



# Inside IRIS Georgia

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*Inside IRIS Georgia* is a monthly newsletter published by IRIS Georgia, a USAID contractor implementing the Rule of Law Program in Georgia.

IRIS Georgia is a satellite office of the IRIS Center at the University of Maryland. IRIS is an internationally recognized source of research and advisory expertise for addressing economic growth and governance issues in transition and developing countries. See the Web site at <http://www.iris.umd.edu> for more information.

## Ozurgeti hosts well-known writer



On May 15-16, 2004 the well-known Georgian writer Otia Ioseliani visited the Ozurgeti Young Teachers Union and participated in an event devoted to his work relating to articles of the Children's Rights Convention. This two-day event was held under the project "Ancestors and Descendants Protecting Children's Rights" funded by IRIS and USAID.

During the event, special emphasis was made on the fact that moral values of Georgian literature and

art are rooted in Georgian folk songs. These values include: a child's right to be raised in a family, the right to protect his/her dignity and life, the right to be provided with food, clothes and shelter. Event attendees joined together to sing a variety of Georgian folk songs.

Part of the event was devoted to reading of dramatic scenes, which were preceded by explanations that the content of the stories corresponded to articles of the Children's Rights Convention. Young theatre students performed "Daughter of Dadiani and a Pauper" by N. Lortkipanidze, "Our Apricot" by Giorgi Leonidze, "What Has

Lullaby Done" by Iakob Gogebashvili, and "Hellados" by Nodar Dumbadze.

Article 42, which states that every child has the right to be protected from war, was discussed in the stories "Dog", "Don't Wake Him Up" by Nodar Dumbadze and "Tsabunia" by K. Lortkipanidze.

Otia Ioseliani was very happy with the children's work. Before leaving, he wrote the following in the book of impressions: "As far as I know, this is the place where students are brought up correctly".

## Newsletter increases legal aid requests

As part of its IRIS grant, Union Article 42 of the Constitution began publishing a monthly newsletter in order to distribute success stories of free legal aid, provide legal advice to the general public and present and analyze problematic legal matters, in particular those dealing with criminal rights.

Two issues of the newsletter have been published so far and were

distributed to court houses, jails and prisons, as well the general public.

"Soon after publishing the newsletter, the number of requests for free legal aid evidently increased. Many of those who ask for legal help say that they reached us based on information from the newsletter" said Roland Asakashvili, head of the project.



## UNAG training for public officials on FOI issues

On June 1-3, 2004, the UN Association of Georgia held a Freedom of Information (FOI) training for public officials. The training was organized as the second phase of their project "Support for the Implementation of the FOI Chapter of the General Administrative Code in Public Agencies."

Representatives of 24 public agencies participated in the training, including representatives from the Office of the President, various

ministries, Constitutional Court, Supreme Court, district and regional courts, Prosecutor General's Office, national commissions and Tbilisi Mayor's Office.



The training covered many issues related to FOI, including procedures

for the appeal of disputes to higher levels of the public agencies and courts.

After the training, the participants took a test in order to determine what they had learned through the training.

The organizers divided the group into three teams. One team requested information; the second team played the role of a public agency and made decisions about what information to provide;

and the third team heard the case in a mock trial to determine the legality of the public agency's decision.

"The training, tests and mock trial were important since the participants had an opportunity to learn the procedures and check their practical knowledge," said Maia Kopaleishvili, IRIS's staff attorney, after attending the training.

## Liberty Institute: Building bridges of cooperation

Liberty Institute is carrying out an educational campaign on freedom of religion. The aim of the campaign is to raise society's awareness about various legal issues related to freedom of religion.

As part of this campaign, Liberty Institute hosted trainings for religion teachers from secondary and Sunday schools on May 20-23 and June 3-6. The objective of training was to create a

network for participants to exchange information.

A wide variety of professionals attended the training, including teachers from Tbilisi and other regions such as Akhaltsikhe, Kutaisi and Rustavi. Representatives of the Orthodox, Catholic, Baptist-Evangelistic and Pentecostal congregations also attended.

Topics discussed included human rights, freedom of religion (also as it relates to the Constitution of Georgia), international and Georgian case law related to the freedom of religion, and the Constitutional Agreement between the State and the Georgian Orthodox Church.

"One of the main achievements of the training was that it brought people together and built bridges of cooperation. Despite tense discussions, participants were able to reach consensus and were respectful even if their opinions were not the same," said Mr. Sozar Subari, the director of the Rule of Law Program at Liberty Institute.

## Collaboration with other NGOs



In December 2003, IRIS gave three Internews documentaries to the Tbilisi Young Men Christians Association (YMCA). Due to additional requests, IRIS donated another nine films in May 2004.

"These movies were very well accepted by

our Day Care Program teenagers," said Mr. Tengiz Gogotishvili, the chairman of YMCA.

"Promised Land," a short film about the problems of human trafficking in Georgia, in particular attracted great interest.

"I realized how an improper attitude can reflect on my life and future," said Lasha Tskhoidze, 15 years old.

IRIS will continue its collaboration with YMCA.

Initially only teachers were invited to the training. However, due to growing interest, officials of several educational districts and members of several Orthodox NGOs also attended. Additionally, the Archbishop of Kutaisi and Gelati Kalistrate sent the main mentor of religion teachers to the training.

## Economists Closeout

The “Implementing the New License Legislation” project of the Association of Young Economists of Georgia (AYEG) was completed on May 31.

Different guides and research published under the project address licensing in the food products



manufacturing, medical, pharmaceutical, and veterinary sectors.

