

CIVIL SOCIETY ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITY

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

A. Purpose

The overall goal of the Civil Society Engagement Activity is to increase citizen engagement, awareness and participation in civic actions and democratic processes. The activity demonstrates a fundamental shift in the way USAID conceptualizes civil society and provides support to them. The civic landscape in Georgia is evolving quickly and new opportunities are emerging. Grass-roots activism is increasing and the public image of civil society is improving as a result of their responses to COVID-19. The definition of civil society under this activity includes a wide range of formal and informal civic actors and will employ a bottom up approach in which local stakeholders are empowered to identify their own development challenges and solutions. Using a flexible and adaptive approach, the activity will address systemic weaknesses within the civil society sector in Georgia, such as lack of legitimacy, weak constituency engagement and poor financial diversification. It will improve the ability and interest of Georgian citizens to mobilize their communities and engage with democratic actors. It will strengthen the capacity and collaboration of a diverse range of civic actors, including formal and informal civil society organizations, civic movements and civic-minded individuals. Specifically, the activity will enhance the capacity of formal and informal civic entities working at the local, regional and national level to address citizen identified issues, thereby building their legitimacy and influence; foster greater trust, connectivity and collaboration between newly emerging grassroots groups and their national and regional level counterparts; and, enhance the long term self-reliance of the civil society sector by developing an ecosystem for sustainability. The activity will meet these objectives by providing a wide range of technical support options and resources that promote inclusive civil society practices and initiatives.

B. Background

Civil society in Georgia has played an instrumental role in advancing the democratic reform process as well as protecting individual citizens rights, promoting tolerance, and speaking out against discrimination. There is excellent capacity among leading CSOs to shape the public agenda and to partner with international donors. These organizations play significant watchdog and advocacy roles; however, several leading CSOs have begun to experience a declining role in the policy implementation process due to deterioration of the relationship between Georgian civil society and the government. CSOs and their leaders are increasingly criticized by high-level government officials attempting to discredit their work and widespread disinformation campaigns have been launched against several leading CSOs and leaders on social media. At the same time, new, less traditional civil society actors are becoming more active and new opportunities are emerging for institutional civil society to build trust and engage with citizens. These developments necessitate new and innovative interventions.

Democratic progress has been impeded by a lack of political pluralism, stalled or ineffective implementation of key reform efforts and the limited participation of opposition in key political

processes. Independent civil society is becoming one of the few democratic institutions to actively and constructively call for government accountability and transparency. Civil society continues to serve as a watchdog against government corruption; holds various elected and appointed officials to account; and actively monitors the policy development processes and implementation. The legal operating environment for civil society is generally permissible, however very few incentives are currently in place which would encourage greater domestic resource mobilization. At the same time, recent instances of CSO harassment and antagonism present a concerning trend.

The strong organizational and technical capacities of leading CSOs contribute to Georgia's relatively high 'Civil Society Capacity' score of .93 on USAID's *Journey to Self-Reliance Country Road Map*.¹ However, significant structural problems persist within the sector. Many leading CSOs have impressive domestic and international influence as well as strong technical capacities on issues such as elections, human rights, judicial independence, gender equity and minority inclusion, however, civic participation and citizen involvement in CSO-led activities is exceptionally low. There are several factors that contribute to this. Leading CSOs have not traditionally engaged in issues that are of greatest relevance to citizens, for example healthcare reforms, economic development, social welfare, and education. There is a lack of sectoral expertise in these areas and citizens do not understand the role that CSOs can play in advocating for policy and regulatory reforms that would benefit them. At the same time, even leading CSOs lack effective communication skills that would enable them to translate complex issues such as human rights and government accountability into relatable and impactful messages. The majority of CSOs are financially dependent on Western donors and have tailored their messaging and organizational expertise to be responsive to the donor community. These priorities do not always align with the needs of Georgian citizens or Georgian citizens don't understand how they affect their priorities. Cumulatively, these factors directly contribute to low levels of public trust and perceived relevance in the civil society sector.

Secondary metrics of *USAID's Journey to Self-Reliance Country Roadmap*, including the Freedom of the World, Civil Liberties Index, the CSO Sustainability Index, and Freedom House's Nations in Transit provide a more comprehensive picture of the civil society landscape in Georgia. The Freedom of the World, Civil Liberties Index ranks Georgia as 37², placing it 9 points below the regional average of 47. The CSO Sustainability Index places Georgian civil society development at a 4.0³ placing it worse off than Armenia, Ukraine and Moldova. These figures present a more nuanced landscape of civil society development in Georgia and reveal the weaknesses and vulnerabilities that exist within the sector.

