



INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR FAIR ELECTIONS AND DEMOCRACY

ISFED
GEORGIA

Strategic Plan

2004 - 2007

June 2004

Table of Contents:

1. Summary	3
2. History of the Organization/ Role of ISFED in the Society	4
3. Development processes in Georgia	6
4. ISFED Mission Statement	6
5. Elaboration of ISFED Strategic Directions	7
6. Strategic Goals and Activities	10
7. Possible obstacles and expected results	12
8. Organizational Development Priorities	13
9. ISFED Outlined Projects	13
10. Financing	14
11. Short term operational plan	15

1. SUMMARY

The International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED) is a non-profit, non-governmental and non-partisan organization that operates in Georgia since 1995.

The organization was founded at a time when civil wars and economic disorder had created general disintegration in Georgia. The founders of ISFED believed that the formation of an organization concentrating on the promotion of democratic values, particularly free and fair elections, was vital for a country that had limited experience with democracy and had been subject to multiple internal political upheavals. As a result, the organization's main priority and scope of work has been election monitoring.

Today, ISFED operates through a wide network of 65 small rayon offices, four regional offices and a central office, employing over 80 persons in total. 800 members and the network of volunteers support the work of the organization.

The strength of civil society organizations lies in their ability to adapt and contribute to new political environments and the changing needs of society. The presidential elections in January 2004 and the re-run parliamentary elections in March 2004 were assessed as being free and fair, marking a new era in Georgian history. As events in southeastern Europe illustrate, however, the work of civil society organizations does not end with free and fair elections. The beginning of genuinely democratic activities obliges the government and elected officials to be accountable to the people, respecting the will and rights of those who elected them. Civil society organizations have a major role to play in this process.

In June 2004, ISFED went through an internal process of updating and elaborating its strategic orientation in order to adjust its programs to the new environment. From this stage ISFED will begin to plan and conduct activities based on the redefined—yet similar—priorities and strategies. Moreover, as ISFED has always worked to promote free and fair elections and accountable and transparent work of the election administration, it will continue to pursue similar goals in the upcoming period.

ISFED will concentrate its work in three major programs:

- A. Enhancing accountable and transparent governance;**
- B. Promoting active citizenship;**
- C. Monitoring and improving democratic election processes in Georgia.**

Each program's goals and activities are elaborated in this document. The changes to be made by the organization and its short-term operational plan are explained; in addition, the thoughts and decisions of ISFED's core staff on the organization's updated profile are presented.

Just as there are obstacles to Georgia's transition to democracy, there are many factors that could undermine this plan. However, ISFED believes that its objectives for the next three years are measurable and will be valuable to the further development of Georgia.

2. HISTORY OF THE ORGANIZATION / ROLE OF ISFED IN GEORGIAN SOCIETY

ISFED is one of the oldest civil society organizations in Georgia, with a well-known public image and a wide network covering the entire country. Since founding, ISFED has carried out numerous activities throughout Georgia. One of the most important and successful activities has been its election-monitoring program. Within the framework of this program, the organization conducted the following activities:

- Monitoring of presidential and parliamentary elections - November 5, 1995;
- Monitoring of plebiscite of IDPs from Abkhazia- November 1996;
- Monitoring of local governmental elections – November 15, 1998;
- Monitoring of parliamentary elections - October 31, 1999;
- Monitoring of presidential elections - April 9, 2000;
- Monitoring of local self-governance election - June 2, 2002;
- Monitoring and conduction of PVT/PTT for parliamentary elections - November 2, 2003;
- Monitoring and conduction of PVT/PTT for presidential election - January 4, 2004;
- Monitoring and conduction of PVT/PTT for second parliamentary elections on proportional system - March 28, 2004.

Additionally, ISFED has monitored special elections, such as: repeat elections; repeat voting; 2nd rounds of elections, repeated parliamentary elections in one-mandate election districts, etc.

In almost all cases, the organization monitored the pre-election process, including voter registration, political party registration and campaigns. Election day procedures included observation of the voting process and counting and tabulation of election results. Post-election day procedures included proclaiming the official results and bringing an appeals process to the courts when necessary. The organization also carried out numerous voter education campaigns.

The latest success in election monitoring includes the conduction of Parallel Vote Tabulation¹ and Parallel Turnout Tabulation² (PVT/PTT) for the elections in November 2003 and January and March 2004.

