



Making Aid Work for Georgia

Summary of Program Results

1 January 2009 – 31 December 2009

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In October 2008, just after the Georgian-Russian war, international donors pledged USD 4.5 billion in aid to Georgia over three years, a sum equivalent to USD 1,000 per citizen. TI Georgia sought to “make aid work for Georgia” by monitoring the distribution and implementation of these funds. Through a combination of evidence-based research and advocacy and engagement with government agencies and donors, TI Georgia achieved the following results:

Stronger government commitments to principles of accountability, transparency and adherence to standards in the implementation of aid programs for IDPs:

One of the largest intended beneficiary groups of the aid pledges have been internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Georgia. With 230,000 IDPs throughout the country before the 2008 war, and another 22,000 displaced as a result of the August 2008 war, the government launched a hasty, yet vast, program to provide durable shelter to both groups and to capitalize on available donor funds. The decision-making on this new policy lacked transparency and a consultative process. TI Georgia published an initial report on “Issues of Concern” that highlighted the main problems in newly-built IDP settlements and pushed publicly for a greater consultation period. These efforts raised the attention of the Ministry of Refugees and Accommodation (MRA), which invited TI Georgia to join a high-level Steering Committee on IDP issues. Through this forum and several working-level subgroups, TI Georgia secured a number of written commitments to transparency, accountability and adherence to standards in the housing construction and beneficiary selection processes. Many of these documents have been approved by government decree and thus TI Georgia’s input laid the groundwork for monitoring the government’s own commitments. On this basis, many civil society groups are now pointing to references to accountability mechanisms and standards in the IDP Action Plan as a way to advocate for a more just and transparent process.

TI Georgia also helped draft and finalize an information brochure for IDPs about their rights to various public benefit programs and actively participated in the elaboration of the Ministry’s information campaign. These achievements were the result of close, sustained engagement with the MRA and other stakeholders. Also as a result of TI Georgia’s close cooperation with the Municipal Development Fund, the technical agency responsible for building IDP shelter, published a list of the contracts with construction companies to its website.



Evidence-based advocacy and strategic engagement with policy makers:

One of the main mechanisms for influencing policy on IDP issues has been through evidence-based research and follow-on advocacy. For example, in November 2009 TI Georgia gave a presentation to government and civil society representatives at an EU-led conference in which we demonstrated how, during the process of decision making over IDP housing policy, implementation of policy often *preceded* a thorough planning process. The main criticism was that the government made hasty decisions behind closed doors and implemented a nation-wide new housing program without communicating it or soliciting the input of the people who would be most affected. This evidence was endorsed by several prominent civil society organizations working with IDPs, who took up the same line of argument in subsequent public events and in their own advocacy campaigns. The MRA's reaction was to seek an interview with TI Georgia to explain their position and to simultaneously acknowledge some of the problems. This interaction actually contributed to a deepening of TI Georgia's working relationship with the government and demonstrated that we are serious about holding them accountable.

Promoting donor transparency and accountability, locally and globally:

By providing the vast majority of financing for new IDP housing programs, donors tacitly (if not expressly) condoned the non-consultative and hasty approach taken by the government. These same donors make strong public statements about the importance of local ownership over development programs, the benefits to participatory democracy that are achieved through longer consultation periods and to the better results that come from engaging beneficiaries in program design. Donors are one of TI Georgia's primary advocacy targets for indirectly influencing government behavior: often TI Georgia's reports are cited in donor requests for proposals and used by donors to measure progress in corruption, on the basis of which funds could be withheld. Thus, donors, especially large donors with big carrots, can hold significant sway over the Georgian government's approach to development. Yet TI Georgia found that influencing the practices of big donors is much more difficult than affecting government behavior. One reason is that, while donors are an accountability mechanism over government action, local actors are not perceived as an accountability mechanism over donors.

TI Georgia took a number of steps to hold donors more accountable for the aid they deliver to Georgia in 2009. We monitored donor websites twice during the year, once in April and again in December, based on a simple set of criteria to determine whether donors were meeting minimum commitments to publish basic information. (do donors provide project funding and activity information? Do they have working contact information? Do they publish information in Georgian language?) Despite TI Georgia's efforts to widely disperse the assessment results, very little changed during this time – the most transparent donors (USAID, EC) remained the most transparent, and the least transparent (Japan, Ukraine) continued to provide relatively little information about their work in the country.

While these efforts did not yield any positive results in donor accountability within Georgia, they are adding to the collective body of knowledge and information about issues in donor transparency that feed into global donor transparency initiatives. TI Georgia will present this



information during a number of upcoming conferences in Europe on aid transparency and seek to draw more attention to the issue. The research may also encourage other local NGOs to push for greater donor transparency.

Lastly, as a result of TI's close cooperation with a coalition of other NGOs working on aid transparency, the Ministry of Finance began publishing a breakdown of donor pledges on its website for the first time. (Donors themselves initially had not made the detailed breakdown of pledges public.)