



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.

UNAG Program Stage II Closing Conference

The United Nations Association of Georgia (UNAG) has completed its recent IRIS-funded nine-month grant, which focused on implementing the Freedom of Information (FOI) Chapter of the General Administrative Code in public institutions.

UNAG successfully introduced the FOI Chapter to approximately 200 public institutions throughout Georgia. As a result of the grant and UNAG efforts, ordinary citizens received guidance regarding the functions, importance and correct application of the FOI Chapter.

Four model documents, in Georgian, English and Russian, distributed throughout the country, have become manuals for local public servants and have contributed significantly to the project. Approximately 165 targeted public institutions utilize the model documents, specifically the "Job Description of the Officer Responsible for Provision of Public Information" document. In addition, 155 public institutions have expressed their readiness to compile and submit information about FOI requests to Parliament and the President of Georgia for the year 2004.

Further, UNAG prepared a package of draft amendments, as well as the draft law on "Dues for Copying Public Information," and discussed them with the Parliament Committee on Legal Issues.

On December 4-5, 2004, UNAG hosted a conference to summarize their project activities. Representatives of the President's Office, the Public Service Council, local NGO's and the mass media attended the event. Guests received a detailed report highlighting UNAG's efforts to encourage local government officials' rule of law efforts.

The report doubled as a guide for public agencies on how to facilitate standards set in the Freedom of Information Chapter. UNAG's Zviad Devdariani commented, "We invited most of our prospective partners for the next year in order to share our mission statement for 2005".

In 2005, UNAG will focus on developing procedures to administer the General Administrative Code in large cities such as Tbilisi and Batumi. UNAG also plans on actively collaborating with the Public Service Council to ensure adequate training of public servants in FOI-related issues. Devdariani comments, "Negotiations with the Public Service Council are underway. This is the state agency that is responsible for the training of state servants and thus a very important partner for us."

New Films from Internews for 2005

Internews was busy filming Public Service Announcements (PSAs) for the Rule of Law program during the last quarter of 2004.

PSAs about Freedom of Speech, bribery, cost of corruption, trafficking in human beings and customs clearance for vehicles have been prepared and are scheduled to air in 2005.

The slogan: “*know the law and you*

will be protected!” will be changed to “*protect the law, and it will protect you!*”. The new slogan “better reflects the ideas behind Internews’ PSAs” commented David Magradze, Senior Staff Attorney at IRIS Georgia.

Future IRIS Georgia newsletters will provide greater detail of the planned PSAs.

New Calendar for 2005 from UNAG



UNAG printed approximately 1,000 copies of a 2005 calendar for targeted public institutions.

The calendar is extremely informative and contains weekly topics related to the Freedom of Information Chapter (FOI) of the General Administrative Code. The calendar will be a helpful guide for public agencies trying to implement the FOI Chapter.

Licensing Hotline is a Success!

The Licensing Hotline, introduced by the Association of Young Economists of Georgia (AYEG) an IRIS grantee, proved to be a success. Of **330** calls made to the Licensing Hotline, **270** entrepreneurs have received valuable consultation regarding licensing issues, related procedures and deadlines - while other callers have received personal consultations and legal acts and guides.

AYEG activities, including the Licensing Hotline, receive excellent media coverage and are a valuable resource to businesses and individuals. AYEG’s Ani Katamadze comments,



“Entrepreneurs who use the hotline are very thankful for our services and in most cases wish to come to the office and have further discussions about various licensing issues”.

Anti-trafficking Update

Introduced in previous newsletters, IRIS’s active involvement in anti-trafficking activities continues.

On December 29th, President Saakashvilli signed a new decree establishing the 2005-2006 State Action Plan to Combat Human Trade (trafficking).

By January 29, 2005, a Temporary Anti-Trafficking Inter-Agency Commission will be created. The Public Defender’s Office and various NGOs have been asked to help implement the Action Plan together with the government and monitor its developments.

On January 12, IRIS representatives attended a meeting organized by OSCE. Security Council representatives participated in the meeting and have come up with the idea to create a working group of international organizations and local NGOs to support the Temporary Anti-Trafficking Inter-Agency Commission. IRIS and GYLA representatives expressed interest in becoming members of the working group and underlined the need to schedule workshops in order to promote collaboration and the exchange of information among state agencies, the donor community and local NGOs.

Licensing Hotline

!!! 93 64 75 !!!

Press Club on Problems in Judiciary

On December 10, IRIS grantee Liberty Institute (LI) held a Press Club Session focusing on corruption and incompetence in the judiciary. LI compiled instances where freedom of expression and related legislation had been misinterpreted in Georgian courts. The material were presented for public discussion and analysis.