¹ Parallel Vote Tabulation (PVT) – a method used to project election results by gathering and processing election results from a number of statistically chosen polling stations

² Parallel Turnout Tabulation – a method used to provide for a voter turnout figures during the Election Day

Although the organization monitored all major elections in the country since 1995, the biggest outreach occurred before the parliamentary elections of November 2003. PVT results produced by ISFED showed a huge disparity compared to the official results. The organization gathered polling protocols that were falsified and appealed to the courts. Based in part on the evidence provided by ISFED, the parliamentary election results were canceled. The public's response to government leaders attempting to illegally take power caused an explosion that culminated in the peaceful rose revolution in late autumn 2003.

As a result of its activities as an impartial and legitimate organization, ISFED gained significant respect and credibility from the citizens of Georgia.

The courage and professional objectivity of ISFED's staff and volunteers, as well as the organization's well-structured process, enhanced ISFED's reputation as an unbiased, professional and liberal organization.

Besides the election monitoring program, ISFED has conducted a variety of projects in civic education and local governance, such as:

- Monitoring the public's access to information within governmental bodies;
- Examining the activities of consular and citizen registration services within 32 districts;
- Monitoring the accessibility of local government officials to the public;
- Monitoring local governments' activities;
- Examining the transparency of local budgets;
- Monitoring the transparency of tax departments;
- Monitoring the activities of the state auto inspection, transportation and registration departments;
- Examining the transparency of the state consular and passport registration agencies;
- Protecting the rights of youth of pre-military age;
- State health policy related problem monitoring;
- Investigating problems of populations without social protection;
- Investigating problems related to land distribution and taxation;
- Investigating problems of vulnerable populations.

Although these were mostly local, community-based advocacy projects, they helped to increase the capacity of the organization overall and enhanced its image in society. In most cases, the projects revealed administrative misconduct and encouraged governmental bodies to act according to the law and for the benefit of citizens.

Since its inception, ISFED has managed to build the largest network among Georgian NGOs. Over 6,000 Georgian citizens from different ethnic, religious and other backgrounds have participated in ISFED's monitoring activities.

Many other organizations that were predominately engaged in election monitoring changed their strategy after achieving free and fair elections; like them, ISFED will continue to play a vital role in Georgian society with new programs tailored to the new environment.

3. DEVELOPMENT PROCESSES IN GEORGIA

Following a brief period of moderate democratic reform in the mid 1990s, Georgia descended into stagnation as political leadership did not take the steps needed to move the country through the transition period following independence. The country's limited experience of democratic institutions, corruption, distrust in government and lack of belief in the chance for real progress towards a more open society put limits on the consolidation of liberal values. The gap between government authorities and the population was widening, and the risk of political disintegration was increasing.

In 2003, however, the people of Georgia took peaceful, purposeful and coordinated action to change the pace of development in the country. Led by the political opposition, a popular revolution forced the government to resign, and new elections were called.

The country has entered into the phase of post-rose revolution development and is optimistic in its prospects to transition to a more democratic state. The political changes brought fresh optimism to the society and the country's political agenda, and the leadership appears to genuinely support democratic and market-oriented development. However, many of the problems that existed before the revolution have not disappeared.

Sustainable social development will become possible when basic values such as respect for human dignity and individual freedom, accountability of public institutions to citizens and communities, rule of law, and protection of the rights of minorities and underprivileged groups are incorporated in the policies of the current political leadership.

The major development organizations (the World Bank, USAID, the European Union, the UNDP and others) still list improvements in the country's governance system as a priority. Strengthening the management of public expenditures, increasing institutional capacity, empowering local governments, and promoting accountability and transparency are vital if the country is to retain international support.

In the coming years, Georgia will face tremendous challenges related to public administration, governance and citizen participation in the decision-making process. Civil society organizations, and ISFED in particular, will play an important role in supporting the country's necessary changes by enhancing cooperation between government and citizens during this vital period in Georgia's history.

4. NEW MISSION STATEMENT

ISFED contributes to the development of democratic institutions in Georgia by promoting the values of active citizenship and public participation in decision-making processes. ISFED empowers citizens to take action to hold government accountable

and guards the basic tenets of democracy by ensuring that elections remain fair and peaceful.

ISFED strives for a future where the public has basic trust in its government and effectively cooperates for the welfare of the country. ISFED facilitates the process of creating real cooperation between public institutions and communities.

ISFED enhances the accountability of government bodies not just through oversight and monitoring, but also by assisting them in finding better ways of incorporating public participation.

5. ELABORATION OF ISFED'S STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

The strength of civil society organizations lies in their ability to adapt and contribute to new political environments and the changing needs of society. Free and fair elections mark the beginning of democratic processes, obliging the government and elected officials to act accountably and respect the will and rights of the people who elected them.

