



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

Mission to Georgia

Project: Western Georgia Community Based Voter Education Initiative (CBVEI)
Implementing Partner: CARE International in the Caucasus

Project Purpose/Objective(s):

The West Georgia Community Based Voter Education Initiative has been designed to increase active participation of vulnerable groups in community based voter education initiatives in the five regions (Guria, Imereti, Samegrelo, Racha-Lechkhumi & Lower Svaneti – working in Ajara is pending) of Western Georgia in order to raise community awareness about voting and election processes, voter rights and responsibilities and the responsibilities of the office of the Presidency; build capacity at a local level in the area of public information dissemination; and develop sustainable mechanisms at the local level.

Background:

Widespread irregularities in the election administration process of November 2 Parliamentary elections have prompted the protests of the Georgian public, which culminated with the resignation of the President, and Georgia has begun a delicate transformation toward a less corrupt and more accountable system of Government. This transformation toward a more transparent, accountable and participatory citizenry is nascent and requires both short and long term support. In the short term, it is imperative to ensure that the citizens of Georgia have the most relevant information to make an informed choice for their future president.

CARE, through the USAID sponsored West Georgia Community Mobilization Initiative (WGCM) is in the last year of a four-year project facilitating the development of a more engaged citizenry in vulnerable communities. West GCM assists communities to strengthen their capacities to identify and address priority needs within the community. West GCM also develops innovative partnerships with targeted communities across sectors that contribute to improved social service and economic growth.

Since the year 2000, West GCM has assisted over 300 vulnerable communities in the regions of Guria, Imereti, Samegrelo, Ajara AR, Upper/Lower Svaneti, and Racha-Lechkhumi. It has strengthened the institutional capacity of Community Based Organizations (CBOs) in each of these target communities. West GCM has also mobilized community resources for the financing of different types of micro-projects, including the rehabilitation of: schools, healthcare facilities, roads, bridges, water and electric supply systems and drainage canals. CARE through WGCM has also awarded over 40 grants to local NGOs in the areas of: Agriculture, Community Mobilization, Health Education, Community Based Health Financing, Community Based Social Service, Community Integrated Management of Childhood Illnesses, Group Lending and most recently, and Voter Education.

The current indicators for socio-economic development, livelihoods, skills and organizational capacity in the communities in Western Georgia show a high degree of commonality across

districts in terms of overall issues/needs. After three years of project implementation, the WGCMI has identified the main overarching problems to be: i) poor infrastructure and basic services, ii) limited economic opportunities in terms of income generation/diversification, and iii) weak civil society structures – one part of which is community access to important information regarding their social and political rights to address issues of sustained socio-economic development.

Access to information

Communities continually highlight the need for more and accurate information regarding social reforms in education, health care and social welfare and information on their government's roles and responsibilities in their lives. With the recent parliamentary elections and the upcoming Presidential elections, CARE has recognized that there are information gaps among citizens about their voting rights and responsibilities and government, structures and practice. Citizens lack clear and reliable information on how to take advantage of their rights or the mechanisms available for them as voters, to lodge complaints or gain redress when their voting rights have been violated.

The above is especially true for remote and more disadvantaged communities in Georgia. There is still a major information gap between urban and rural areas. Ethnic minorities, women, the youth, IDPs and people with disabilities do not always have the ability to access information and government institutions easily. Since these vulnerable groups are more directly affected by poor public policy-making and malpractice in governance at the local and central level and require tailor-made information, these groups are to be included in any voter education activities.

It is essential to provide as much information as possible to voters so they can learn about changes and reforms in electoral processes, take informed decisions and participate as active citizens in elections and other participatory processes. It is important that voters are not just provided with information, but are also supported in developing skills in obtaining information themselves and how to use this information for actions that create an environment where citizens are an active and integral part of the of democratic processes at the grass-roots level.

In the last parliamentary elections in November 2003, CARE, Mercy Corps and IFES collaborated to implement a community based voter education program across Georgia. CARE, through WGCMI, provided grants to qualified local NGOs to implement voter education activities in Western Georgia. Due to the short time period for voter education activities for the upcoming Presidential elections, CARE will grant these previously identified NGOs additional resources to implement community based voter education activities

The OSCE's support to the community based voter education initiative will be instrumental in supporting local NGOs to carry out voter education activities for these critical elections. USAID funds under the ongoing WGCMI project will manage the activities including both programmatic and financial monitoring.

Approach:

This project will provide resources to support NGO projects implemented in partnership with organization(s) from the region/district which will develop and implement sustainable, community based voter education initiatives entailing the following:

- Facilitating discussions and information sessions with communities on voting and election processes with an emphasis on encouraging citizens in obtaining information themselves.
- Offer creative ways for delivering information about election processes and voter rights and responsibilities at the community meetings.
- Offer effective mechanisms for reaching disadvantaged groups such as women, ethnic minorities, disabled, internally displaced persons and others.
- Offer high quality printed materials (either existing materials or materials developed as part of the project, if they do not exist). All materials and use of other Media will be cleared by CARE prior to final approval of projects.
- Offer development of skills and understanding about voting and election process at the local level, which will be used in the future as well.
- Ensure wide community participation, which will motivate community members to actively participate in election processes.
- Demonstrate coordination with other organizations conducting voter education activities such as OSGF and other NGOs to ensure that the proposed activities complement other activities that might be going on in the given region/district in order to avoid duplication.
- Suggest an evaluation process for measuring changes in knowledge as a result of the education campaign.

