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## Georgia and USA Build on Success in Fight Against HIV/AIDS

On December 10, Ambassador John Bass commemorated World AIDS Day at Muza theater hall in Tbilisi with an event that focused on raising public awareness among youth and featured an HIV/AIDS awareness-themed photo and slogan contest.



Ambassador Bass and Holly Holzer-Bass at the World AIDS day

Through events like this, as well as through the healthy lifestyle topics in the secondary school curriculum, the U.S. Government is raising awareness among youth of how HIV/AIDS is transmitted, reducing the stigma associated with HIV/AIDS, and helping to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS in Georgia. This USAID program has also developed and piloted a healthy lifestyles curriculum for secondary schools that was adopted by the Ministry of Education earlier this year. Over the past decade, the U.S. Government has dedicated more than \$7 million to help prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS in Georgia. The current five-year \$6 million HIV Prevention Program builds on successful disease prevention by continuing support for voluntary counseling and testing services that are delivered directly to the most at-risk populations.

## "Every Day is a Human Rights Day"

Ambassador John Bass marked the 63rd anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights with a keynote address together with the Georgian Public Defender and the European Union Ambassador to Georgia at the Europe House in Tbilisi.



Ambassador Bass, Public Defender Tugushi and NGO Multinational Georgia Chairman at HRD reception

The Ambassador recognized some significant accomplishments by Georgia in advancing human rights this year, primarily the introduction of trial by jury, and new legislation improving legal status of minority groups practicing different religious faiths. The Ambassador also focused on areas where additional progress would be important. He named selective application of the law as one of the challenges facing Georgia's legal

system hampering the increase of public confidence. He said more should be done in the fields of labor rights, freedom of assembly and the press. Ambassador Bass spoke about the values of civic engagement in building democracy, especially in the coming two years running up to the parliamentary and presidential elections in 2012 and 2013. He paid tribute to those individuals and organizations who promote human rights on day-to-day basis: "Every day is a human rights day," said the Ambassador in conclusion.

# Peace Corps Marks World AIDS Day

## in Akhaltsikhe

Peace Corps Volunteers in Akhaltsikhe, with support from the local European Voluntary Service, Teach and Learn Georgia program, and the local NGO Women's Hope, coordinated a short-term peer education program to mark World AIDS Day celebrated on December 1. Fourteen young people, over the age of sixteen, formed an initiative group with the goal of developing an HIV/AIDS awareness campaign. The initiative group distributed 550 red ribbons, had discussions at schools and the university, organized a Facebook campaign, held a rally at the Akhaltsikhe's central park and made an appearance on the local evening news.



## in Dusheti

A PVC taught about HIV/AIDS to the 9th and 12th graders at Dusheti School #2 through integrating life skills activities in their English lesson. 12th graders seemed interested, but they also seemed to know most of the information already. There were a few things that they didn't know and the PVC and his counterpart were glad to speak with them and provide accurate information. There was a lot of confusion and misinformation around the topic among 9th graders and the lesson was very valuable for them. In both of the classes many students believed that men can't be affected by AIDS. Once they learned that this was false, the boys became much more interested and involved. The volunteer reports that one of the best things of the entire day was when a 9th grader told him that she thought it would be a good idea to get tested before getting married. If nothing else, he knows he got through to her.



## in Marneuli

On December 1, a PCV in Marneuli in cooperation with the Marneuli Youth Center (MYC) conducted an educational seminar in connection with World AIDS Day for thirty young people ages 15 to 22. Following the seminar, participants carried banners informing the public about HIV/AIDS from the MYC to the Atta Holding Center sports hall where the local female volleyball tournament was being hosted to promote HIV/AIDS awareness. The tournament was kicked off by a speech celebrating World AIDS Day for more than 60 local spectators.



## in Batumi

A Social Entrepreneurship & Organizational Development (SEOD) volunteer in Batumi, organized a workshop for 120 students from five different schools in Adjara region. Information was provided on World AIDS Day, worldwide and Georgian HIV statistics, and also conducted an HIV Q&A game. After the presentation, the kids managed to get all the answers correct, which shows they learned something! The volunteer also provided the school with the YouTube links to Health Education Video lecture series, produced by Life Skills Committee so they could watch the lecture at a later time.  
<http://www.youtube.com/playlist?>