¹ USAID Journey to Self-Reliance Country Roadmaps. Countries and sectors are ranked on a scale of on a 0-1, 0 being the worst, 1 being the best. <https://Selfreliance.usaid.gov/country/Georgia>

² Freedom in the World, Civil Liberties. Countries are ranked on a scale of 1-60, 1 worse, 60 best. <https://freedomhouse.org/report-types/freedom-world>; <https://freedomhouse.org/countries/freedom-world/scores>

³ CSO Sustainability Index. Countries are ranked on a scale of 1-7, 1 being the best, 7 being the worst. <https://csosi.org/?region=EUROPE>

Recent public opinion polling of Georgian citizens aligns closely with the above-mentioned secondary metrics. For example, according to a 2019 survey carried out by the Caucasus Research Resource Center, only 20 percent of respondents expressed trust towards CSOs, 25 percent expressed distrust, 40 percent neither trust nor distrust CSOs, and 15 percent do not know or refuse to answer. There is an ongoing need for new and pluralistic voices to strengthen CSOs' ability to represent their constituencies, including women and minorities.⁴

A routine IRI Public Opinion Poll conducted in May-June 2019 reported 92% of respondents have not attended a public meeting/town hall; 94% have not attended a rally (political and/or social); 95% have not volunteered; 98% have not signed any petitions, including online; 99% have not donated money to a political party, NGO or CSO⁵. The analytical material and polling data demonstrate that the level of civic engagement and participation in Georgia is remarkably low. A strong majority of citizens do not trust CSOs, are not informed about their activities and are not participating in civic initiatives.

However, new opportunities are emerging in the civil society sector and the landscape is shifting. In the last nine months, civil society has emerged as a leader in the fight against COVID-19, gaining recognition in their communities and working to build trust. Civil society was one of the first stakeholders, outside of official healthcare structures, to mobilize to address COVID-19 and its implications. As activists and civil society organizations provide critical services to their communities, they have been met with new levels of volunteerism, charitable giving and community solidarity.

Additionally, in recent years, the country has experienced a wave of grassroots, issues-based civic activism in the form of civic movements, informal/ unregistered organizations, civic minded individuals, influencers, etc. These initiatives, for the most part, operate in parallel with the more 'formalized' CSO sector and significant skepticism exists between the two groups. These new initiatives often have several strengths that the formalized sector lacks: strong constituency engagement practices and citizen mobilization tactics, citizen trust in activities, and domestic funding/ volunteer support. At the same time, they may lack the technical and organizational skills and relationships to amplify their work. Despite their weaknesses, these new grassroots and informal civic initiatives and movements are shifting the way citizens engage and mobilize around issues.

There is a need to build on this momentum, increase individual activism whether through broad based social movements/ protest actions/ general civic awareness and volunteer/ giving efforts. Strengthening community initiatives that bring together citizens to address concrete concerns is of crucial importance in re-building citizen faith that their actions can in fact make a difference.

⁴ <https://caucasusbarometer.org/en/cb2019ge/downloads/>

⁵ IRI Public Opinion Survey, Residents of Georgia, June 2019.
https://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/georgia_poll_2.pdf

CSOs need to serve as effective channels to translate the energy and momentum from protests/ individualized actions into specific demands for state accountability and/or democratic reforms. At the same time, CSOs need to address the two challenges they continue to face. Grassroots organizations, who have the trust of their communities, must improve their capacity to implement activities and affect policy change and ‘elite’ CSOs need to better understand and respond to the needs and interests of citizens to increase their legitimacy and the weight behind their advocacy initiatives. In addition, new possibilities for financial diversification are also emerging, including crowdfunding platforms, corporate social responsibility initiatives and various models of social entrepreneurship, although many CSOs are still unaware of how best to develop these new revenue streams. Developments in financial diversification are relatively nascent and amounts are small, however even modest donations help to build trust and legitimacy in the sector. While citizens are generally familiar with concepts of charity and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), the notion of philanthropy and its importance for development is not well known.⁶ Data on giving is unavailable and there is limited understanding of relevant actors, existing resources, legal frameworks and opportunities for advancement in this area.

Under the Civil Society Engagement Activity, the implementing partner will work directly with a wide range of civil society entities to address these challenges and opportunities, and to increase overall levels of citizen engagement, awareness and trust in civic actions and democratic processes. Successful Applicants will demonstrate an innovative approach that responds to USAID’s emphasis on locally led development, civil society sustainability and self-reliance.

