



2015

15 YEARS OF CIVIL ACTIVISM



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ABOUT US

For 15 years already TI Georgia has been operating as an independent non-governmental organization based in Tbilisi, Georgia. We are a member of the Transparency International movement, which is made up of over 100 independent National Chapters, approximately 30 Individual Members and an International Secretariat in Berlin. We are the TI's national chapter in Georgia. Our head office is in Tbilisi with 40 employees working there and we also have regional offices in Kutaisi, Zugdidi and Batumi with 10 people working there.

Our vision is to make Georgia a country which is free of corruption in all parts of society. A country where people are involved in the policymaking process. We aim to make Georgia a place where transparency and openness in government and the private sector are the rule rather than an exception. This includes supporting an engaged citizenry and a vibrant and fair democratic environment.

To achieve this, we have undertaken a mission to support building and empowering state institutions, develop good governance and the rule of law and ensure the transparency and direct accountability of the state institutions.

Transparency International defines corruption as the abuse of entrusted power for private gain. A corruption-free environment is the guiding ideal for TI Georgia. We have identified poor governance -- abuse of power, lack of public oversight and weak institutions -- as the primary impediment to achieving a corruption-free society.

TI Georgia is dedicated to provide reliable, fact-based and fair analysis that has a level of depth and detail necessary to influence and shape policy debates. At the same time, we aim to communicate our work so that interested non-experts can easily follow and understand our research and recommendations.

In the years to come, TI Georgia will be dedicated to improve the democratic environment and quality of life for all Georgians. Our work will be guided by our key principles.





Eka Gigauri, Executive Director, Joined TI Georgia in 2010

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Transparency International Georgia (TI Georgia) turned 15 in 2015. I have served as its executive director for 5 years.

The organization has undergone many changes in the past 15 years; however, our liberal values – the foundation of a modern state – have remained unchanged.

15 years ago, when TI Georgia was founded, Georgia was a country with fragile state institutions and strong networks of corruption. Our country has since achieved significant progress. I am proud to say that our organization has actively contributed to this process.

I remember when I started working at TI Georgia we only had one office with 15 employees. Now we have offices in Tbilisi, Kutaisi, Zugdidi, Batumi as well as an office in the Georgian Parliament, while our team consists of 50 professionals. For a long time TI Georgia's activities were limited to a couple fields. Today, however, we work on many issues, including: anti-corruption reform, elections, justice reform, health care reform, medication prices and insurance services, competition environment, state procurement, accountability of the Parliament, property rights, transparency of local government, and training of public servants. Most importantly, we offer free legal advice to citizens. Another major achievement for us is that we started working with socially vulnerable citizens and

on solving problems facing the population in different regions of the country.

I would like to emphasize the importance of all the people that work or have worked for TI Georgia during all these years, for without their effort, energy, and knowledge we would not have been able to achieve this much in contributing to the country's progress.

Our success would not be possible without our partner organizations, whose work has enabled us to reach many mutual goals.

Our success would not be possible without our donors, who support our initiatives and work towards establishing democratic values in Georgia.

Our success would not be possible without the media, which has always acted as a link between us and the public.

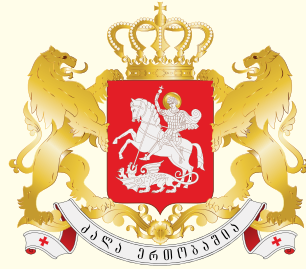
Our success would not be possible without those politicians, who understand the importance of criticism and dissenting opinion, and who continue to cooperate with us despite our harsh criticism.

TOLERANCE, RULE OF LAW, EQUALITY BEFORE THE LAW, TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY OF STATE STRUCTURES – THESE ARE THE PRINCIPLES THAT GUIDE TI GEORGIA.

And most importantly, our success would not be possible without the support of regular citizens of this country.

We do not consider our mission to be complete. 2016 is the election year. The upcoming parliamentary elections will be very important not only for our country but for the region's stability as well. We plan to actively monitor the election reform. If the election system is not changed before the 2016 parliamentary elections, we plan to continue urging the next Parliament to make the necessary changes. We plan to examine the media environment during the election period, protect journalists from political pressure if need be, and cooperate with political groups, so that they have an adequate understanding of all the challenges facing the country.





