



NEWSLETTER №2

*Activities of the Georgian National Platform
Of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum*

March-April, 2015



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“Strengthening and Capacity Building of Georgian National Platform
For the Eastern Partnership“

Joint Activities of the Georgian National Platform

On 17 March, 2015 Georgian National Platform released a Statement on Recognizing the European Perspective for the Eastern Partnership States.

The member organizations of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum Georgian National Platform, are waiting for a clear message from the members of the Riga Summit confirming that notwithstanding aggression waged against EaP countries, our European perspective is universally recognized and as European states, we cannot be deprived the right to become fully-fledged members of a unified Europe.

Signatory organizations call on the European Union and its member states to explicitly recognize at the Riga Summit the European perspective for Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. The statement was signed by 80 member organizations.

See the full version of the Statement:

http://eapnationalplatform.ge/admin/editor/uploads/files/eap/Statement%20-%20Riga%20Summit_ENG.pdf

On April 22, 2015 Chairman of the Georgian National Platform and representatives of member organizations met with the Chair of EU Integration Committee, Tinatin Khidasheli. As it was mentioned during the meeting the long-term cooperation between the civil society and the Committee will be carried out. Main goal of this cooperation is to monitor the implementation of the Association Agreement and to engage civil society representatives in this process.

Attandess agreed to work out a plan, which will be main tool for legal amendments, as well for govermnet monitoring. Chair of the Committee expressed her wish that the representatives of civil society were involved in the discussion of government initiatives from the beginning.



Working Group I (WG1 -Democracy, Human Rights, Good Governance & Stability)

Natia Kuprashvili, the first group coordinator, participated in Working Group Council 1 meetings held in Yerevan, on March 17 and 18. The meeting was focus on brainstorming and planning the actions, project ideas and contributions of WG 1 in 2015. On March 16 she attended Euronest meeting with CSOs.

Georgian Association of Regional Broadcasters continues informing population about the Association Agreement and DCFTA. EuroDigest, the weekly TV Program is being prepared; apart from this, discussions are carried out in a live television broadcast at the bases of Regional Televisions enabling the population to ask questions to experts and responsible persons.

On 22 April 2015 Association Green Wave, in particular the Director of Association and Radio Green Wave Ms Manana(Maka) Jakhua participated in the open discussion “Responding to Russia's Weaponization of Information”, which was held in Frontline Georgia under the organization of Baltic to Black Sea Alliance (BBSA) and Baltic To Black Sea Alliance Georgia (BBSAG).

The topics such as Mass Media in Russia's neighborhood-conquering people's minds, Policy paper review- «Responding to Russia's weaponization of information, Lativa's experience of responding to Russian propaganda, also Russian Propaganda -possible scenarios and trends for Georgia, Putin's Information warfare -human psychosphere, Fake News Stories, Armies of news trolls –Russian, Georgian, global practices, Anti-Western discourse in Georgian Media, Georgia's response to aggressive information campaign were dealt and discussed at the working meeting.

Ms Manana Jakhua spoke about the topic: Russian Propaganda- Myth or Reality; Challenge for Georgia. Based on the survey and analysis of different American, British and European experts and researchers' opinions certain ways of coping with the pro -Russian propaganda were singled out: studying and acknowledging the problem, raising the transparency, improving media environment and professionalism. The speakers and the attending audience were unanimous about admitting the fact that there is a real hazard and it should be responded observing all the democratic principles.



More specifically, the following recommendations were worked out: the necessity of conducting research and detecting the needs, planning specific strategies and obtaining necessary funds for their implementation, carrying out legislative changes, cooperating with all the donors and state bodies in order to communicate the real essence of European integration and reforms, also, developing new forms of media and organizing informative working meetings with students and citizens on spot and propaganda against propaganda or just showing “fakes” or just promoting western values.

The director of Association and Radio Green Wave also presented the results and their causes of the project “EaP Media Freedom Watch” in the Eastern Partnership Region.