Development hypothesis underlying the Civil Society Engagement Activity:

IF civil society is better connected and responsive to citizens’ needs, and opportunities for civic engagement are supported, and IF cross-sectoral collaboration and financial diversification is enhanced THEN civil society will have greater legitimacy and effectiveness in supporting democratic processes.

C. Relationship to Mission Strategy and Agency Priorities

Country Development Cooperation Strategy:⁷ The activity will enhance citizen-responsive governance through improved citizen capacity to engage with democratic institutions and oversee the work of government and elected officials. By strengthening the capacity of both

⁶ In USAID’s PSE Policy, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is defined as: “a company’s initiatives to assess, and take responsibility for, the firm’s effects on environmental and social well-being. These issues typically align to a corporation’s strategy and operations, but are not part of its core business. The term generally applies to efforts that go beyond what regulators might require. CSR is also known as “corporate citizenship,” and can involve incurring short-term costs that do not provide an immediate financial benefit to the company, but instead promote positive social and environmental change. In contrast to CSR, corporate philanthropy is an act of a corporation or business to promote the welfare of others generally through charitable donations of funds or time. (Source: Adapted from USAID and Investopedia)”

⁷ <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/CDCS-Georgia-MAY-2025.pdf>

citizens and civil society to conduct oversight and hold the government to account it contributes to the new Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) Development Objective 2:Fragile Democratic Gains Consolidated Through Enhanced Citizen Responsive Governance; Intermediate Result (IR) IR 2.1 Civic Participation Catalyzed; and sub-IR2.1.2 Civic Activism and Oversight increased.

The focus of the new CDCS (2020-2025) is on strengthening citizens' capacity to engage with the government and demand that Georgia's institutions and procedures deliver meaningful, responsive results through open and accountable governance and rule of law. As part of the Mission's Redefining the Relationship (RDR) approaches, USAID/Georgia will "...engage with civic movements and CSOs to hold the Georgian government accountable for commitments and policy implementation (building demand for responsive governance)." (CDCS p.17)

With a new focus on civic movements, the partner base will be expanded to those who exhibit strong commitment but need assistance to build capacity. The Mission will amplify the activities of a wide range of new civic actors and connect them with their more established CSO counterparts. (CDCS pp.29-30).

Journey to Self-Reliance (J2SR)⁸: The activity contributes to improvements on Georgia's Country Roadmap scores by working with civil society to demand citizen-responsive governance. It also contributes directly to civil society capacity by strengthening the effectiveness of civil society institutions and new civic actors. The activity will directly contribute to Georgia's overall Journey to Self-Reliance by developing an ecosystem for philanthropy to enhance the long-term sustainability and self-reliance of the sector.

Alignment with Private Sector Engagement Policy: USAID's Private Sector Engagement (PSE) Policy⁹ calls for USAID staff and partners to actively assess the role of the private sector and use of market-based approaches in approaching development issues for more sustainable development outcomes. Implementing partners play a vital role in advancing the PSE Policy by actively engaging relevant private sector partners, embracing market-based approaches, and integrating the unique capabilities of the private sector in addressing development challenges across sectors.

This Activity will advance collaboration among CSOs and the private sector in addressing citizen-identified issues with an emphasis on the full breadth of financial and non-financial ways to collaborate. It will mobilize private-sector action and resources—including philanthropy and CSR assets. It will convene public and private actors around civic issues in order to build relationships and trust among them. The Activity will engage on issues of shared interest to civil society and multiple private sector actors such as regulatory reform, advocacy, policy, and strengthening the enabling environment.

⁸ USAID's Journey to Self Reliance <https://www.usaid.gov/selfreliance>

⁹ USAID' Private Sector Engagement Policy:
https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1865/usaid_psepolicy_final.pdf

Alignment with Youth Engagement Policy: The program will prioritize youth engagement throughout all activities. It will support new civic actors, many of whom are youth and will promote engagement and networking of youth participants across USAID programs.

USAID’s Effective Partnering and Procurement Reform,¹⁰ through which USAID seeks to reform how it designs and procures its program. This activity will be working with locally established partners -civil society organizations, civic movements, civic minded individuals; it will focus on financial diversification of civil society—a key driver of self-reliance; it will strengthen engagement and partnerships between private sector and CSOs, and will support collaborative partnerships in the form of co-creation.