The President's Letter of Congratulations

The 15th Anniversary of Transparency International Georgia

Dear friends, I would like to wholeheartedly congratulate you on your anniversary.

Having a stable, European style political system that upholds the interests of the people is essential for the democratic development of Georgia. Such a system involves full transparency and freedom from all forms of corruption of all decisions and processes related to an individual's fate, as well as timely elimination of any violations in this regard. This goal cannot be achieved without continued vigilance and involvement of the public.

For the past 15 years your organization has worked on raising the public's legal self-awareness, promoting the development of anti-corruption mechanisms, ensuring media freedom, and many other issues. This work has been a significant contribution to the country's progress and development.

Through your work you have acquired good reputation, public approval, and a distinctive place among civil society.

May the future bring you further development and success.

Giorgi Margvelashvili



Non-governmental organizations and ordinary citizens alike should call for government accountability and transparency. Through modern technologies and platforms, it is Transparency International Georgia's belief that these goals are achievable only through the active involvement of all segments of the society.

George Akhalkatsi, Chair of the Board

Transparency is not just a well-known concept but a useful operating habit. The decision to conceal information from the public is usually an attempt to mask unethical actions. Transparency International Georgia plays a key role in helping people see and understand what is happening in their world and in building strong institutions so that Georgia can protect its interests and independence.



Mark Malen, Member of the Board



I have witnessed Georgia's impressive transformation from a failed state at the beginning of the century to the most reformed country of the FSU today. TI played a crucial role with successive governments in exposing the weaknesses of the system and contributing solutions to amend it. I am very proud to have joined the Board of an independent NGO with strong influence on the conscience of the country leaders, while there still are improvements to be achieved.

Paul-Henri Forestier, Member of the Board

If we need to achieve sustainable development and just society we need to ensure transparency around government decision making. TI Georgia advocates for open government, anti-corruption agenda, pushing for access to information and scrutiny of public contracts, protects the rights of people and organizations affected by unfair governmental decisions. It advocates for Transparency that matters for all of us.



Manana Kochladze, Member of the Board



Transparency in government, as in business, allows all stakeholders in society to have a view to the decision making processes that affect their lives. Transparency International Georgia is helping creates an environment of trust and accountability, where all citizens have a voice in the community they live in and create.

Justin W. Bancroft, Member of the Board



Giorgi Oniani, Deputy Executive Director,
joined TI Georgia in 2015

OPEN GOVERNMENT PARTNERSHIP IN GEORGIA

My desire to work for TI Georgia was exactly because the great work this organization had been doing for last several years. And this my impression was only strengthened when I witnessed all this from the inside. TI is a group of young, motivated and optimistic professionals with different backgrounds, who do their everyday job with great passion and dedication. They are driven by a noble idea to contribute to creation of better Georgia, through promoting the values of democracy, human rights, personal and civic liberty. Each of them is very different, be it with backgrounds or personal characters and this is exactly what makes TI Georgia such an adorable place to work. I am indeed, very excited and privileged to work with such wonderful people.

TI has been established as a brand of high-quality reports and unbiased assessments. This is surely due to the professionalism of the staff I mentioned earlier, but also because of the leadership and guidance of the management of the Organization over the last several years.

TI in Georgia is rather different from what you would expect from a typical TI chapter. Of course, we are working on anti-corruption issues, but we are also involved in all important areas of public life – starting from our participation and assessment of reforms in judiciary and public sector, ending with organizing public concerts in support of Georgia's Euro-Atlantic future or protesting against illegal surveillance. We are participate

in a number of different forums or consultative councils be it in Georgia or abroad.

It is worth mentioning that we are rather IT savvy NGO – not only we administer 7 websites, but also, generally, we try to be technologically advanced, inter-alia in designing creative databases, which are more user-friendly and allow for easier procession and comprehension of information. We also think that presenting our findings in this more digital way would be easier for comprehension and more interesting to read.

Another direction I would like to highlight is Open Government Partnership (OGP). TI Georgia was one of the first NGOs that were involved in OGP in Georgia – back in 2012 TIG was among a handful of NGOs that participated in the first OGP summit in Brazil. Last year was a landmark year in that direction for us and especially on the OGP's legislative track, where TI Georgia has been at the forefront from the very start. We were a part of the first parliamentary inter-faction working group, composed of faction and civil society representatives who drafted the first Open Parliament Action Plan for the Parliament. Out of the 18 commitments in the Open Parliament Action Plan, 6 were drafted by TI Georgia. These commitments concerned access to data, proactive disclosure of important documents, fine-tuning explanatory notes and using open proprietary formats for all documents posted on the parliamentary webpage.