The Gori region was outlined as the most resistant to the FOI issues. In some cases, the Gori court made decisions based on old legislation rather than the new laws addressing freedom of expression.

The Secretary of the Supreme Council of Justice attended the Press Club and, as the result of LI research, disciplinary actions were initiated against 23 judges.

The Press Club Session received widespread media coverage.

Citizens Charter Flyers

Liberty Institute (LI) created six professional charters including the "Citizens Charter" as a result of professional focus group surveys conducted in Tbilisi and other regions of Georgia.

The goal of the survey is to define the notion of corruption as it is perceived by representatives of different professional groups. LI aims to raise public awareness while promoting public participation and transparency.

The Citizens' Charter, Parents' Charter, Students' Charter, Teachers' Charter, Charter for Public Officials and Priest's Charter are the result of these focus groups, which were organized in seven major Georgian cities in June of 2004.

The most important question asked in the survey was "What is corruption and how to struggle against it?." LI experts developed charters as the result of the survey responses and analysis and will distribute promotional flyers during LI regional campaigns.

Legal Aid Success Case

On September 10th an individual known as M.C. contacted GYLA's legal aid center for assistance. M.C. claimed that on September 2nd he was detained and charged by the police for stealing 300 grams of aluminum. The police considered the amount of aluminum significant and a criminal case has begun per Paragraph 2 of Article 182. M.C. did not have any previous criminal records and lived in an abandoned ruined structure. M.C. claimed to have found the aluminum, in the form of electric wires in the abandoned structure where he lived at the time. Assuming an object discovered in an abandoned building has no owner, M.C.'s action was most likely a mistake.

M.C. was not given proper legal assistance while detained.

Yet he could have been released had he been provided adequate defense.

GYLA chose to provide legal assistance for M.C. during the pre-trial investigation state. On November 11, 2004, Georgian Parliament adopted a law abolishing Article 182 of the Georgia Criminal Procedure Code. After Article 182 was abolished, the defense requested M.C. be tried under the new law and receive a lesser penalty.

The request was granted and M.C. was released from court.

GYLA Free Legal Aid Hotline
!!! 99 50 76 !!!



Introducing IRIS staff



Lasha Chkhatarashvili

Lasha Chkhatarashvili, Accountant

Lasha has been IRIS Georgia's accountant since 2000. Lasha manages and tracks project expenses, reports expenses to IRIS/College Park, and maintains and manages IRIS-Georgia bank accounts.

Prior to joining IRIS, Lasha served as an accountant with the firm Begiashvili & Co. Limited, as well

as other private companies.

Lasha holds a degree in micro-economics from Tbilisi State University's Department of Economics, International Law and Economic Relations. Lasha has also completed International Standards Bookkeeping courses.

Congratulations !!!

Eka Tkeshelashvili

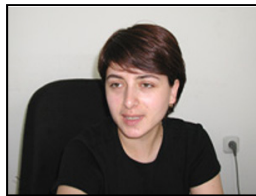
This month we bid farewell to Eka Tkeshelashvili, who has served as staff attorney at IRIS before becoming Deputy Chief of Party.

Eka has been with the Rule of Law program since the fall of 2002.

Starting in January 2005, Eka will begin her appointment as the Deputy Minister of Justice of Georgia. The main areas of her work will include international legal relations,

probation services, execution of civil judgment and the general coordination of penitentiary system reform. Eka will also work on reform of the criminal justice system and free legal aid.

IRIS congratulates Eka with her new appointment and wishes her success in her career.



Eka Tkeshelashvili

Schedule of January events:

Date	Events
Jan 17	GYLA: town hall meeting in Telavi for public agencies and general public on FOI
Jan 18	GYLA: town hall meeting in Batumi for representatives of mass media and general public on freedom of speech and expression
Jan 20	GYLA: roundtable in Tbilisi for NGOs and state agency representatives on anti-torture activities Liberty Institute: press club session on corruption in regional branches of Tbilisi State University: illegal collection of military fees
Jan 22	GYLA: town hall meeting in Akhaltsikhe for journalists and general public on freedom of speech and expression
Jan 26	GYLA: town hall meeting in Telavi for NGOs on social rights
Jan 28	GYLA: town hall meeting in Rustavi for NGOs on Human Rights protection GYLA: training for trainers in Administrative procedures in Tbilisi (through Jan 30)
Jan 31	GYLA: town hall meeting in Kutaisi for NGOs and mass media on legislative amendments

Editorial Policy

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