D. Activity Purpose, Objective, Illustrative Results and Activities

The purpose of the Civil Society Engagement Activity is to increase citizen engagement, awareness and participation in civic actions and democratic processes. All interventions taking place under the activity will directly contribute to building the legitimacy and sustainability of the civil society sector. The activity has three objectives:

- (1) Enhance the capacity of CSOs, including new formal and informal civic groups, movements and individuals, to address citizen identified issues at the local, regional and national levels and mobilize domestic resources;
- (2) Foster effective intra-sectoral partnerships among local, regional and national level civil society entities;
- (3) Develop an ecosystem for sustainability and promote long term self-reliance of the civil society sector.

CSOs will be better able to engage in citizen driven/ supported advocacy campaigns (i.e., increasing their capacities to identify/ advocate for issues that are of concern to citizens, to actively involve citizens in advocacy campaigns and to communicate results back to citizens). Citizens will be empowered to engage in activism (i.e., increasing their awareness of various mechanisms for activism-philanthropy, volunteerism and increasing resources to and influence of informal/ new groups that are grounded in community needs).

These two levels of activism will be strengthened and will reinforce one another by increasing the linkages between elite/technocratic CSOs and grassroots civil society.

The primary target of the activity will be organizations or initiatives engaged in advocacy and policy initiatives. CSOs that engage in both advocacy and service delivery will also be included (and successful ‘hybrid’ models will be scaled up and shared). CSOs engaged exclusively in service delivery initiatives will not be a primary target of this activity and therefore public trust in these organizations will not be considered as an indicator for activity outcomes.

¹⁰ USAID’s Effective Partnering and Procurement Reform <https://www.usaid.gov/eppr>

Implementation principles and approach

As Georgia's moves into a new phase of civil society development, USAID has identified several principles and approaches that should drive implementation to ensure more effective programming:

- **Emphasis on experimentation and innovation:** The activity will prioritize experimentation, learning and adaptation, particularly when supporting new actors such as civic movements and newly emerging civic groups as well as sustainable funding models. For example, what might work well in terms of support to one civic group may not work well for others. Successful applicants will utilize a 'learning by doing' approach, and clearly demonstrate how they will experiment with interventions, adapt and seek to expand successful practices.
- **Co-creation and empowerment of local stakeholders:** The activity will employ co-creation practices as a means to empower local stakeholders to promote local ownership of programming. Co-creation in this context refers to the practice of involving a wide range of traditional and non-traditional stakeholders (including local CSOs, private sector, local government representatives, media, artists, educators, cultural leaders/influencers, youth leaders, etc.) to contribute to the process of defining the development challenges and solutions facing their communities.
- **Evidence-based identification of issues:** The activity will prioritize research and participatory methodologies, such as co-creation, in identifying issues of common concern to citizens. It will also promote partnerships between different types of CSOs to pool expert resources in complex technical areas, which will strengthen their initiatives.
- **Rigorous monitoring, evaluation, and adaptive learning:** The activity will develop a robust monitoring, evaluating and learning plan that will help the project to capture lessons learned from innovative approaches and adapt programming mid-stream. The activity will ensure that it has the capacity to collect, analyze and use data for reporting and decision-making by both the applicant and USAID. Collected data needs to provide evidence for higher level results to be achieved by the activities as well as indicators to be used by the applicant to measure those results. Innovative ideas and approaches should be tested and piloted, subjected to evaluation and scaled up and shared if demonstrating proof-of-concept. The applicant also will support civil society organizations to more effectively measure the impact of their activities to develop evidence-based learning. While USAID will be implementing an independent evaluation of the project, the activity will plan evaluation/s for its own interventions to be used for accountability and learning purposes.
- **Engagement of a diverse group of stakeholders:** The activity will expand and diversify USAID's civil society partners. The activity will engage civil society activists, government, the private sector, academia and artists/influencers in its activities. However, the program should not set conditions whereby new CSOs would be created to respond to this project. The project should work to create networks and partnerships of existing and promising new civil society initiatives rather than create new entities.

- **Networking of actors and efforts:** Increase trust, coordination, collaboration, cooperation: between CSOs and civic groups, media, and the government; between the private and public sectors; and between donors to maximize and synergize efforts.
- **Enhanced communication and greater public understanding:** to enhance public knowledge of what citizen engagement is, how it works and how civic movements and civil society organizations can contribute to raising and solving issues of common concern, as well as communicating the results back to citizens.

Expected Activity Level Results (Objectives)

- Capacity of civil society to address citizen identified issues at the local, regional and national level enhanced.
- Effective intra-sectoral partnerships among local, regional and national level civil society entities promoted.
- Long term sustainability and self-reliance of the sector enhanced.