The basis for several of our recommendations on open data standards can be found in the Ten Open Data Guidelines, adopted by Transparency International Georgia and affirmed by the Sunlight Foundation in 2012. The document serves to outline best standards in the use of open data in a way that maximizes public engagement and makes public information more accessible, transparent and freely usable, at the time of the creation, but also over- time.

To further add onto the country's success stories in OGP, TI Georgia co-organized with the Parliament and other CSOs the Global Legislative Openness Meeting in Tbilisi in September 2015. It was there first when we showcased our Open Parliament Benchmarking Analysis– a report that compares the practices of the Georgian state legislature to Georgian parliamentary practices. We expect the methodology and approach developed by us to be used as a template for other OGP countries. A number of public consultations on the methodological component of the research has already been held with local NGOs in Georgia as well as with the NDI DC office.

As for the future plans, we aim to remain very active in these directions in the years to come. Moreover, *TI Georgia seeks to pioneer the Judiciary track of Open Government Partnership, bringing the principles of openness, accountability and accessibility principles to the judiciary sphere.* The work is already underway.





*Lika Sajaia, Project Manager, Parliamentary Secretary,
joined TI Georgia in 2014*

TI GEORGIA IN THE PARLIAMENT

TI Georgia continued its close cooperation with the Parliament in 2015.

Our parliamentary team attended committee hearings and participated in working groups set up by the committees.

In 2015, we analyzed more than 30 draft laws and presented our written comments to committee chairpersons. We also published up to 20 blogs on significant legislative amendments. We welcome the fact that the Parliament has taken into account a part of our recommendations.

TI Georgia was also active in terms of initiating legislative proposals. On May 8, 2015, the Parliament passed amendments to the Law on the Legal Status of Foreigners and Stateless Persons. The amendments included the overwhelming majority of our legislative proposals, and removed the majority of unreasonable legal barriers. We also presented the Parliament with an anti-corruption legislation package and a legislative proposal to criminalize nepotism, both of which are currently being reviewed.

In 2015, our parliamentary group published its second annual report on Parliamentary Performance Assessment. The report contained recommendations related to parliamentary activity,

as well as increasing its transparency and accountability. A part of our recommendation was accepted by the Parliament. For example, the parliamentary Rules of Procedure were amended to no longer consider family issues as a valid reason for MP absence. In addition, the Parliament website saw significant improvements in terms of transparency and informativeness.

We also prepared a report on MP questions – a major mechanism of parliamentary oversight function, as part of our parliamentary monitoring program. The report analyzed the questions posed by the MPs of the 8th convocation of the Georgian Parliament to various government members as well as their answers.

In 2015, we continued informing the public through our parliamentary website. We recorded our weekly parliamentary news podcast during the spring, fall and special sessions of the Parliament, and sent text messages to subscribed citizens about events planned in the Parliament. Our website - www.chemiparlamenti.ge enabled citizens to pose questions to MPs and receive their responses.

Finally, in 2015, we actively worked with the majoritarian MP offices by organizing two staff trainings on budget issues. The training was attended by up to 60 MP office employees.





Erekle Urushadze, Program Manager,
joined TI Georgia in 2009

ANTI-CORRUPTION SYSTEMS

In June 2015, Transparency International Georgia (TI Georgia) published its second National Integrity System (NIS) assessment report. The NIS model is based on the methodology developed by Transparency International Secretariat in Berlin in early 2000s, and is used in many countries to analyze the resilience of a country and its population towards corruption. The 2015 NIS was our second evaluation of Georgia's key institutions, including the legislative, executive and judicial branches of government, as well as the media and civil society. Due to the fact that the first NIS was published in 2011, the 2015 report was a good opportunity to review the changes that occurred over the last four years. Towards the end of 2015, we also published a Local Integrity System (LIS) assessment report for Tbilisi, Kutaisi, and Zugdidi.

In early 2015, we prepared and submitted a package of legislative initiatives to the Parliament, aimed at setting up an independent anti-corruption agency. We believe that the introduction of this agency will significantly increase the effectiveness of the Georgian anti-corruption policy.

