March 4-6, the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) hosted the second Women in Policing Conference. Approximately 150 women police officers from Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Moldova, and Ukraine participated in this year’s conference. The initial March 2012 conference included Georgian officers but its success led to the expansion of conference attendees to include officers from other Eastern European countries.

The conference provided a mix of practical presentations and breakout sessions. The training provided both professional development and substantive law enforcement skills. The conference sought to empower women police officers to advance in their careers and take on increasing responsibility and leadership in field positions. Many women police officers in Eastern Europe still serve in administrative positions and have been historically underrepresented in law enforcement duties. Georgian Minister of Internal Affairs noted the importance of promoting women in law enforcement and highlighted his ministry’s efforts to establish principles of gender balance in hiring and professional development of staff. He acknowledged that women have historically been underrepresented in law enforcement in Georgia, but the ministry was improving on the past and now 12.5 percent of ministry staff are women. Persistent training and outreach efforts over the course of several years will make a difference and begin to break through the adverse societal attitudes and cultural norms that women police officers face in Eastern Europe. Because of its success, this conference for women police officers will become an annual event for the Embassy Tbilisi INL Section.

“Many of the women in attendance... talked about the inspirational examples set by the highly successful and experienced women law enforcement speakers.”
Observation of World Tuberculosis (TB) Day

On March 22, 2013, Ambassador Norland joined First Lady Sandra Roloefs, WHO Goodwill Ambassador for Health Related UN Millennium Development Goals in the European Region (Chairperson of CCM), Minister of Labor, Health and Social Affairs, and Minister of Corrections to observe World TB Day. Over 6,000 TB patients are currently registered in Georgia with approximately 4,500 new cases diagnosed each year in the country. Georgia is one of the 27 countries with the highest burden of multidrug-resistant TB (MDR-TB) in the world. This situation is further complicated by the fact that 26% of MDR-TB patients in Georgia do not complete the course of treatment. The current USAID TB Prevention Program (TPP) began in 2011 as a $4.4 million four-year nationwide activity. TPP works to improve clinical services, strengthen the National TB Program’s capacity to address critical challenges, serve hard-to-reach populations, improve TB response in the evolving Georgian health care system, including multi-drug resistant TB, and infection control.

Ambassador Norland Meets with Tbilisi School Civics Clubs Students

On February 20, Ambassador Norland met with school-based civics clubs students at Tbilisi public school #45. School civics clubs were established under the USAID-funded Applied Civic Education and Teacher Training Program (ACETT), which is implemented by PH International. The ACETT program reaches 740 schools nationwide and is supported by the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia. The goal of ACETT is to improve the quality and scope of school-based civic education and encourage participation of youth in Georgia’s civic and democratic processes. At the event the Ambassador and participants spoke with 10 school-based civics club members about their work on good citizenship.

U.S. Treasury Department Auditing Courses

The U.S. Treasury Department, Office of Technical Assistance (OTA) taught two classes in auditing skills. These classes provided specific instruction on how to conducting audits of construction companies and hotels. These capacity building projects Short term advisors have worked with the Revenue Service on their dispute resolution process and their human resources department. A commentary has been written on the liquidation articles in the Georgian law to address areas where greater clarity is needed. The photographs above show the class on how to audit construction companies. The individual in front of the class is an auditor in the methodology department who taught with Advisor Ann Green. By co-teaching, the skills of the Revenue Service auditors are enhanced and the class benefits from both a local and an international perspective.
Access to Mobility Equipment for Persons with Disabilities

On March 12, Ambassador Norland attended a presentation at the Coalition for Independent Living (CIL) Wheelchair Workshop demonstrating new, lightweight electric wheelchairs and postural seating supports. The electric chairs provide additional mobility options and postural seating supports allow chairs to be customized to the user. CIL and the Neurodevelopment Center (NDC), a USAID-supported Wheelchair Production Network project demonstrated how these improved functions would increase mobility options. This is one of the ways the U.S. Government is supporting and promoting the inclusion of persons with disabilities in Georgia. In addition, USAID’s two-year Disability Advocacy Project aims to strengthen the capacity of disabled people’s organizations and promote the active participation of people with disabilities in policy making at national, regional and local levels.

Political Party Financing and Women’s Participation in Political Life

On March 12, Ambassador Norland attended the 2nd Roundtable on Political Party Funding and Women’s Participation in Political Life in Tbilisi. The conference was a joint effort between USAID, the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), and Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD). Topics addressed at this two-day conference included: political party funding, lessons learned and models of funding, 2012 Parliamentary elections and women’s participation, and how to increase women’s political participation. Based on discussions, the roundtable participants are developing recommendations with the broad participation of Georgian political parties, nongovernmental organizations, government representatives, international donor and development agencies, experts and the Georgian media.