## Regional Anti-corruption Conference for Prosecutors

On December 7-9, the Regional Anti-Corruption Conference for Prosecutors was held in Tbilisi. The conference was a joint venture of the Resident Legal Advisor (RLA) program of U.S. Department of Justice and the Chief Prosecutor's Office of Georgia. Its aim was to bring the former Soviet countries of the region together to discuss prosecution strategies and tactics to combat this deep-rooted legacy of corruption. The conference concentrated on practices used to fight corruption in the US and Europe and the common challenges for the countries of the post-Soviet region. An empha-

sis was placed on the recent success Georgia has made with regard to prosecuting corruption cases. The conference was held in Georgia to show other nations of the former Soviet Union specifically how Georgia successfully dealt with corruption. The hope was that these nations would see that their situations are not hopeless and that both political will and a sound strategy can successfully combat corruption.

Georgia has set an example of success in this area, which has been known through various reliable international reports. But this conference was one

of the first, if not the only, real opportunity for the professionals of neighboring countries to learn about the specifics on how these strategies developed and how the Chief Prosecutors Office reformed to the point where they were in a position to make a real impact against corruption in Georgia. Prosecutors from Georgia, Moldova, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan, the EU and the USA attended the conference. The conference concentrated on the enforcement of anti corruption laws through investigation and prosecution – as opposed to prevention.

The conference was opened by Georgia's Speaker of Parliament, Davit Bakradze and Georgia's Chief Prosecutor, Murtaz Zodelava. Both men pointed out the common situation that all of the countries of the former Soviet Union had faced and discussed the most important institutional strategies Georgia implemented in its fight against corruption. However, they stressed that no structural or legislative reform would have worked without the strong political will which exists in Georgia.



Speaker Bakradze shares insights with conference participants

## Ambassador Bass Speaks at UN Event on Fighting Gender-Based Violence

On December 2, Ambassador Bass delivered a key address at the UN's "16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence." Attendees included leaders of Georgian NGOs, women's shelters, and women's rights groups, in addition to members of the religious and diplomatic communities. Ambassador Bass read the Secretary's message on the 16 Days of Activism, sharing her words directly with the event's attendees.

Ambassador Bass used this forum

to highlight a number of programs being implemented by USAID and U.S. Embassy Public Affairs Section, including the Democracy Grants competition, the women's shelters in Tbilisi and Batumi, and the newly-opened Civic Engagement Centers in 10 cities around Georgia. He strongly encouraged those present to make use of the resources and to continue promoting women's rights issues. The footage of his statements and of the event ran on all major news outlets that evening.



Ambassador Bass with the UN Resident Coordinator Jamie McGoldrick and Swedish Ambassador Diana Janse

## U.S. Government Supports Efforts to Improve Accuracy of Voter Lists for Upcoming Elections



Ambassador and the Minister of Justice Zurab Adeishvili at the signing

On January 18, Ambassador Bass signed a Memorandum of Understanding to support implementation of a new project to improve the voters' lists by correcting addressing in Tbilisi. During the project, 474,000 units will be mapped and approximately 1.2 million registered individuals will be assigned to physical addresses. The data collected by addressing efforts will improve the quality of the voters' list. The U.S. Government will provide \$1 million funding to support the readdressing of Tbilisi.

The project is sponsored by USAID as part of its \$16 million Good Governance in Georgia (G3) project that will improve transparency and institutional efficiency at all levels of government in providing better services to citizens, as well as improving communication channels between government institutions, stakeholders, civil society and citizens.

*The ability to accurately monitor maritime activity throughout Georgia's territorial waters vastly improves Georgia's ability to quickly identify suspicious activity and develop a coordinated response to maritime threats.*

## EXBS Completes Coastal Surveillance Upgrades

The U.S. Department of State's Export Control and Related Border Security (EXBS) program, in cooperation with the U.S. Coast Guard, Customs and Border Protection and Nuclear Smuggling Outreach Initiative, completed the installation of an integrated coastal surveillance system for the Georgian Coast Guard. The newly installed system integrates data collected from each of Georgia's five coastal radar stations

and two command posts, enabling all locations to share a common, consolidated surveillance picture as well as communicate back and forth via a secure text messaging feature. The consolidated surveillance picture incorporates radar, Automatic Identification System (AIS), global positioning system, surveillance video and automatic radio direction finding input into a single system overlay. The ability to accurately monitor maritime activity throughout Georgia's territorial waters at each of these seven locations vastly improves Georgia's ability to quickly identify suspicious activity and develop a coordinated response to maritime threats. The \$2M improvement project included the purchase and installation of five new, networkable radar systems, multiple data link receivers and transmitters as well as supporting computer processors and workstations for each location.