Other speakers and participants at the discussion were: Tiko Tsomaia, Chair, BBSA Georgia, GIPA, Vita Terauda is the Vice Chair of the Baltic to Black Sea Alliance, Prof. Dr. Ainars Dimants, Chairman of National Electronic Mass Media Council of Latvia, Moderator Irakli Tabliashvili, BBSAG, Director, Georgian Review, Jana Javakhishvili, Psychologist, Natalia Antelava, Journalist, Nino Japiashvili, BBSAG, GIPA, Tamar Kintsurashvili, Director, Media Development Fund, Nino Danelia, BBSAG, Ilia University.

Anti-Violence Network of Georgia continues to work on domestic violence issues, provides the victims of DV with psycho-social rehabilitation, legal consultations and shelter service. The organization works throughout Georgia, in all ten regions of Georgia.



On March 3, Chair of AVNG was invited to the TV show KOMUNIKATORI. The topic of the broadcast was violence against women.

For more information see the link below: <http://www.myvideo.ge/?act=dvr&chan=gpbhq&seekTime=04-03-2015+18%3A39>

AVNG regional coordinator, Eliso Amirejibi was invited in Radio Tavisupleba, “An Hour with Gogi Gvakharia”. The main topic of the broadcast was the status of single parents, the existing legal guarantees and problems connected to social services for them.



For more information see the link below:

<http://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/media/video/tavisuplebis-erti-saati-giorgi-gvakhariastan-ertad/26880420.html>

On March 10-11, Regional Coordinator (Eliso Amirejibi) and the lawyer (Manana Purtskhvanidze) of AVNG, together with the organization Women for Regional Development have conducted a seminar on the results of domestic violence. The seminar was conducted in frames of the project “We Talk and Act for Combating Gender-Based Violence”, with the support of Heinrich Boell Foundation South Caucasus Bureau.



On April 24-26, 2015, PR and Fundraiser of AVNG have travelled to the Hague on the conference “The shrinking space for the civil society - Women’s participation in decision making” organized by the Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation. The participants of the meeting were women human rights defenders

from KtK partner organizations from Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Democratic Republic of Congo, Georgia, Iraq, Kosovo, Lebanon, Macedonia, Montenegro, Palestine and Serbia.



The aim of the meeting was to give inspiration and knowledge for future work on how to tackle the shrinking space facing the civil society to increase women's participation in decision-making.

In March-April, AVNG regional coordinator have conducted 5 trainings in Leliani (April 15), Toloshi (April 6), Tsikhisjvari (April 5), Magharoskari (March 13) and Shukruti (March 7).

The attendees of the training „Domestic Violence and Women's Property Rights” were women community workers and self-help group representatives.



The training took place in frames of the project "Women as Actors for Change and Empowerment", implemented by Women's Information Center, supported by USAID, in partnership with "Taso Foundation", Georgian Young Economists' Association, War and Peace Reporting Institute and organizations active in Gali through Tbilisi, Mtskheta-Mtianeti, Kakheti, Samtskhe-Javakheti, Imereti and Gali. The aim of the project is to support women's involvement in politics through empowering women socially and economically, mobilizing community and researching local needs in target regions.

On 8th of March, Anti-Violence Network of Georgia has joined the demonstration “More Women in the Parliament”. The demonstration was devoted to supporting women, promoting quota system in Georgia and making the related problems more visible.

AVNG continues participating in a campaign against domestic violence “No to Violence”, which is organized by the Ministry of Internal Affairs.



In the frame of campaign, in 2015 an informative meeting was organized in School “Tamarioni”, Tbilisi. Students met AVNG chair, Nato Shavlakadze, together with the members of the joint working group of Ministry of Internal Affairs and Ministry of Education and Science.

People’s Harmonious Development Society by support the Embassy of the United States to Georgia, have recently finished a production of a documentary - “Silk Road Slavery.” This 34 min film addresses problem of trafficking in humans in Georgia. A focus of the documentary illuminates hidden life of most dynamic tourist resorts in Georgia, Batumi and its victims of trafficking – several Uzbek girls.