Illustrative Activity Level Indicators

- Increased percentage of citizens engaged in civil society activities and activism.
- Increased percentage of citizens have trust in CSOs.
- Increased percentage of CSOs engaging in 2-way communications with citizens.
- Increased percentage of civil society advocacy campaigns informed by citizen priorities.
- Increased numbers of intra-sectoral civil society partnerships.
- Increased percentage domestic resource base of Centers for Civic Engagement.
- Value of non-donor resources mobilized for locally-led development.
- Improved knowledge and data about the ecosystem for financial viability (CSR, philanthropy, etc.) in Georgia.
- Increased public awareness and support for philanthropy and Corporate Social Responsibility.
- Increased partnerships between civil society, private sector actors, and government on issues related to advancing the ecosystem for financial viability in Georgia.
- Improved financial viability score in CSO Sustainability Index.

Objective 1: Enhance capacity of CSOs, including new formal and informal civic groups, movements and individuals, to address citizen identified issues at local, regional and national. (Approximately 40% of Program Effort)

The activity will develop and test new approaches to building the capacity of local civil society. It will provide highly tailored, flexible and demand driven capacity support to a wide range of civic entities, including newly emerging formal and informal civic groups, civic movements, and civic minded individuals with an emphasis on constituency building, outreach, communications and mobilization of domestic resources. Rather than focusing on traditional capacity building areas such as technical or financial strengthening, the purpose of all capacity

building support under this objective is to increase legitimacy and trust of civic entities (organizations, movements, individuals, etc.) as well as the impact of their initiatives, thereby increasing the self-reliance and sustainability of the civil society sector. While the activity will work to build the capacity of some civil society organizations, the purpose of this objective is not to ‘formalize’ grassroots civic initiatives or civic movements, but rather to provide them with tools, techniques and resources to amplify their existing activities, messaging and networks. If new and established (formal and informal) civic actors can provide citizens with more means to address their concerns, this will provide a locally owned set of avenues for identifying, addressing, and financing citizen initiatives. This will in turn provide a clear way for citizens to improve their local communities, will demonstrate the role that civil society can play in this process, and will build community assets and trust that can contribute to Georgia’s overall development process.

Support to New Civic Actors: In addition to working with traditional civil society organizations, the activity will place significant emphasis on support to new civic actors (for example, grassroots groups or organizations, informal initiatives, social movements, civic minded individuals and influencers, etc). Support to these actors should be provided through a ‘do no harm’ lens, should be non-directive, flexible and adaptive to their specific needs. For example, support should not seek to co-opt social movement initiatives or to conform them into more traditional non-governmental structures. Support should seek to amplify their messaging and extend the reach and impact of their activities in an organic manner that is grounded in constituency building. An experimental approach will be taken to support these groups, with several streams of activities being piloted and scaled up in close coordination with USAID including mentoring, challenge grants, asset mapping and networking. Network mapping exercises to identify which initiative areas have the greatest potential or resonate most significantly with citizens could be done prior to providing assistance.

Co-Creation to Promote Citizen Engagement and Constituency Building: The activity will prioritize co-creation approaches to building the capacity of CSOs to identify citizen priorities and solutions. Co-creation is an inclusive process in which a wide range of stakeholders come together to jointly define problems and brainstorm solutions. Co-creation approaches help CSOs to develop trust and legitimacy among citizens by ensuring organizations have a shared understanding of the issues that are of greatest relevance to citizens and vesting them in initiatives to address them. Co-creation approaches should be incorporated throughout project activities to promote citizen participation and ensure interventions are demand driven. Other citizen engagement and constituency building activities may include constituency resource management skills, membership/ affiliation initiatives, volunteer cultivation, etc. Importantly, the activity will help partner CSOs become more inclusive by encouraging participation of vulnerable and marginalized groups (including persons with disabilities, women, youth, LGBTI, ethnic and religious minorities and others) into civic activities and democratic processes.

Civil Society Communications Capacity: The activity will build civil society capacity to proactively publicize their initiatives through a range of social and traditional media outlets in a manner that is easily understandable and relevant to citizens. Many Georgian CSOs are unable to effectively communicate the importance of their work to those outside of the democracy, rights and governance fields, which negatively impacts levels of organizational trust and

legitimacy in the eyes of citizens. The activity will support civil society to develop simplified, direct narratives on how they are addressing issues that resonate with citizens. The activity will build the capacity of CSOs to spread positive narratives by documenting and sharing their individual success stories and achievements. At the same time, the activity will work with those organizations working on complex, often abstract concepts such as human rights, governance and accountability to simplify their goals and provide real world examples of how restrictions or impediments impact citizens' everyday lives.