As events in southeastern Europe illustrate, however, the work of civil society organizations does not end with free and fair elections. In the past, ISFED worked for free and fair elections and the accountability and transparency of the election administration, and it will continue to pursue similar goals in the upcoming period in order to contribute to Georgia's development.

ISFED will maintain three strategic directions in the future: a) enhancing accountable and transparent governance, b) promoting active citizenship, and c) monitoring and improving democratic election processes in country.

A. Enhancing accountable and transparent governance

Fair and democratic elections are not the only avenue for public participation in political processes. Citizen participation in decision-making activities is vital for the establishment of an effective democracy; to reach this end, ISFED will focus on both local and central governments.

1. **Local government** is the unit of government closest to the citizens. ISFED believes that local governments are crucial for changing one of the deep-rooted paradigms from the Soviet era that implies that people exist to serve the government, rather than the other way around.

ISFED will work with local administrations and communities to help them cooperate and establish an effective system of checks and balances. ISFED will support local governments on how to use local resources more efficiently, how to find joint solutions to various local problems and how to incorporate public participation mechanisms.

2. The mass mobilization of Georgian citizens during the rose revolution was a response to the government's attempt to falsify the results of the parliamentary elections. The public understands that **parliament** is one of the fundamental institutions of the state and defines the country's development orientation. It is vital to reinforce the achievements of parliament and further consolidate its democratic culture.

The parliament still faces challenges in sustaining strong communication and building trust with society. The public is eager to maintain contact with its elected representatives in parliament and contribute to its activities. Therefore, on the central level, ISFED will focus on providing a link between parliament and the public, so that citizens can bring their voices to parliament and members of parliament can maintain connections with their constituents.

3. The **central government** is planning major restructuring processes in many directions. In some cases, changes will be difficult and will create fears and resistance in various segments of society that could endanger the process of national consolidation and successful implementation of the reforms.

ISFED sees its role as helping the government to educate citizens about these reforms, monitor the implementation of reforms on the local level, and make sure that the reforms are conducted according to legal requirements.

B. Promoting active citizenship

ISFED puts an emphasis on democratic education that will enable citizens to become active in various democratic processes beyond elections. The election campaigns helped ISFED to gather valuable information on different segments of population. The results show that youth (up to 30 years old), ethnic, religious and other minorities living mostly in mountainous regions and other areas densely inhabited by them are less active in democratic processes due to a lack of knowledge of their rights.

Therefore, apart from education on democracy for the general public, the emphasis will be on the following categories of citizens:

1. One of the reasons for low **youth** participation is the lack of interest and the belief that important political decisions are taken solely by the elder generation. Many young people are dissatisfied and feel excluded from the democratic process. ISFED will work with young people to promote their rights and duties through different methods specially designed for youth.
2. **Ethnic and other minorities** often do not perceive themselves as equal citizens and do not identify themselves as part of the Georgian state. One of the reasons for this is their limited access to and participation in the country's social and cultural life. ISFED will work on the promotion of rights of minorities among the general public and with members of minority groups themselves.
3. **Remote areas** are also very isolated in terms of information and attention; this brings a high level of nihilism and therefore low activism. Using its countrywide

network, ISFED will work in remote areas to overcome infrastructural disadvantages and promote the inclusion of the population in the civic and political life of the country.

4. ISFED particularly works for the protection of **socially vulnerable people** by providing them with adequate information and helping them to get access to the resources and privileges endowed them by law.

ISFED will promote the knowledge of civic, social and political rights, support tolerance education among the general public, and enhance the image of active citizens who have certain rights and duties towards the society and country.

C. Monitoring and improving democratic election processes

The valuable experience accumulated by ISFED in the field of elections needs to be further sharpened and used more effectively and strategically. Therefore, ISFED will become more actively engaged in advocating for democratic elections, and will develop and update approaches in the field.

1. The **political leadership** has expressed its willingness to improve those structural limitations that are threatening the conduct of transparent and fair elections. ISFED plans to increase its advocacy for planned improvements in the legislation and administration of elections. The main goal is to bring the Georgian elections on all levels in accordance with international standards and commitments.

2. In terms of promoting and embodying democratic values within the society, it is crucial that the culture of fair elections is equally practiced in different institutions. Reforms in the field of education are starting to take place in Georgia. The **education institutes** (schools, universities, etc.) are driven to become independent and democratic units, which implies that a number of positions or units will be elected. ISFED sees its role as rendering consultancy for the proper preparation and monitoring of these elections.