The producing team of this documentary endeavored to magnify complications that flow from an inadequate counter-trafficking state policy. Due to relaxed approach by Georgian government a response of the law-enforcement agencies continues to be ineffective. Inactive civil society that tolerates trafficking in humans also contributes to gradual raise of a number of cases.



Since Georgia promotes a policy of active Silk Road player it retains vulnerability to challenges that are attributable to this role. Our organization, along with partner NGO's, insistently attempts to remind the state policy-makers about importance of constant counter-trafficking actions. We also would like to galvanize civil society and bring sufficient pressure on the government to act in favor of victims of trafficking in humans. Film presentation held at Marriott Tbilisi Hotel 25 April 2015

Working Group 2 (WG2 - Economic Integration and Convergence with the EU Policies)

On March 23 the first meeting of the Second Working Group of the Georgian National Platform for 2015 was held. In a meeting that was hosted by “European House” priorities and activities of the Working Group were discussed, including hosting of informational meetings, establishment of the thematic working groups, preparation of policy papers and others.

In order to strengthen advocacy activities and cooperation with the Forum of the Eastern Partnership (through 2nd Council WG) in the frame of WG2, the establishment of the different thematic groups was decided, as thematic groups on: DCFTA related issues, Transport, Small Business and Women Enterprises, Food Security and Food Safety issues within.

At the meeting the Oxfam GB representative, Nino Edilashvili, presented the objectives of the EC funded project – „Improving Regional Food Security through National Strategies and Small Holder Production in the South Caucasus“. The presentation was followed with the discussion regarding food security policy problematic in Georgia.

On March 19, at the Courtyard Marriot Hotel OXFAM and the Biological Farming Association ELKANA carried out a round-table discussion on the theme - How the private sector can cooperate with smallholder farmers. The discussion was organized around the recently conducted survey on agriculture related private sector organizations, commissioned within the frame of the EC-funded project “Improving Regional Security through National Strategies and Smallholder Production in the South Caucasus”.

Purpose of the workshop was to present the outcomes of the survey for the following target groups: banks and micro financial organizations, insurance companies, processors, retailers. The venue was also used to share success stories of private sector’s engagement in smallholder development and to foster dialogue among state and the private sector, to find common grounds in creating enabling environment for private sector engagement with smallholders.

The conference was attended by 47 participants, including representatives of the Delegation of the European Union to Georgia, Ministry of Agriculture, National Food Agency, local and international NGOs working in the agricultural sector, banks and micro financial organizations, insurance companies, farmers and women organizations.



The meeting was welcomed by Mr. Juan Echanove the Attache on Agriculture and Rural development in Delegation of the European Union to Georgia and Mr. David Galegashvili the deputy Minister of Agriculture.

The keynote speaker was Mr. Daniel Gonzalez Dellacha, chief of Ferrero in Georgia, who presented a successful example of cooperation in the hazelnut business.

ELKANA representatives made presentations on survey results and reflection of the needs and potential of the target groups in the newly adopted Strategy on Agriculture Development. The presentations made at the conference were followed by intensive discussions between the representatives of the private sector, Ministry of Agriculture, farmer organizations and civil society.

It was underlined that cooperation between state, NGOs and farmers has to be increased. Raising awareness of farmers should become a priority issue. The agricultural loan practice has to be better targeted. All these will lead to more effective use of the private sector potential in agriculture and further development of agriculture related businesses.

Association "Peaceful and Business Caucasus" (APBC), with a financial support of EU/UNDP joint initiative COBERM 2, implemented the project: "We support conflict affected communities to keep them in better health" from August 2014 till March 31 2015.

Project beneficiaries are socially and economically vulnerable people who are permanently living in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, mostly ethnic Abkhazians and Ossetians, for whom qualified medical services are less available.

In 8 months period qualified medical services were provided to 226 patients living in conflict zones (Abkhazia and South Ossetia).