Individualized Capacity Building Support for thematic/issue-specific CSOs: The activity will provide individualized capacity building support to select organizations, including grassroots or newly formed CSOs. Selected organizations should have either a demonstrated track record implementing citizen driven initiatives, demonstrated support or trust within their communities, and/ or potential to have meaningful impact on specific issue areas. Capacity building support will emphasize organizational self-reliance, sustainability, and impact. Support could include financial diversification and domestic resource mobilization techniques, constituency outreach and mobilization support, learning opportunities and coalition building among organizations working on similar issue areas (linked closely with activities under Objective 2), techniques to strengthen relationships and communications with local community members, etc. The objective for all capacity building support is to increase legitimacy and trust of organizations, thereby increasing their self-reliance and sustainability.

Flexible Grants Pool: A flexible grants pool will be established under the activity to support scale-able support for evidence-based advocacy initiatives, amplify context-specific responses of civil society and drive innovative solutions to democratic development challenges. Grant support will prioritize initiatives that have strong citizen backing or the potential to increase the engagement of citizens in democracy and governance processes. Context-specific responses refer to those activities that civil society, including formal and informal groups, engage on in response to an unforeseen event. This could include civil society response efforts to situations such as the COVID19 crisis and its impacts, or other events which can represent an opportunity for civil society to fill critical governance gaps that often go unaddressed at both the local and national level. If civil society is able to respond effectively and efficiently to citizen needs during times of crisis, it can help build long term citizen trust in the sector. Finally, grants will be available for civil society organizations with innovative solutions for democratic development challenges. Underlying principles of the flexible grants pool should include the following:

- Promote community self-reliance by advancing locally-led development;
- Build strong relationships and promote collaboration among local actors and across sectors to initiate and lead development efforts;
- Mobilize resources for innovative development purposes; and
- Support local leadership and community ownership of the development process

Illustrative Activities:

- Flexible capacity building support to newly established local organizations (emphasis on organizational/ core support).

- Establishment of an accessible discretionary fund to support informal civic initiatives (could include project-based or organizational/ core-based support).
- Establishment of co-creation mechanisms to support implementation of community identified/ prioritized initiatives.
- Supporting experimentation and scaling up innovative interventions through the innovation grants program.
- Trainings to new civic leaders on leadership, community organization/ mobilization, volunteer promotion, etc.
- Technical capacity building support for CSOs engaged in policy areas that are of interest to citizens (e.g., health care, education, social welfare).
- Trainings and mentoring to CSOs on various digital and traditional platforms to share information, ‘user friendly’ constituent outreach methods and use of data visualization.
- Flexible grants pool to support evidence-based advocacy initiatives and/ or amplification of context-specific responses.

Illustrative Results:

- Citizen-driven civic initiatives empowered and increased.
- Opportunities for co-creation for civic priorities and projects increased.
- Citizen understanding of importance and mechanisms to engage in civic initiatives increased.
- Effective two-way communication of CSO with citizens on key policy issues increased.
- Technical capacities of CSOs working on ‘less-traditional’ policy areas such as health care, education, social welfare, etc. strengthened.
- CSO organizational capacities in governance, management, and advocacy improved.
- Citizen awareness of the role and importance of civil society organizations increased.
- Effective local and national level civic advocacy and oversight campaigns implemented.
- CSO and citizen feedback mechanisms developed at national and local levels.

Objective 2: Foster effective intra-sectoral partnerships among local, regional and national level civil society entities (Approximately 30% of Program Effort)

The activity will increase trust, communications, collaboration and partnerships within the civil society sector with a specific emphasis on bridging the existing divide between national level organizations and grassroots civic groups. The activity will also promote communications, collaboration and learning among civil society groups working in different regions and communities.

Bridging the Elite versus Grassroots Divide: Civil society development in Georgia is imbalanced. The national level organizations that have developed over time have and continue to serve as a critical watchdog to government authority. These organizations have been critical in advancing democratic reforms and safeguarding individual rights and freedoms. Despite their strong organizational and technical capacities, these organizations have struggled to effectively communicate with a majority of Georgian citizens or build popular support for their activities. In recent years, Georgia has experienced a wave of grassroots civic activism that has, for the most part, operated in parallel to the more ‘formalized’ non-governmental sector. These newly

emerging groups are more likely to have strong constituency engagement practices, resulting in trust and support of their activities. Both subsets of organizations would benefit from greater formal and informal collaboration and partnership opportunities. Grassroots civil society groups would benefit from the political relationships, technical and organizational expertise of national level NGOs. These relationships could enable grassroots organizations to elevate locally identified issues into nation-wide advocacy campaigns. At the same time, national level groups would benefit from exposure to the constituency engagements practices and citizen mobilization tactics that grassroots civil society groups employ. The activity will test various approaches to foster greater partnerships and collaboration between these two subsets of civil society.