## Integrated Approach to Sustainable Use of Georgia's Important Watershed Areas

On December 14th, Ambassador Bass traveled to Telavi to introduce a pro-



Ambassador and the Deputy Minister for Environmental Protection Giorgi Zedginidze at the launch

ject for integrated natural resource management in targeted regions of Georgia. The event highlighted the \$6.5 million Integrated Natural Resource Management in Watersheds project managed by USAID to ensure the sustainability of critical environmental resources and services for Georgia's long-term ecological health and rural development.

The program supports local communities in efforts to improve potable

and drinking water systems, develop climate change adaptation activities, implement erosion, landslide and flood control mitigation measures, and engage youth groups in natural resource and environmental protection through eco-clubs and eco-camps. It is expected to benefit up to 20,000 people in 40 communities, as well as develop the capacities of local and national authorities, institutions and companies.

## U.S. Marines Warm Hearts at Kojori Children's Home

Holly Holzer Bass accompanied the Embassy's U.S. Marine Detachment to Kojori Children's Home to spread the joy of winter holidays through the Toys for Tots Program, the traditional annual event that the Marines lead to collect new toy donations from the community for needy children. Led by Gunnery Sergeant Rodrigo Arias, the Detachment exceeded last year's collection of toys reaching 401 new toys.



Embassy Tbilisi Marines and Holly Holzer Bass with children

Mission-Tbilisi seeks to be a good community member and the Toys for Tots is an annual event that promotes volunteerism widely. This year, the Marines almost doubled the number of toys donated and recruited Radisson Blu Hotel, Caucasus Research Resource Center and students of New School Georgia to support the joyous cause. Seventy five Kojori children aged 6-16 had a brighter day thanks to the U.S. Marines' and Holly's attention and warmth.

## Trial Skills Training for Prosecutors

During December 15-17, 2011, Regional Legal Advisor (RLA) Jared Kimball and a Georgian co-trainer from the procuracy conducted a Trial Skills training to Ministry of Justice (MOJ) prosecutors.

The Department of Justice and the American Bar Association (ABA) developed a case problem involving an aggravated murder and illegal possession of a firearm. The case problem proved to be well balanced allowing both sides to make the best use of their trial skills in order to win the case. The training was held for two days at the new MOJ training center with a mock trial held on a third day at the Tbilisi City Court. More than 80 per-

sons took part in the Mock Trial exercise. Sitting Criminal Judges presided over mock trials. Students from Tbilisi State University participated as witnesses and jurors. Prosecutors won four out of five mock trials. This training was yet another in the ongoing series of Trial Skills trainings agreed upon with DOJ, MOJ and ABA for FY 2011/12 in order to enhance the trial advocacy skills of Georgian prosecutors and defense attorneys. RLA will continue to use Georgian co-trainers in order to build capacity of procuracy's in-house trainers on Trial Skills.

## USDA Experts Provide Training for National Statistics Office

On December 13 – 16, 2011, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) organized a training on data collection procedures and survey methodology for agricultural statistics, for staff from the National Statistics Office of Georgia (GEOSTAT). The training session was conducted by two experts from the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), of USDA, Barbara Rater, Director of the Agricultural Statistical Office for the State of Maryland, and Michael Steiner, senior statistician of the Interna-

tional Programs Office from NASS in Washington DC, along with senior staff from GEOSTAT. Forty statisticians, interviewers and coordinators working on agricultural surveys in the Samtskhe-Javakheti Region of Georgia participated in this training which took place in Bakuriani. The training for Georgian interviewers on agricultural statistics was a pilot activity under the USDA Caucasus Agricultural Development Initiative.



Traditional group photo at the end of the training

## Mine Clearance in Tusheti Completed



On December 6, Ambassador John Bass marked the completion of mine clearance in Tusheti Protected Areas at the Ministry of Environment.

Tusheti is a place of great cultural and historic importance to Georgia, as well as an area of outstanding beauty. However, old mine fields posed a threat to tourists. In the summer of 2011, with approximately \$100,000 in support from the U.S. Department of State, British NGO HALO Trust cleared a large minefield in Tusheti Protected Areas close to Georgia's northern border with Russia.

In 2011, over 9,000 visitors came to Tusheti, many of whom walked to the Keselo towers and Zemo Omalo village, land cleared through U.S. financial assistance.