Combating and Preventing Disease in Georgia’s Prisons

On February 6, USAID Mission Director and the Minister of Corrections and Legal Assistance signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to prevent and combat Tuberculosis (TB) and HIV in Georgia’s penitentiaries. The MOU supports efforts to strengthen TB control within the prison system by training healthcare providers in early detection and quality treatment of TB, and establishing functional mechanisms for follow-up referrals from prison to the public health sectors. In parallel, HIV prevention efforts provide training penitentiary health professionals and developing education programs for high-risk behavior youth. For over a decade, USAID has contributed more than $15 million for TB treatment and control activities and HIV/AIDS prevention projects in Georgia.
Conference on Political and Electoral Access for Persons with Disabilities

On February 27, Ambassador Norland addressed legislative, societal, and physical barriers that prevent the disability community in Georgia from achieving full political and electoral enfranchisement spoke at a conference in Tbilisi. Georgians with disabilities face significant societal, physical, and legislative barriers to equal participation in their country’s electoral and political processes. A significant inhibiting factor for Georgia’s disability community is a lack of awareness, shortcomings in the electoral framework inadequacies of electoral procedures and full and equal access at polling stations.

Participants engaged on topics such as: why the disability community should talk about political rights; the right to vote; unique barriers people with different disabilities encounter to full and equal political participation; and, the role of election management bodies in facilitating elections that are accessible. The conference included a voting simulation where participants will experience voting at an accessible and inaccessible polling stations.

Intellectual Property Customs Border Enforcement Workshop

The U.S. Department of Commerce (CLDP) held an Intellectual Property Customs Border Enforcement and Coordination Workshop in Tbilisi, Georgia February 26-27, 2013. The workshop was designed to improve the skills and knowledge of the Revenue Service of Georgia to better interdict IP infringement on goods, including those counterfeited or pirated. The interactive sessions and presentations focused on enforcement of IPR, counterfeit product identification, investigation of IP infringing goods, and interagency cooperation on IP investigations. Advisors to the programs included representatives from the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), and the World Customs Organization (WCO). Both CBP and WCO offered continued technical assistance to the Revenue Service of Georgia and discussed future exchanges with customs officials. The goal of the workshop was to increase the adequacy and efficiency of Georgia’s customs officials to combat the trade in counterfeit and pirated goods, to increase the efficiency of IPR enforcement in Georgia, and to promote increased dialogue between customs officials, rights holders, and other Georgian agencies tasked with IPR enforcement.
Plea Bargaining Reform Study Tour

On February 2, 2013, the Resident Legal Advisor (RLA) traveled with Georgian prosecutors, defense attorney, and Deputy Minister of Justice to Los Angeles, California, for a week-long study of plea bargaining processes in the federal state courts. The Georgian participants spent the week learning about plea bargaining procedures (and due process protections) from judges, prosecutors, defense lawyers, and individual defendants. The trip provided a significant step in enabling the Ministry of Justice to observe the proper and fair use of plea bargaining procedures so that necessary changes can be made in Georgia in this regard. The RLA also used this visit to reinforce U.S. best practices regarding the imposition of fines in criminal cases—and to emphasize that fines in the U.S. are standardized and that excessive fines are rarely imposed—and are not imposed on the indigent or as a financial burden to a defendant’s family.

Development of Common Principles of Ethics and Professional Conduct

A working meeting to develop common standards for ethical and professional conduct was held March 22-24, with the Chief Prosecutor’s Office and the Georgian Bar Association. Through a joint RLA and USAID’s JILEP initiative, this program supported the Chief Prosecutor’s Office in building constructive cooperation and improve professional relations between prosecutors and the Georgian Bar Association. This effort will create common understanding of criminal law and procedure and develop common ethical standards which apply to both professions. The working meeting supported prosecutors and defense lawyers on the topic of ethics and professional conduct. Participants gathered with the specific goal of creating common standards for ethical and professional conduct in the courtroom. RLA provided expertise and shared examples from U.S. best practices. This project is a shared initiative between the RLA and USAID’s JILEP program where the RLA and JILEP work together in support of their respective areas of expertise—(RLA with prosecutors from U.S. best practices. This project is a shared initiative between the RLA and USAID’s JILEP program where the RLA and JILEP work together in support of their respective areas of expertise.

Renewable Energy Heating System

On February 20, Ambassador Norland attended a renewable energy presentation pilot project at a secondary school in Natakhtari. The project presented a safe and ecologically-friendly technology that utilizes residual biomass for heating. The project serves as a role model for the rural population of Georgia, including schools, farms, different public and household units and intends to significantly decrease the cost of supply of heat energy for rural population. The project popularizes the use of residual biomass as an affordable and economically profitable fuel.