Our team worked on a number of other important anti-corruption issues throughout 2015. We studied the international experience in the fields of asset declarations and whistleblower protection, and prepared recommendations based on this experience for

Georgian legislation and relevant institutions. Another report prepared by TI Georgia in 2015 had to do with the practical implementation of the Georgian anti-corruption legislation. Finally, together with partner organizations, our team also assessed the implementation of the EU Association Agreement and the Association Agenda in terms of anti-corruption policies and administrative reforms in 2014-2015.

“ Our organization’s anti-corruption programmes are based on a comprehensive view of the subject which is not focused on the simplest and most evident forms of corruption alone and also aims to prevent the more complex expressions of this problem in all sectors of society and at every level of government. ”

I am very pleased to say that the extensive package of legislative amendments adopted by the Parliament in the fall of 2015 reflected many of the recommendations prepared and published by TI Georgia in recent years. These amendments include, for example, the introduction of a monitoring system of asset declarations filed by public officials in 2017, and improvement of whistleblower protection legislation.





*Nino Robakidze, Media Program Manager,
joined TI Georgia in 2015*

GEORGIAN MEDIA ENVIRONMENT

2015 was a year of challenges for the Georgian media. For the same reason it was also a very active year for our team, full of important events, research, and interesting findings.

Despite the fact that the media environment became relatively freer and more pluralistic after the 2012 parliamentary elections, 2015 was the year when problems posing threat to the free media environment could clearly be identified.

In 2015, we studied a number of uninvestigated cases of pressure on regional journalists, and witnessed the shutting down of several popular political talk shows. Unfortunately, we still had to talk about cases of personal information being used against journalists. TI Georgia defended the rights of those journalists and television companies who encountered serious deliberate obstacles in their professional activities. To this day, we represent the interests of 20 or so journalists, who had to leave the television company Maestro.

During the final months of 2015, TI Georgia actively monitored the legal dispute surrounding the television company Rustavi 2. We tried to ensure that the pluralistic media environment as well as the existence of one of Georgia's most critical and popular media organization would not be threatened during a process with a difficult political context and history. We are pleased to say that we managed to achieve his goal with the joint effort of the media, other civil society organizations, and the international community.

Finally, I would like to mention the updated Who Owns Georgian Media report prepared by our team. This report is unprecedented, since not only does it cover the ownership of largest media organizations, but it also explores online media. With this study we managed to identify the connections and political interests of the owners of various anti-west oriented online media outlets that have appeared in recent years. We believe that the public deserves to know who owns the media, and who funds the propaganda that is presented to us as news on a daily basis.





Levan Natroshvili, Program Manager, joined TI Georgia in 2012

ELECTION ENVIRONMENT, PUBLIC SERVICE AND ECONOMY

My team and I worked on many different issues in 2015. We worked on the election environment, ongoing processes in the public service, and monitored various sectors of the economy.

Monitoring election processes is one of our most important activities. Transparency International Georgia (TI Georgia) actively works towards improving the election environment. The main weakness of the current mixed election system is its majoritarian component. Our recommendation was to hold the 2016 parliamentary elections under a fully proportional system. Even though the Georgian government shares our concerns regarding the flaws of the majoritarian system, the ruling political coalition has refused to make fundamental changes for the time being.

TI Georgia also actively worked towards achieving better regulation of special polling stations used by the military servicemen and other citizens with a similar status. The government accepted our recommendation of abolishing special polling

stations inside military units, but refused to accept a more important recommendation regarding voting restrictions on military servicemen during majoritarian elections.

TI Georgia regularly publishes reports on important sectors of the economy. In 2015, we examined the oil products and gambling markets.

The main finding of our report on the oil products market was the fact that competition on the market had increased only slightly since 2012. The main problem remains to be the inexistence of a state fuel quality control system. To our knowledge, the government is actively working on introducing such a system.

Our report on gambling found that the income received from gambling activities constitutes an important part of the total income of many resort towns. Shortcomings related to registration on online gambling websites is the main problem of this sector. Other problems include risks of money laundering.

TI Georgia has been monitoring the public service for many years. In 2015, we published a report examining the staffing policy of public institutions, and asset declarations filed by public officials. The report praised the provisions included in the new Law on Public Service, and reviewed the negative practices used in previous years.

