



INSIDE IRIS GEORGIA

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Young Filmmakers in the Ozurgeti Region



On April 25th, IRIS grantee Ozurgeti Young Teachers Union presented a documentary that had been filmed by students in the Ozurgeti region. The film depicts the poor conditions in regional schools.

“Children go to school in an environment that is absolutely unsuitable for them, a violation of Articles 24 (right to health) and 28 (right to education) of the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child*,” explained Marina Topuria, President of Ozurgeti Young Teachers Union.

According to Ms. Topuria, 70% of schoolchildren in Georgia suffer from scoliosis and infectious diseases, which are primarily caused by broken sewage pipes and unsanitary water supply systems at schools.

After watching the documentary, regional Governor Zhani Kalandadze promised to visit regional schools and review their complaints. He also promised to try to increase financial support to schools from the state central budget. “Based on information we’ve received, Governor Kalandadze is already visiting schools,” added Ms. Topuria.



Freedom of Information Training



On April 16th, IRIS hosted a Freedom of Information (FOI) training for different state agencies on various administrative act issues and the related appeal procedures. Justice Maia Vachadze of the Supreme Court Chamber for Administrative Cases presented at the training along with Maia Kopaleishvili, an IRIS staff attorney.

Different administrative law issues and experiences in court were discussed during the meeting. IRIS publications and related materials were distributed to 15 participants. “IRIS will continue to train public officials on various problematic issues of administrative law,” said Ms. Kopaleishvili.



Review of Accomplishments with Grantee Internews Georgia



After several years of producing original films and receiving a media award for work funded through grants from IRIS, Internews Georgia's work with IRIS has come to a close.

With IRIS funding, Internews Georgia produced 19 documentaries and 22 Public Service Announcements (PSAs) that were aimed at informing the public

about their legal rights and anti-corruption issues. The public awareness campaign proved effective in reaching people in the capital as well as those in the regions.

IRIS funded two experts to assist Internews Georgia in creating effective media products—Magda Walter, a documentary film production expert, and Jerry Hunnicutt, a PSA expert.

During their three years of work with IRIS, Internews Georgia managed to set new standards in PSA production. Their films and PSAs were aired throughout the

country and have been extremely popular. In 2002, Internews Georgia received a Golden ADDY award for producing Rule of Law PSAs.



“The PSAs and films produced by Internews Georgia have been some of IRIS's most effective public awareness tools,” said David Magradze, IRIS's Deputy Chief of Party in Georgia.

UN Association Emphasizes Freedom of Information Reporting

The General Administrative Code of Georgia requires that public institutions provide annual reports in December of each year to the President and Parliament of Georgia to outline their implementation of Freedom of Information (FOI) regulations.

Over the last year, IRIS grantee United Nations Association of Georgia (UNAG) has actively worked with targeted public institutions to support their compliance with the reporting requirement.

In 2004, only 135 reports were provided. Of these, 28% were provided by public institutions in the capital. The remaining 72% of the

reports were provided by regional public institutions that UNAG had targeted.



In December 2004, UNAG conducted an analysis of the reporting process to study the format and content of submitted reports and to determine what obstacles existed in the reporting process.

As a result of this analysis, in February 2005 UNAG published a brochure of recommendations

for public institutions to better comply with the requirement.

A total of 100 brochures were sent to various public institutions in Tbilisi and throughout the regions.



Zviad Devdariani, UNAG's Rule of Law Project Director, explained, “UNAG will continue to assist public institutions with compliance. UNAG will also work with the President's Office and Parliament in their examination of the reports.”

Liberty Institute Highlights Freedom of Speech and Expression Law



On April 18th, Liberty Institute (LI) held a workshop in Tbilisi on the new *Freedom of Speech and Expression Law*. The goal of the workshop was to promote proper application and increased awareness of the law among judges, lawyers and members of the media.

LI staff members discussed new legal procedures that had been established under the law.



Participants had an opportunity to ask questions and share their experiences with such issues as burden of proof and legal aspects of editorial independence.

Kote Kublashvili, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, served as the guest speaker at the workshop.



“Implementation of this law is very important to us as it is based on case law of the European Court of Human Rights,” said Chief Justice Kublashvili. He further stated that in the near future, Georgian courts will be required to consider decisions and practices of the Supreme Court as obligatory, thus introducing the concept of case law to Georgia.

A two-volume *Freedom of Expression manual*, which LI compiled and published in 2005, was presented as a resource. Materials introducing the new *Freedom of Speech and Expression Law* were also distributed at the workshop.

“Trainings and workshops targeted towards practicing judges and lawyers will have a crucial impact. The *Freedom of Speech and Expression Law* was adopted almost a year ago. However, it has never been fully implemented due to a lack of awareness among legal professionals,” observed LI’s Tamar Kintsurashvili. LI will continue to conduct similar workshops throughout Georgia.



Georgian Young Lawyers’ Association Legal Aid Case



In March 2005, client TK applied to the Georgian Young Lawyers Association’s (GYLA) legal aid clinic for assistance. At that time she had already filed a complaint with the court against her husband to whom she had been legally married since 1994.

TK and her husband own a flat in Tbilisi where they had lived together with their ten year old son. When TK’s husband began drinking regularly, being aggressive towards family members and neighbors and being physically abusive towards TK, she decided to move with her son to her parents’ home.

At one point her husband went to her workplace, threatened her with an ax and demanded that TK’s

employer fire her. After this TK submitted a divorce application to the court. TK’s husband filed a counterclaim requesting a reconciliation period and that the court recognize him as the 50% owner of their property.

With GYLA’s legal assistance, the court granted two-thirds of the property to TK as long as the child remained with her. The court also awarded child support to TK and granted a divorce without a reconciliation period.

Introducing IRIS Grantee Staff



Giorgi Meladze

Giorgi Meladze, Liberty Institute

Giorgi Meladze joined Liberty Institute (LI) in 2001, and he has served as the Rule of Law Director at LI since September 2004.

Mr. Meladze manages IRIS's Rule of Law program activities at LI and the funds devoted to the program's implementation.

Mr. Meladze holds a law degree from Tbilisi State University. He was also a Public Interest Law Initiative visiting scholar at Columbia University Law School in 2002 and 2003.

Giorgi is a native Georgian speaker and is fluent in English and Russian.

Schedule of May Events:

Date	Events
May 12	Ozurgeti Young Teachers Union: regional debate tournament. Topic: "The state must provide education for adolescents."
May 15	Liberty Institute: Press Club Session in Tbilisi, regarding restitution of property to the church, rights of private owners; Young Economists: training for businessmen engaged in the food production sector; Young Economists: conference concerning research findings (food products sector);
May 23	Liberty Institute: presentation of the first draft of Citizens Charter (internal regulations) to local government officials in Gori;
May 25	Liberty Institute: presentation of the first draft of Citizens Charter (internal regulations) to local government officials in Kutaisi; Liberty Institute: workshop on freedom of speech and freedom of religion issues for mass media and legal professionals in Batumi (through May 27);
May 26	Liberty Institute: presentation of the first draft of Citizens Charter (internal regulations) to local government officials in Telavi;
May 28	Liberty Institute: presentation of the first draft of Citizens Charter (internal regulations) to local government officials in Batumi;
May 30	Liberty Institute: presentation of the first draft of Citizens Charter (internal regulations) to local government officials in Akhaltsikhe;

Editorial Policy

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