Communications and Learning Opportunities: Civil society activities, including best practices and lessons learned, are often siloed across the country. This represents a missed opportunity for organizations, particularly newly emerging groups, to learn from the experiences of one another and to collaborate for broader impact. The activity will support organizations to more effectively measure the impact of their activities to develop evidence-based learning, promote greater information sharing and collaboration among civil society groups throughout the country, including those working at the local, regional and national level. The activity may also consider initiatives that would promote information sharing across borders around specific or logically related themes.

Partnerships between different types of CSOs. The capacity of CSOs to identify, advocate and influence policy issues and processes that are of greatest relevance to citizens will benefit from the participation of think tanks, academia and research oriented CSOs. Very few advocacy/ policy CSOs have strong technical competence in areas that are of greatest relevance to citizens (healthcare, education, social welfare reforms, etc.). The recipient should promote partnerships between different types of research and academic organizations and advocacy/ policy CSOs. These partnerships will provide advocacy organizations with expert resources in new and complex technical areas, which will strengthen their initiatives. It will ensure campaigns are grounded in evidence- based research, which can increase their credibility and likelihood for success.

Illustrative Activities:

- Exchange opportunities (internships/ fellowships) for junior and mid-level civil society activists and CSO managers working in Tbilisi-based CSOs and local CSOs/activists.
- Development of thematic grant pools requiring co-application/ implementation by coalitions that include Tbilisi-based and local organizations and/or private sector or academic partners.
- E&E region-wide exchange opportunities (internships/ fellowships).
- Research roundtables.
- Co-creation exercises that bring together stakeholders from civil society, academia, private sector, etc. around topics of interest.

Illustrative Results:

- Horizontal and vertical linkages between national, regional and local CSOs increased.

- Understanding of technical and organizational strengths and experiences of various types of civil society entities increased.
- Thematic coalitions developed and strengthened.

Objective 3: Develop an ecosystem for sustainability and promote long term self-reliance of the civil society sector (Approximately 30% of Program Effort)

The activity will support the initial steps necessary to develop an ecosystem giving and philanthropic activity, to enable the civil society sector to become more sustainable and self-reliant.

Developing an ecosystem for sustainability: An ecosystem approach to building sustainability of civil society as a sector recognizes that several interconnected and mutually reinforcing areas must be strengthened. Key elements of the ecosystem - of which philanthropy is a cornerstone - include the following: 1) A legal and regulatory environment that promotes individual and corporate giving (i.e., tax incentives or assignments), incentivizes social investment, and enables social entrepreneurship; 2) Recognition and acceptance of a diversity of resources (i.e., sources of income generation) and monetary and in-kind contributions (i.e., corporate and private giving, social service provision, volunteer support, fee-for-service/ social entrepreneurship, membership dues, state funding, foreign donations, etc.); 3) Citizen engagement and empowered communities (i.e., the ability of citizens to aggregate and direct assets to benefit their own communities); 4) Public trust in civil society to advance collective interests; and, 5) Cross sectoral cooperation (i.e., building relationships and trust among the public and private sectors). Philanthropy and CSR in Georgia are nascent and activities under this objective will support the initial steps necessary to support its advancement. Grounded in evidence-based assumptions and expectations, the activity will strengthen the philanthropy infrastructure, including building knowledge, tools and public understanding of giving.¹¹ The activity will strengthen cross-sectoral cooperation and trust. The activity will advance the capacities of civil society to self-generate and mobilize a range of resources, both monetary and in-kind.

Strengthening the financial diversification of existing CSO infrastructure: In addition, the activity will build on previous USAID investments in civil society infrastructure, including working with the Centers for Civic Engagement to increase their financial diversification and sustainability. The Centers for Civic Engagement (CCEs) network has been operating in Georgia since 2010 and consists of 10 regional centers which offer a range of services to citizens, civil society organizations, businesses and government. The range of services and activities offered by the CCEs has expanded dramatically since their formation and they continue to serve as a valuable resource for the communities in which they operate. Several CCEs have begun exploring domestic funding opportunities such as income generation/ social entrepreneurship initiatives, space rentals, applications to local government funding, etc. This activity will work with the existing CCEs to test new models for income generation, including a potential restructuring of the network. Continued support for CCEs may be conditioned on achievement of modest but annually increasing leverage targets.