The meeting was held by initiative of the Agricultural Cooperatives Development Agency, ACDA for strengthening the role of women in Agricultural Cooperatives, where with other Non-governmental organizations have been participated Association for Farmers Rights Defense, AFRD. Today more than 740 Cooperatives have been registered in Georgia with status of agricultural cooperative. They have 4862 shareholders, among them 22% are woman (1084 shareholder women), where 73 cooperative are managed by a woman.



Working Group 3 (WG3 - Environment, Climate Change and Energy Security)

April 28, 2015 at the Cultural Center of the Oni Municipality The Energy Efficiency Foundation presented the results of its project “Energy-efficient technologies with low carbon dioxide emission for the protection of natural environment and sustainable development of up to 800 members of the border vulnerable communities of Upper Racha”. Representatives of Donor, Local authorities, the Governor of Racha-Lechkhumi-Kvemo Svaneti and the Municipal Development Fund visited the office of the Youth Center for the Sustainable Development of Racha and the house of one of the beneficiary families, that have been renovated and equipped under the project.



In each of the four target communities (Chala, Utsera, Glola, Chiora) established youth organization for sustainable development. In each of the eight families of the recipient of five communities of the Oni municipality (Oni, Gary Utsera, Glola and Chiora) implemented: thermal insulation of up to 35 square meters of living space, the installation of energy-efficient wood-burning stove, solar water heating system and two Energy Saving (LED) Lamps. Integrated use of energy-efficient technologies has allowed the beneficiaries to reduce the consumption of firewood and electricity from two up to three times. Respectively, the above mentioned allowed the recipients save labor and finances, reduce carbon dioxide emissions to the environment and build a rudimentary residential comfort.

The project was funded by UNDP/GEF Small Grants Programme, Co-Funders and Co-participants were: the Oni Municipality Governance, the Energy Efficiency Foundation, the company "Knauf", local Youth and Beneficiary Families. Photo documentary materials already published at the appropriate page of Facebook (search for relevant information on Google or Facebook search engine by the following key phrase: EEF-ენერგოეფექტურობის ფონდი).

On March 27, 2015 seminar – Energy and Environmental Protection organized by WEG and Institute of Energy and Sustainable Development of Ilia State University was held in Ilia State University. Seminar was conducted in renewed format with main focused on guest’s involvement. According to the new format, number of speakers reduces and more time will be devoted to in-depth analysis and discussions.

On the 27 March seminar, expert in environmental issues, Manana Kochladze presented the speech about energy and environment and their connection. She spoke about the negative environmental impact of different energy projects in Georgia as well as in other countries. She emphasized the need of proper planning and analysis.

See more:

<http://weg.ge/%E1%83%A1%E1%83%94%E1%83%9B%E1%83%98%E1%83%9C%E1%83%90%E1%83%A0%E1%83%98-%E1%83%94%E1%83%9C%E1%83%94%E1%83%A0%E1%83%92%E1%83%94%E1%83%A2%E1%83%98%E1%83%99%E1%83%90-%E1%83%93%E1%83%90-%E1%83%92/#.VUh8-PmqrBE>

Within the framework of German International Cooperation (GIZ) program "Private Sector Development in the South Caucasus", started “Training on Energy Efficiency in Georgian Construction Sector” project, which will be implemented by the Union of Experts Sustainable Energy and Environment, UESEE. (www.uesee.org)

The aim of the “Training on Energy Efficiency in Georgian Construction Sector” project is to increase experience and qualification skills of the representatives from the target group.

The target group was composed by the:

- Teachers and postgraduates from architect and construction faculties of the VET Institutes’;
- Representatives from private sector (practicing specialists/experts) ;
- Architects /builders/ energy managers or energy specialists from the Georgian municipalities.

In total with 30 participants.



Training was held from 27th of April till 1th of May. During training the following issues were introduced: design role to build energy efficiency buildings, insulation of building envelope, more airtight buildings, passive/energy efficiency building, more recycling of heat, more interaction between systems, using renewable energy in heating/ cooling and hot water production and etc.

In the framework of project it's foreseen to conduct training's ToT courses on 8-12 June, 13-17 July and 7-12 September, 2015.