The published research, conducted by experts in the respective sectors, identified legislative and practical issues regarding licensing. The relevant state agencies recognized and discussed these issues at separate workshops.

During the project, three workshops and eight conferences were conducted for state agencies, as well as 12 conferences for entrepreneurs. A large number of entrepreneurs received information about the new licensing law, license conditions and procedures for obtaining a license or a permit.

Young Economists have created model regulations for five state agencies. Three out of five regulations have already been adopted. The other two are already in use and are expected to be officially adopted after the reorganization of the agencies. The regulations drafted by AYEG are essential to the operations of the state agencies.

IRIS is discussing a new, similar partnership with the Association of Young Economists for funding in 2005, to cover licensing in additional sectors.

## Alfami closeout

Organization Alfami has been one of the smaller, yet just as effective, grant partners of IRIS Georgia. Alfami, whose project expired at the end of May 2004, took a creative approach to communicating the importance of individual rights and liberties through various media and artistic exhibitions.



Alfami implemented a range of activities, from documentary films to creative postcards.

In Tbilisi, Alfami organized three exhibitions: “Victim,” “Public Information Box” and “Dysfunctional Country.” These exhibitions were also presented regionally in Rustavi, Telavi and Akhaltsikhe. Alfami also used publications and video material to convey and disseminate human rights ideals.

Additionally, Alfami published postcards and a notebook-calendar for 2005 and presented fundamental constitutional rights to Georgian society through artwork of classical and modern Georgian genres.

The majority of Alfami’s works were shown and distributed at regional exhibitions and

meetings, as well as in subway stations, along streets and in post offices and supermarkets.

Alfami’s activities were a fundamentally new way of delivering human rights ideas to society through artistic images. Wide interest expressed by society, art critics, and the governmental and non-governmental sectors illustrates that this method was effective.

More information about Alfami, as well as a digital version of all works produced under the project, can be found at [www.actualart.ge](http://www.actualart.ge).

**Introducing IRIS staff**

**Lexo Khubulava, Public Information Officer**



Lexo Khubulava

Lexo implements several projects in the areas of freedom of information and information technology, administers the IRIS Georgia website, and provides support for the office computer equipment and network.

Lexo also contributes to the translation and editing of legal texts whenever necessary.

Lexo has an international law degree from Tbilisi State University. His previous professional

experience includes work with international agencies and the NGO sector.

A native Georgian, Lexo speaks fluent Russian and English.

**IRIS Georgia’s calendar of events – June 2004**

Date	Events
June 1, 2, 3	GYLA: town hall meeting in Gori on the right to property Ozurgeti Young Teachers Union: presents the movies on children’s rights (through 7 June) Internews: broadcasts a documentary on Youth Activities (Imedi TV) UNAG: training for civil servants on FOI issues Green Wave: radio program “Borchalo Tatars and Ossetians” Liberty Institute: training of school teachers of religion, in freedom of religion and tolerance
June 5, 6	JTC: training in Administrative Law for judicial assistants
June 8, 9, 10	Liberty Institute: round table in Akhaltsikhe: Corruption / patients’ rights in the region GYLA: town hall meeting in Ambrolauri region on freedom of information Green Wave: radio program “Georgian Golden Age and European Renaissance XI-XIII centuries” Internews: airing a documentary on anticorruption activities in Georgian schools (Imedi TV)
June 11	GYLA: town hall meeting in Bolnisi region on freedom to property
June 12, 13	JTC: training in Administrative Law for judicial assistants
June 14	ICCC: radio performance No. 11
June 15	GYLA: town hall meeting in Zestaponi on administrative proceedings GYLA: town hall meeting in Dusheti on juvenile delinquency
June 16	GYLA: round table in Tbilisi about the freedom of religion
June 17	GYLA: town hall meeting in Kutaisi on available remedies in case of human rights violations Pluralism Center: presents a book and a film “Human Rights and the Georgian Culture” Green Wave: radio program “Ilia Chavchavadze”
June 18	Liberty Institute: round table in Poti - the outcome of monitoring of human rights violations
June 19, 20	IRIS: training for journalists on FOI issues in Bakuriani ICCC: radio performance No. 12 JTC: training in Administrative Law for assistants of Judges Liberty Institute: round table in Kutaisi - Optimization of the educational system in the region
June 21	Liberty Institute: round table in Telavi on problems in accessing public information
June 22	Liberty Institute: round table in Rustavi on corruption in the mayor’s office and municipality Ozurgeti Young Teachers Union: organizes Karl Popper debates - - “The authority must protect children from violence” GYLA: town hall meeting in Gori on right to social security GYLA: town hall meeting in Akhmeta on FOI issues
June 23-25	GYLA: town hall meeting for journalists on ECHR GYLA: west and east of Georgia – training for judges on Administrative Procedures Green Wave: radio program “Heritage of “Tergdaleulebi” IRIS: Presentation of IRIS Georgia activities and publications in Telavi Pluralism Center: presents a book and a film in Signaghi Institute of Law: Constitutional roundtable on the Constitutional rights of accused persons
June 26	Pluralism Center: presents a book and a film in Telavi
June 28	Liberty Institute: roundtable on optimization of the educational system in Shida Kartli
June 29	GYLA: town hall meeting in Kutaisi and Segnagi region on FOI issues GYLA: town hall meeting in Telavi on protection of human rights
June 30	Ozurgeti Young Teachers Union: presents documentary about children’s right to be healthy

**Editorial Policy**

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