¹¹ Data should be gathered and analyzed on the current state of philanthropy, CSR and constraints on business to inform appropriate expectations for the Activity.

Illustrative Activities:

- Developing an understanding of what philanthropy and CSR are among relevant actors, and its importance for Georgia's development.
- Providing recognition to philanthropic and CSR efforts and individuals contributing to Georgia's development (historic and present day).
- Building knowledge of the ecosystem in Georgia. Mapping of relevant actors, efforts, data on giving, data on CSR and analysis of current legal frameworks to identify opportunities for future advocacy interventions.
- Advocacy initiatives which seek to address key constraints in the enabling environment to incentivize domestic resource mobilization and public funding.
- Strengthening cross-sectoral partnerships between civil society, private and public sector actors, including media through various platforms and initiatives that foster mentoring opportunities; volunteering; community actions, challenge grants etc.
- Support and promote further expansion of CSR efforts and strategies to foster greater cooperation with civil society and strategic community engagement.
- Enhancing skills of civil society to mobilize local resources (financial and human) at the community level through creative and constituency building approaches.
- Support for various creative cross sectoral fundraising activities intended to further promote philanthropy, CSR, locally led development and community engagement (events, giving circles, auctions, walk-athons, crowdfunding).
- CCEs register as separate, locally based entities to promote competitiveness for local funding.
- CCEs develop and test new fee for service and social entrepreneurship models.

Illustrative Results:

- Improved knowledge and data about the ecosystem for civil society's financial viability, philanthropy, and CSR in Georgia.
- Increased public awareness and support for philanthropy and CSR.
- Improved enabling environment for social investment and CSO financial viability.
- Platforms and networks that foster cross sectoral dialogue and collaboration around financial viability issues established and/or strengthened.
- Capacity of selected CSO's for mobilization of resources enhanced.
- Cooperation and trust between civil society and the private sector improved.
- Opportunities and models for future, longer term advocacy interventions to advance the financial viability of the civil society sector identified.
- Financial viability of CCEs improved.

E. USAID/ Georgia Democracy and Governance Portfolio and other Relevant Programming

The recipient should seek out potential synergies with USAID's current democracy and governance portfolio, particularly as it relates to youth engagement, integration and civic education as well as governance initiatives at both the national and local levels. For example, the activity can build the capacity of civil society organizations working in the area of governance, political processes, media, human rights and other areas of democracy portfolio, to engage in citizen driven advocacy campaigns by providing them with tools, techniques and resources to amplify their existing activities, messaging and networks. Further, USAID/ Georgia and US Embassy/ Georgia have promoted civic engagement among youth both directly and indirectly through a variety of initiatives. Many participants of these programs have gone on to serve as community leaders and influencers, teachers, entrepreneurs, political representatives, etc. This activity will establish tools and mechanisms to build on momentum established by other USG programming and harness the capacity of beneficiaries from programs, such as civic education, elections and political processes, Promoting Integration Tolerance and Awareness (PITA) and others, to enable them to quickly identify and re-engage the widest range of beneficiaries under this activity and continue to support beneficiaries as they develop their skills and commitment to civic activism.

Burden Sharing

Many international donors, both governmental and nongovernmental, support civil society development. Below are some of the donor-supported efforts supporting civil society organizations through a range of approaches:

- **EU delegation in Georgia:** The EU Delegation's Roadmap for Engagement with Civil Society in Georgia, adopted in December 2018, constitutes a basis for the overall EU engagement with civil society in Georgia. EU support for civil society is focused on five broad areas including: (a) enhancing civil society's enabling environment, capacity, transparency and accountability; (b) contributing to a more favorable ecosystem for social entrepreneurship; (c) increasing CSOs' competency to better perform their roles as reliable actors of governance; (d) reinforcing the role of CSOs in tackling climate change; and (e) supporting CSOs active in the promotion and defense of human rights and democracy.
- **SIDA** provides a multi-year funding to its selected strategic partners – leading Georgian CSOs.
- **Grantmaking organizations**, such as the National Endowment for Democracy, the European Endowment for Democracy, the Black Sea Trust, and the Prague Civil Society Centre, which provide small-medium sized grants that help support independent media, civil society organizations, and human rights groups. Local grantmaking organizations include Open Society Georgia Foundation and Europe Foundation
- **US Embassy:** supports local CSOs through its Democracy Small Grants Program.

The civil society engagement activity will leverage the resources and opportunities presented by these activities and ensure proper coordination between donor organizations.