3. In past eight years, ISFED gained valuable experience in monitoring elections. The experience and knowledge collected by the organization could be very relevant for **similar organizations** operating in neighboring countries or other post-Soviet republics. In that context, ISFED will play an important role in increasing these groups' capacities through an exchange of knowledge. ISFED will participate in election monitoring missions in other countries in order to increase its proficiency in election monitoring.

4. ISFED will further elaborate its election monitoring profile and develop an updated monitoring approach for future elections. Election commissions have already started to improve their skills, methods and overall performance, thus pressuring **election-monitoring organizations** to become more proficient and targeted.

6. STRATEGIC GOALS AND ACTIVITIES

A. Enhancing accountable and transparent governance

The major strategic goal is to improve the relationship between government and the public by promoting communication and citizens' involvement in the decision-making process.

The following objectives have been set:

Objective 1.

Local government bodies incorporate mechanisms to increase the participation of interest groups and local communities in the decision-making process.

Major types of activities

- Training of interest groups in advocacy skills;
- Training of local governments in public participation mechanisms;
- Assisting local governments in establishing transparent systems;
- Increasing human resource capacities of local agencies by providing trained volunteer interns;
- Facilitating problem-solving meetings between the public and local governments;
- Facilitating public discussion on local government initiatives.

Objective 2.

Members of parliament (majority MPs) exercise accountability towards the electorate by bringing other voices to the parliament.

Major types of activities

- Supporting majority MPs' local bureaus by informing the public of their work;
- Increasing the human resource capacities of local bureaus by providing trained volunteer interns;
- Encouraging MPs to hold regular meetings with the electorate and to follow legal requirements;
- Ensuring that public concerns are properly channeled and advocated by MPs.

Objective 3.

Increased citizen involvement in the decision-making process nationwide

Major types of activities

- Initiating and organizing public discussions on drafts and current issues of public concern;
- Initiating and organizing expert discussions on drafts and current issues of public concern.

Objective 4.

Reforms are implemented effectively on the local level in accordance with legal requirements and general standards.

Major types of activities

- Collecting information on selected reforms taking place within the country;
- Disseminating information on reforms in order to increase understanding of and commitment to changes among the general public and targeted groups;
- Monitoring these reforms' implementation on the local level.

B. Promoting active citizenship

The major strategic goal is to increase citizens' understanding of democratic principles and enable them to take more active role in society.

The following objectives have been set:

Objectives

1. Improved understanding of democratic principles among the general public, especially in remote areas;
2. Greater participation in democratic processes among youth;
3. Increased public awareness of the principles of equity and equal rights despite ethnic or other differences;
4. Enhanced awareness and ability of the socially vulnerable to protect their own rights.

Major types of activities (activities are similar for all objectives)

- Trainings and seminars in high schools and other education institutes on civic values, human rights, advocacy and tolerance;
- Public events and actions;
- Media campaigns and specially designed forums through national and local media promoting civic values, tolerance education and human rights;
- Information dissemination through various methods;
- Providing specific information for socially vulnerable populations;
- Outlining examples of good practices in public participation and advocacy;
- Training interest groups and assisting them with advocacy.

C. Monitoring and improving democratic election processes

The major strategic goal is to further contribute to free and fair elections by improving the legislation and administration of elections at all levels.

The following objectives have been set:

Objective 1.

An improved legal and administrative environment for holding fair elections at all levels

Major types of activities

- Advocating for relevant legal changes;
- Monitoring the implementation of an action plan for the improvement of the election administration (composition and qualification of commission members, preparation of voter lists, etc.).

Objective 2.

The culture and practice of fair elections successfully implemented in schools and other education institutes

Major types of activities

- Providing consultancy for election preparation;
- Monitoring the balloting process;
- Reporting.

Objective 3.

Increased cooperation with similar organizations from other countries in the region

Major types of activities

- Establishing contacts;
- Organizing study visits;
- Participating in election monitoring missions in other countries.

Objective 4.

Improved organizational proficiency in election monitoring

Major types of activities

- Revision and further development of the election monitoring approach;
- Maintaining and widening the volunteer network and increasing relevant capacities;
- Conducting election-monitoring campaigns.

7. POSSIBLE OBSTACLES AND EXPECTED RESULTS

Georgia's first few months of fragile democracy give guarantees for the country's development, both politically and economically. However, there are still many obstacles left; for example, one third of the country still has no state sovereignty, leaving room for further conflicts; there are many Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs); many people are very poor; industrial capacities have been destroyed; there is a large number of unemployed people; Georgia has no democratic culture; corruption is widespread; elected officials are unaccountable to their constituents; many citizens are passive. ISFED believes, however, that the measures begun by the government to solve these problems will show significant results in the upcoming period.