Ambassador Bass marked the completion of mine clearance in Tusheti Protected Areas

## Fulbright Scholar Talks About U.S. Elections

Between December 9 to 22, Fulbright scholar Jeremy Teigen held presentations on U.S. Elections with different groups of politically active youth.



On December 9, Professor Teigen, presented to a group of 45 politically active youth in Kutaisi an overview of intra-party democracy in the United States. In discussing how political parties nominate candidates, Prof. Teigen shed light on the U.S. democratic process. USAID's implementing partner, the International Republican Institute, brought together the youth group, which was comprised of youth who had participated in one of IRI's political debate forums.

As Georgia's second-largest city and its future parliamentary home, beginning in 2012, politically-active youth have been underserved compared to their peers in the capital. Prof. Teigen's presentation allowed them to compare democracy within U.S. political parties to the situation in political parties in Georgia, where party leadership, rather than the electorate, traditionally choose a candidate to run for office. It underscored the long process the U.S. has followed to reach its current level of democracy and brought together youth from different political parties to discuss the issues.

The same day, Jeremy Teigen attended an English Discussion Club at Kutaisi Public School #3. The English Club is hosted by a Fulbright English Teaching Assistant. The youth had the opportunity to interact directly with an American political scientist to ask questions about Obama's election, political parties, and other events about which they were curious to know.



On December 10, Jeremy Teigen spoke with a group of 25 politically-active youth gathered for a leadership studies conference organized by USAID implementing partner IRI. These youth represent some of the youngest (ages 18-25) in their party. Prof. Teigen's presentation reached party members while they are passionate about what they do, and young enough to be impressionable that their actions can have an impact in the good governance of their party. The conference was part of a series of leadership trainings being conducted around Georgia.

Students outside Tbilisi have few opportunities to meet with Americans, let alone political scientists well-versed in U.S. politics. Taking a Fulbright scholar to speak with the students exposes them to new ideas, broadens their understanding of democracy, and increases visibility of U.S.-funded educational and exchange programs – all part of Mission's goal of strengthening P2P interaction and expanding global education.

On December 22, Professor Teigen spoke with International Relations and Diplomacy students at Telavi



State University, giving an overview of the U.S. electoral system and how the 2012 Presidential Elections will unfold. The program concluded with an interview broadcast that evening on several local television stations, ensuring exposure on the program extended beyond students in the room.

## Georgian Students Participate in Regional Virtual Lecture Series

During Nov 3 - Dec 15, 2011, PAS Tbilisi hosted a regional virtual lecture series through CO.NX, a digital diplomacy team with the Bureau of International Information Programs (IIP) at the U.S. Department of State. Eight lectures on Conflict Resolution in U.S. History were broadcast live to American Studies and International Relations students in Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia. At the end of each lecture, students were given the opportunity to use question and answer box in the “virtual space” and to



participate in an engaging Q&A session. Lecture series were concluded with the DVC, which provided an interactive platform to all students, who shared their impressions about sessions and exchanged personal experiences.

Thirty students from three different public and private universities in Georgia benefited from the lecture series, which focused on points of conflict resolution in U.S. history. American professors from various universities covered a wide range of topics related to the U.S. History. Georgian students enriched their knowledge of such issues as the formation of the United States, the evolution of slavery, the Civil War, Reconstruction, the Jim Crow South, the Great Depression, etc. Public Affairs Section received very positive feedback from the lecture participants.

## 20th Anniversary of U.S. - Georgia Relations

On February 14, Ambassador Bass announced the winner of the U.S. Embassy 20th Anniversary Logo Contest, announced in November 2011 by the U.S. Embassy in celebration of the 20th anniversary of bilateral relations between the United States and Georgia. The contest was open to Georgian youth of age 15-25. 100 entries were received by the U.S. Embassy by January 15th deadline. The winner was awarded a new iPad2.



Tamar Makharashvili, the contest winner, is a 21-year-old native of Gori and an undergraduate student of the Electrical and Electronic Engineering Department at the Tbilisi State University. She also works for the EM Consulting and Software company. Ms. Markharashvili dedicated her logo to “the last two decades of partnership” between the United States and Georgia and to U.S./ Georgia cooperation in the future.

The U.S. Embassy in Tbilisi was established on April 23, 1992, and throughout 2012, the U.S. and Georgian governments will be celebrating two decades of diplomacy, friendship, and partnership.

Submit your story for the next issue to Irine Gabriadze: [GabriadzeI@state.gov](mailto:GabriadzeI@state.gov)

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