Working Group 4 (Contacts between People)

Within the framework of the project “Helping others assist yourself”(financially supported by UN Women and EU), on April 7, IDP Women Association “Consent” has organized Round Table in Tskhaltubo, at Municipal Council Hall .



Meeting was attended by Gamgebeli Konstantine Mamiseishvili, head of Sakrebulo Paata Akhaladze, representatives of non-governmental sector, representatives of IDP issues department, members of self governance and representatives of IDPs community living in Tskhaltubo. Expert Mr Badri Oniani shared with attendees information on social services. Format of the meeting was ‘Answers and Questions’.

On April 17 in Gori, at Center for Civic Engagement, IDP Women Association “Consent” has organized the Round Table. Meeting was organized within the framework of projects” We can do that” (Synergy Network) and “Helping others assist yourself” (UN Women).

Meeting was attended by Mr. David Chikhradze, head of Health and Social Department Service - Gamgeoba of Gori Municipality, by representative of organization “Safer World” - Ms Natia Nadiradze and people from conflict affected villages and IDP settlements (Ergneti, Nikozi, Koshki, Gugutiantkari, from Karaleti IDP Settlement).

On the meeting Ms Natia Nadiradze presented results of research on problems of conflict affected population that live along side of Administrative Boundary Line and Mr Davit Chikhradze spoke about the provided social services and gaps of the program. What's more, attendees had a chance to receive answers on their questions.

Additional trainings were conducted about “Gender Equity and Women rights” for women beneficiaries in Ambrolauri and Tsageri on April 24-29, 2015. Trainings were initiated and supported by “UN Women” and organized by the “Fund of Women Entrepreneurs”. 17 beneficiaries from Ambrolauri and 19 beneficiaries from Tsageri participated in the discussion of the issues related to gender equity and women rights. 3 days trainings were also attended by Racha and Lechkhumi rayon local government representatives.



On April 21, 2015 the women's School started functioning at Kutaisi, where 15 women will be able to study computer programs and English Language for free. Learning duration is 3 months.



მე-5 სამუშაო ჯგუფი (სოციალური დიალოგი და პარტნიორობა)

Georgian Trade Unions held a protest action in front of the Ministry of Economy of Georgia, demanding the restoration of full-fledged labour inspection from the government.

Statistics show that during the year 2007-2014, 562 were seriously injured and 314 people died as a result of workplace accidents. Only in 2014, 41 people died during performance of their duties. Georgian Trade Unions require immediate preventive measures and effective steps from the government of Georgia.



Staff of the Tbilisi Transport company, including yellow bus drivers and subway operators might announce a strike on April 14. Disbursement of the bonuses from Tbilisi municipality is the main reason. Almost all companies and its employees under the Tbilisi Municipality received 80% of their salaries as an Easter bonus, however Tbilisi Transport Company employees received nil.

Today, employees of the Tbilisi Transport company, including yellow bus drivers and subway operators with the leadership of the Transport Union gathered at HQ of the Georgian Trade Unions and made statements about a possible strike.



Tbilisi State university students joined the Trade Unions representatives and workers on a protest rally against RMG Gold to express their solidarity. Few days ago, 1000 employees left Trade Union. Students and Trade Union representatives believe that employees were under a huge pressure from RMG Gold.



RMG Gold employee, who attended the rally, mentioned that few days ago his neighbour who asked him to leave the Trade Union contacted him. Metallurgy and mining industry workers Trade Union stated, that the Prime Minister's office as well as the Prosecutor's Office was informed about the workers' rights violation, but unfortunately nothing has been done so far.

President of the Georgian Trade Unions Confederation Mr. Irakli Petriashvili expressed solidarity. In an interview with the media representatives, he emphasised that Trade Unions will do utmost to ensure workers' rights protection and will inform Georgian society and foreign partners about the anti-trade union actions.

"US government will be funding a project on the implementation of labour rights in Georgia." Presentation of the project "Strengthening workers' organisations in Georgia" funded by the US government held on 4 March. Trade Unions and its member organisations skills and development on social dialog and workers' rights better protection by law will be supported within the project.