All of these obstacles reflect on ISFED's goals, as well. However, ISFED believes that its goals are achievable and measurable in the next three years.

The biggest obstacle to the organization's future work will be its image as an election-monitoring organization. ISFED believes that it will be able to change this image as a result of its new projects, just as similar organizations in Southeastern Europe managed to do.

By developing more detailed projects based on qualitative and quantitative analyses in the proposed areas, and by measurable results, ISFED intends to contribute to the country's overall development, alongside other well-respected Georgian and international NGOs.

8. ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES

Today, ISFED operates out of a central office, four regional offices, and small offices in 64 rayons in the country. Additionally, there are 10 coordinators in Tbilisi. The organization regularly recruits more than 3,000 volunteers in election monitoring campaigns.

ISFED employees are well-educated and experienced in many areas. However, in order to achieve the proposed goals, a set of key actions must be taken to ensure the organization's further development and sustainability.

In the management field, the existing management system throughout the organization will be strengthened, communication between the central and local offices will be enhanced, and cooperation with possible partners in strategic directions will be further developed.

In the human resources field, managerial, financial and other skills of ISFED's employees will be enhanced through participation in various training programs and projects. The strategy for working with volunteers during the interim election period will be developed.

The structure of the organization will be evaluated and adjusted to new realities by changing the charter and other governing documents.

In order to inform the public about ISFED's future role in society, the public relations component of the organization will be strengthened.

9. ISFED OUTLINED PROJECTS

Program A. Enhancing accountable and transparent governance

Projects:

- Capacity building to increase transparency and accountability in local governments;

- Internship programs for local governments;
- Public participation through town hall meetings;
- Supporting the work of majority MPs with their electorate;
- Internship programs for majority MP's with their constituencies;
- Parliament and Public: public and expert debates;
- Supporting reform implementation in Georgia.

Program B. Promoting active citizenship

Projects:

- Education for democracy and tolerance;
- National Minorities: Equal Citizens of Georgia;
- Active Youth: Action for Reaction.

Program C. Monitoring and improving democratic election processes

Projects:

- Bringing election legislation and administration in accordance with international standards;
- Assisting with democratic elections at education institutes;
- Sharing experience with regional partners;
- Monitoring local and national elections in Georgia.

Program D. ISFED organizational development

Projects:

- Enhancing ISFED's capacity to effectively implement the updated strategy;
- Developing effective monitoring and evaluation system.

10. FINANCING

In the past, ISFED's work has been supported by the NDI, OSCE, UNDP, British Embassy, Open Society Georgia Foundation (OSGF), British Council, World Learning, Eurasia Foundation, and Save the children.

According to this strategic plan and the detailed projects to be developed, ISFED expects to receive donor support in the future. Currently, the organization is supported by NDI and the UNDP.

11. SHORT TERM OPERATIONAL PLAN

Donor	Program	Project	Activities	Tentative budget	Planned date
European Commission	Accountable and Transparent Governance	Capacity building for transparent and accountable local government	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Training for ISFED coordinators 2. Orientation workshop for local governmental officials 3. Start up and monitor the Inf. Centers operation 4. Dissemination of information in public 	50,000-80,000 Euro	2004-2005
NDI/NED	Accountable and Transparent Governance	Support program for 65 majority MPs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Supporting of Majority MPs' local bureaus by informing the public on their work 2. Increasing human resource capacities of local bureaus by providing trained volunteer interns 3. Promoting MPs for holding regular meetings with electorate and following legal requirements 4. Monitoring that public concerns are properly channeled and advocated by MPs 	\$ 150,000	2004 -2005
UNDP/ OSCE	Monitoring and improving democratic election processes in country	Local self-governance election monitoring program for November 2004	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Volunteer Recruitment 2. Pre-election monitoring 3. Election day monitoring 	\$ 100,000	November 2004
Ministry of Education	Monitoring and improving democratic election processes in country	Election monitoring program in 10 educational institutions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Volunteer Recruitment 2. PA campaign 3. Pre-election monitoring 4. Election day monitoring 	\$ 90,000	2004 - 2005
NDI/NED	Enhancing capacities of ISFED for effective implementation of updated strategy	ISFED Capacity Building Program	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strengthening existing management system 2. Strengthening communication between central and local offices 3. Enhancing managerial, financial and other skills of the staff through participation in different training programs and projects 4. Strategy development to work with volunteers 5. Strengthening PR component 	\$ 100, 000	Fall 2004-2005