

Project Description
**“Support for the CEC Voter Information Campaign in the Georgian
Parliamentary Elections of 28 March 2004”**

Project Aim:

- The aim of this project is to ensure that the Georgian election administration structures conduct the 28 March repeat Parliamentary election in a transparent manner at all stages including pre and post-election phases.

Project Objective(s):

- The overall objective of the project is to ensure that the Georgian electorate receives in a timely and professional manner all information necessary to enable them to make an adequate exercise of their right to vote.
- The project also strives to strengthen the institutional capacity of the Central Election Commission and its departments, namely the newly established Public Relations Office (PRO) to work efficiently for holding democratic and fair elections in Georgia.

Background:

Following the 2003 November events, the Central Election Commission has embarked on a complex reform of election administration and CEC management. Given the tight time-frame for holding Presidential Elections and the significance of the high turn-over of electorate for validating the results of the election, in December 2003 the CEC has established Public Relations Office (PPIO) with the aim of increasing the public awareness on election procedures (voter registration, voting procedures, etc.), and of ensuring transparency of the CEC's work in order to provide an avenue for a dual flow of information between the CEC and public.

The PRO was established with the assistance of the OSCE, UNDP and IFES. Within a short period of time the office managed to conduct an effective public information campaign. Significant components of this campaign were related to voter marking and the compilation of the voter lists, both of which were implemented within the framework of the Georgia Election Assistance Programme (GEAP) Phase I. The current project falls within the short and long objectives of the second phase of this programme. Its implementation will assist to conduct democratic and fair Parliamentary elections on 28 March 2004 and also strengthen the capacity of the PRO in preparation for future election administration processes.

Approach:

The project will be undertaken in a two-fold approach and will relate to all election related aspects, including preparation phases (with the exception of the voter list compilation and voter registration activities), election day and post election phases.

The project will be supported by a team of 4 persons, including the Head of the PRO, two project officers and a logistician/driver. The team will be assisted by the OSCE project manager where necessary.

The campaign will use TV and radio as primary outreach tools. The TV and radio campaigns will be supported with press releases, information leaflets and posters.

Media strategy development:

The PRO will develop a media information and outreach strategy. This will include a strategy for reacting to changes quickly and appropriately and will ensure a proactive information effort for the electorate to be informed about key activities related to the election preparation and conduct.

Direct contact with media representatives:

The PRO uses several tools to ensure better communication and information flow to the media representatives. The Office prepares special news releases and documents widely distributed through print and electronic media facilities. Briefings and presentations will be actively used for pre-election, election day and post-election period where the journalists can have the possibility to directly track the developments at the CEC and receive information from the primary sources. Media trips, organised in various regions of Georgia which proved during the 2004 Presidential Election to be an effective tool for reaching out all parts of the country will also be continued for the Parliamentary Elections. Through these events the CEC will inform the various stakeholders throughout Georgia about the election administration preparations for the Parliamentary Election and inform them about important procedural or administrative issues.

Targeted voter information campaigns:

The PRO will implement special public awareness projects and campaigns to inform voters about:

- *Election day information campaign formulation and implementation* - A campaign advising voters of their voting rights and responsibilities will be implemented a week before election day. This effort will focus on informing and motivating voters. Television and radio will be used as primary modes of communication in this effort. Leaflets, posters and a planned media outreach effort will also be used to provide targeted information about the voting process to the public.
- *Telephone enquiry service* - Based on the agreement with the company "Info Georgia XXI", the free-of-charge '09' public enquiry line will be used to support the election day information campaign to inform voters about election day rights and responsibilities and to answer to their question regarding voting procedures. In addition, this service will be used to record public complaints on violations of the electoral procedures. More than 9 advisors will be available to answer more difficult technical questions.
- *Internet outreach* - The CEC's website will be updated and maintained to continue to be used as a mode of communicating information to the public and as a mechanism to ensure the transparency of the election administration.
- *Post-election evaluation and report* - an evaluation workshop will be conducted after the election to further strengthen the effort to institutionalise the public outreach efforts undertaken by a permanent public information unit. The information and analysis gathered at this workshop will consolidate 'lessons learned' and form the basis of the development for the longer term sustainability of a public information unit of the CEC.

External voter education outreach co-ordination and support:

The PRO will co-ordinate and oversee production and publication of all materials related to the elections and prepared by various national and international organisations.

Dissemination of printed material:

Dissemination of printed material (leaflets and posters) will take place through CEC channels (DECs and PECs) and will be supported by domestic and international NGOs, who have agreed to assist.

Implementation arrangements:

- *The PRO will prepare an Operational plan/Time table by within 3 days after signature of the agreement.*
- *The PRO is responsible for the implementation of all the activities. The Head of the PPIO will maintain the day to day management of the project implementation, while the OSCE will provide financial, or expertise assistant if needed.*
- *The PRO is equipped with the needed technical equipment and some of the lacking ones will be purchased with the assistance of the UNDP.*
- *The PRO is now fully staffed and has recruited all the needed specialists.*
- *The Head of the PRO and respective OSCE personnel will be responsible for the monitoring of project implementation. The PRO will conduct evaluation of the impact of its work with relevant stakeholders after the Parliamentary elections that would be useful for identifying lessons learned and areas for improvement.*
- *Any equipment or materials, purchased for the implementation of the project, will be transferred to the CEC and become the CEC property upon successful implementation of the project.*

Results:

The project will generate the following results:

1. The 'official' information produced by the CEC will be accurate and reliable.
2. The public image of the CEC will be strengthened and the election administration will maintain and increase its degree of transparency.
3. The media campaign will be both proactive and reactive.
4. The capacity of the public information unit will be developed.
5. The post-election recommendations will improve future public information campaign.

Budget: 97 890 Euro