender, disability etc.
 - With the international focus on Georgia it is considered unlikely there will be any serious disruptions to community-based voter education activities.

Implementation arrangements:

Mercy Corps, through OSCE funds, will provide funds to experienced local NGOs to conduct voter education activities. Each local NGO will sign an agreement with Mercy Corps that outlines the responsibilities of both Mercy Corps and the local NGO taking into account obligations of Mercy Corps to the OSCE under the agreement on the present project. Mercy Corps will be working with the following NGOs (partners): Centre for Support of Reform and Democratic Development, Women's Leadership Association, Life Fund, Freedom and Equality, Association 'Telaveli', Shida Kartli Centre for IDP Rights, International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy. Geographical areas of activities are described in the table below.

Preparatory activities have been carried out since the beginning of December with planning, setting up community meeting schedules etc. The two week period from 15th to 26th December is when most meetings will take place with any extra scheduled for 29/30th December before things close down for New Year. In addition, Mercy Corps and its partners

consider it prudent to minimize meetings of this nature in the days immediately preceding the election itself.

All necessary physical means have been budgeted for in the agreements with the partners or through Mercy Corps for its direct implementation responsibilities. In addition, each partner will be utilising some resources previously allocated by Mercy Corps under its E-GCMI program for voter education in support of the November 2003 parliamentary elections. All unused funds have been re-programmed into this new program.

Mercy Corps Tbilisi and regional-based Grants Officers will be responsible for monitoring partners' performance. In addition, Mercy Corps staff located in Tbilisi will provide oversight to the direct implementation carried out by Mercy Corps staff in Kvemo Kartli.

A final report will be submitted which summarizes individual close-out reports from the partners and Mercy Corps own experience in Kvemo Kartli.

Partner	Region/District	Methodology	Target Group (meeting attendees)	Materials Distribution
Mercy Corps	Kvemo Kartli Region Non-Azeri villages in Bolnisi, Tsalka, Tetri-Tskaro and Dmanisi Districts,	80 Sacrebulo-level community meetings with follow-on info. distribution to the wider community	5,000 voters	17,300 Georgian 830 Russian
Centre for Support of Reform and Democratic Development	Samtskhe-Javakheti Region All sacrebulos in Akhalkhalaki and Ninotsminda Districts	18 community meetings, info. distribution, both in meetings and outside	900 voters	300 Georgian 1,500 Russian
Women's Leadership Association	Kakheti Region All sacrebulos in Sagarejo District	18 meetings specifically targeting marginalized groups Individual visits to invalids	900 voters	1,900 Georgian 100 Russian
Life Fund	Kakheti Region All sacrebulos in, Telavi District, Akhmeta District and Kvareli District	33 community meetings, info. distribution in meetings	1,320 voters	1,300 Georgian 50 Russian
Freedom and Equality	Kvemo-Kartli Region All sacrebulos in Marneuli District	18 community meetings, info. distribution in meetings, and outside meetings	900 voters	2,500 Georgian 2,500 Russian
Association 'Telaveli'	Kakheti Region All sacrebulos in Telavi District	28 community information meetings with follow-up distribution outside meetings	1,700 voters	2,500 Georgian
Shida Kartli Centre for IDP Rights	Shida-Kartli Region All precincts in Gori Town	20 community meetings, drama performances and utilization of mobilizes to	1,000 voters	5,000 Georgian

		disseminate information Individual visits to invalids		
International Society for Fair and Democracy	Mtskheta-Tianeti Region Mtskheta and Akhagori Districts, Rustavi Town and the non-Azeri villages of Gardabani District	35 community meetings Individual meetings	1,750 voters	1,500 Georgian 500 Russian