Through USAID’s New Applied Technology Efficiency and Lighting Initiative (NATELI) II initiative, the project was completed by Georgian Association of Energy Engineers (GAFE) and Winrock International Georgia. The pilot heating system in Natakhtari secondary school is one of the ways the U.S. Government is supporting climate-friendly interventions in the energy sector to provide reliable energy to many Georgian households and commercial buildings, while reducing the emission footprint on the environment.
Intellectual Property and Innovation Workshops

The U.S. Department of Commerce, in partnership with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) and the National Intellectual Property Center of Georgia “Sakpatenti”, hosted two workshops on intellectual property and innovation on April 1-2, 2013. The April 1 workshop focused on technology transfer and innovation and was attended by leading academic and scientific institutions and universities, intellectual property lawyers, private sector representatives, and officials from the Technology Transfer Center of Georgia, and Sakpatenti. Topics included technology transfer in the United States and Georgia – law and policy, intellectual property valuation, and transfer of intellectual property rights. Two USPTO patent attorneys and a European patent lawyer led the workshop. On April 2, the workshop focused on technical intellectual property aspects of interest to Georgian patent examiners and Sakpatenti officials. Topics included data protection for pharmaceutical data, USPTO work-sharing initiatives, and the implementation of the recently adopted America Invents Act. Discussions focused on the roles of patents in marketing new drugs, how to pursue abbreviated marketing approval, how countries can join the public procurement highway, and practical implementation of the “first to file” policy.

The training programs aimed to bolster innovation and R&D commercialization in Georgia as well as provide an opportunity for an exchange of best practices with US and European counterparts in effective IP protection.

Georgian Prosecutors Study Trial Advocacy

A group of Georgian prosecutors participated in a trial advocacy training March 11-15, at the Department of Justice National Advocacy Center in Columbia, South Carolina.

RLA co-presented and facilitated allowing Georgian prosecutors full participation at this center designed for U.S. federal prosecutors. Georgian prosecutors learned all phases of trial advocacy and practiced these skills in a mock courtroom setting. The participants were also videotaped to allow for self and group critique of trial advocacy skills. The participants had the chance to interact with fellow U.S. prosecutors and familiarize themselves with the skills necessary to conduct jury trials in Georgia in an ethical and competent manner. This training continues efforts to support the successful implementation of the Criminal Procedure Code in Georgia.
On February 21, 2013, Ambassador Norland hosted a graduation ceremony for the first class of the Multimedia Reporting Program, a two-semester certificate program by Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) designed to improve the quality of journalism education. Radio Tavisupleba (Radio Liberty) Journalism School is an independent media strengthening program launched with the assistance of USAID through G-MEDIA, which is a four-year, $12.9 million project implemented by IREX.

The school offers their Multimedia Reporting Program and internship program to people who seek a career in journalism or professional journalists who seek additional, practical training. Students are provided the latest multimedia technologies and practices along with the opportunity to put their reporting skills to use under the direction of practicing professionals. Highly qualified and experienced Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty journalists and their colleagues from RFE/RL Prague headquarters have served as instructors, providing important theory-based classes and practical skills training. The certificate classes were conducted at the Multimedia Education Center (MEC) which was launched by G-MEDIA program in March 2012. The Center provides a state-of-the-art multimedia newsroom for university classes, short-term noncredit courses and workshops, and professional development training programs for working media professionals.

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Peace Corps Volunteers, in cooperation with the Georgian and American Friendship Club, as well as students, teachers, volunteers and organizations, successfully held Georgia’s first-ever National English Spelling Competition (NESC). The event was held at the Youth Palace and was attended by approximately 200 family members, teachers, and supporters of the finalists.

The local and regional competitions, held throughout the country over the past several months brought together students from a wide variety of communities and backgrounds.

The 8th-9th graders competed first. The competition took 33 rounds to complete and the final round concluded with Sopho Tsikoridze of Kutaisi as the champion. This year’s 10th-12th grade champion was Nana Ghonghadze of Tbilisi. Both champions were awarded with an Apple iPad, second place winners with an Apple iPod, and third place winners with English dictionaries and thesauruses, all generously donated by the Public Affairs office of the U.S. Embassy.

A special reception was held by Ambassador Norland for the students, teachers, judges, sponsors, and volunteers to recognize and celebrate everyone’s accomplishments. The Ambassador noted, “The event’s tagline ‘Georgia Spells Opportunity’ could well serve as a preview of the brand for the rapidly democratizing and developing Georgia that we know and love.”
President of Union of Deaf, Amiran Batatunashvili provided a tour of the facility to visiting DoS Humanitarian Programs Director, grantees, and U.S. Embassy Deputy Assistance Coordinator. The tour demonstrated the many ways Union of Deaf is making the speaking communication more accessible. They’re utilizing a green screen and other technologies to make spoken communications accessible, translation of English, Russian, and Georgian into sign, and teaching Georgian sign.

U.S. Department of State, humanitarian grantees; Community and Humanitarian Assistance Program (CHAP), hellenicare, A Call to Serve (ACTS), and United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) recent joint efforts provided medical care and assistance to Union of Deaf. The Union of Deaf of Georgia serves more than 2,700 deaf, invalid, orphaned, sick, physically disabled and elderly. The cooperative assistance and distribution effort by CHAP, hellenicare, ACTS, and UMCOR provided soup, rice, and school kits. Medical care and evaluation were made available on location by hellenicare’s Mobile medical units.