The participating local NGOs will provide these activities in communities that have already participated in or are scheduled to participate in WGCMI community mobilization activities and most recently, the community based voter education initiative conducted for parliamentary elections in November 2003.

Prior to the commencement of implementation of the activities by the local NGO for each region, a meeting will be scheduled with representatives of the local NGO, West GCMI, local government and perhaps regional authorities, to introduce the **Community Based Voter Education Initiative** objectives, obtain additional detailed field insights and commence plans for the local NGO to meet with a wider cross-section of target community members.

Activities

Under this project, CARE will support local NGOs to do the following activities:

- Mobilization of citizens to check the voter lists for accuracy
- Voter rights and responsibilities
- The Office of the Presidency (its role, responsibilities, structure)
- What citizens should expect from their President
- Why voter participation is important
- Voting procedures from a voters perspective
- Vote counting procedures

- Outreach to disadvantaged groups

Participating Local NGOs will participate in a 2 day training and will be provided specific voter education materials by qualified staff from the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES). The basic package of materials will be developed by IFES and time permitting, will be reviewed by the Central Election Commission (CEC) to ensure that the materials are in accordance with the Georgian Law. The details of this voter education package will be provided at the WGCMI information meetings and posted on the WGCMI website.

The IFES basic materials will include information on the following topics:

- Voter Registration: Voter lists - Why it is important to check, how, where, when, what to do if your name is not there.
- Presidency and its Role in Georgian Governance – structure, numbers, functions
- Voter's Rights and Responsibilities: Polling Day (our thought is to include times of polling, the process of voting, how to mark the ballot papers)
- How the votes are counted – Precinct level and District consolidation

CARE will review all materials disseminated within the community to ensure consistency, accuracy and lack of political bias.

IFES has maintained an on-site presence in Georgia since 1998, providing technical support to the Central Election Commission (CEC) and undertaking civic education initiatives. IFES assisted the Parliament and representatives of the Georgian NGO community in the drafting process of the Unified Election Code and worked with the CEC in development of election administration procedures, training of election officials (DEC and PEC), official voter information campaigns and most recently, in computerizing the voter list data. In addition, IFES is staging regional civic education activities to increase citizen awareness of elections and governance issues. Currently IFES is working in Imereti region.

- Anticipated Outputs: Concrete physical and non-physical outputs to be achieved:
 - Trained Voter Educators in 206 communities of West Georgia
 - 84,180 citizens in 236 communities and 40 IDP Collective Centers of West Georgia increase knowledge and are informed about legislation requirements, election procedures and voters rights.
 - Active participation of citizens West Georgia to check the voter lists.
 - Active participation of citizens in Presidency Elections

Indicators and sources of verification of the achievement of project objectives and results

- “Community’s Voter Educators” participation at the training/meeting in regional level (participants list, Monitoring Reports of CMOs and GOs)
- Frequency of meeting and list of community members participated at the Voter Education meetings in communities and IDP’s Centers (participants list, Monitoring Reports of CMOs and GOs)



- Distributed leaflets, posters and information in communities between community members.
- Pre and post tests filled out by training/ meeting participants
- Narrative Reports – Each NGO will design a narrative reports to report on their activities
- *Assumptions*

CBVE meetings may not be able to be held due to the influence of government's representatives and different political parties during the meeting in the communities. Additionally security constraints may prevent travel to communities. CARE is preparing to go into Ajara if approved by sponsors. If not approved, then the NGO will return the unspent money back to CARE.

- *Implementation arrangements*

As mentioned above, CARE, through OSCE funds, will provide funds to experienced local NGOs to conduct voter education activities. Each local NGO will sign an agreement with CARE that outlines the responsibilities of both CARE and the Local NGO taking into account obligations of CARE to the OSCE under the agreement on the present project. CARE will be working with the following NGOs:

- Euro Caucasian Cooperation Association (Samegrelo) and maybe Ajara if approved
- Racha_ Lechkhumi & Lower Svaneti Sakrebulo Association (Racha-Lechkhumi and Lower Svaneti)
- Teachers Union "Education and the World"(IDP Centers in Imereti)
- Georgian Young Lawyers association/ Kutaisi Branch Office (Half of Imereti Region)
- Helpers International Foundation (Guria Region and Half of Imereti Region)

Note: Due to the current situation in Adjara where it remains unclear if the presidential elections will be held, CARE will not conduct voter education activities in this region unless the Adjara authorities agree to hold free and fair elections.

Operational plan/Time table

12/12/03 The Project will begin with training activities of participating NGOs

12/12/03 –12/31/03 Local NGO conduct Community based meetings disseminating voting materials.

1/15/04 Final reports due

Division of tasks between OSCE and implementing partner organisations

CARE will manage and disseminate OSCE funds to local NGOs who participated in the WGCMI sponsored voter education activities for the November 2003 parliamentary elections. CARE will monitor the Project implementation process. and will create all necessary conditions for the OSCE to monitor this process.

Staffing requirements

The project will support staffing costs of local NGOs as outlined in the attached budget. CARE will provide staff that are supported under the WGCMI for monitoring.

Monitoring, reporting and evaluation procedures (the latter if foreseen)

CARE staff will monitor activities of the implementing NGOs on a daily basis and NGOS will provide a final written report at the end of the project. Financial documentation will be reviewed by qualified CARE staff.

Budget:

- *Detailed breakdown per cost category*
- *Long-term possible financial implications*
- *Envisaged sources of funding, as appropriate*