**“ IN 2015, TOGETHER WITH PARTNER
NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZA-
TIONS AND POLITICAL PARTIES,
WE TRIED TO CONVINCE THE AUTHORITIES
TO CHANGE THE FLAWED ELECTION SYSTEM
BEFORE THE NEXT PARLIAMENTARY
ELECTIONS.**

In 2015, we prepared a number of important reports on public procurement, including a voluminous report analyzing the relevant legislative framework and practice, with special emphasis on existing problems and interesting trends.





Gia Gvilava, Program Manager, joined TI Georgia in 2011

REFORMING AND PERFECTING THE JUSTICE SYSTEM AS AN IMPORTANT COMPONENT OF GEORGIA'S DEVELOPMENT

In 2015, my team and I actively worked on the justice system reform by trying to improve its efficiency and strengthen the guarantees of its independence. In addition, we worked on the reforms of the prosecution, the Criminal Code, and the Code of Administrative Offenses.

In June 2015, Transparency International Georgia (TI Georgia) representatives, together with partner organizations, took part in a round table organized by the Venice Commission in Venice, reviewing the prosecution reform draft law prepared by the Ministry of Justice. The meeting was also attended by representatives of the Georgian government, the Prosecutor's Office, and the Parliament. Most of the critical issues raised by us and our partners were accepted by the Venice Commission and included in its final report.

2015 was also the fourth year of monitoring the High Council of Justice. The monitoring is aimed at identifying shortcomings and presenting relevant recommendations. Our 2015 report on the High Council of Justice provides a detailed overview of its shortcomings, achievements, and ongoing processes. A large portion of the report is dedicated to important recommendations.

Thanks to our lawyer's considerable effort, 2015 was the first time when information on serious problems and suspicious processes in the judicial system became available to the public. I believe that one of our main missions is to disclose the flaws of the system and inform the public about them.

TI Georgia has been monitoring high-profile criminal cases since 2012. In 2015, we published our third report, where we presented complete information on courtroom proceedings, and provided assessment of procedural decisions and party positions.

Throughout 2015, we worked on virtually all of the important issues related to the court, the police, and the prosecutor's office. We published several assessments/studies, blogs, and reports. In addition, together with our partner organizations, we worked on specific recommendations, which we presented to both the government and the parliament.

Towards the end of 2015, together with our partners (within the framework of the Coalition for an Independent and Transparent Judiciary), we launched a new campaign to tackle the problem of changing the flawed judge selection procedure in the judicial system.





Mikheil Kukava, Senior Analyst, joined TI Georgia in 2011

MORE TRANSPARENCY OF PUBLIC FINANCES

In 2015, as in previous years, our efforts were directed at freeing the public financial management from the political influence.

The system of public financial management is run by the Ministry of Finance, the State Audit Office and the National Bank. The Georgian Constitution and legislation guarantee the independence of the State Audit Office and the National Bank from the executive. In defiance of these guarantees, the government has put quite some political pressure on the State Audit Office and has repeatedly attempted to limit the National Bank's independence since 2014 by trying to remove its banking supervision function. TI Georgia started to mobilize public opinion against these changes from the moment of their initiation. Later, together with the parliamentary minority, we filed an amicus curiae brief (literally, a brief by a friend of the court) with the Constitutional Court to offer our view of how the removal of banking supervision functions would prevent the National Bank from fulfilling its responsibilities.

2015 was an important year in the other areas of public financial management, when TI Georgia challenged the Ministry of Finance on its 2014 budget deficit, which is a key macro-

economic and financial indicator. The Ministry of Finance tried to explain the inconsistencies with different methodologies. Eventually, however, they had to publish the actual budget deficit data.

2015 was loaded with budget trainings for public officials, including staff of the majoritarian MP-s bureaus, members of the local legislatures and local government staff in Zugdidi, Akhaltsikhe, and Marneuli. The trainings were aimed at improving legislative budget oversight by teaching MP-s and members of the local legislatures to question the executive's budget proposal and the budget execution reporting and ask the right questions to understand where, when and how to intervene. We believe MP-s and members of local legislatures asking right questions is instrumental to effective legislative oversight of budgets.

While the government accountability remains an important challenge we plan to continue to actively promote transparency of public finance in the future. We believe that the government accountability cannot increase without a higher degree of transparency in public finance.



ALAC - FREE LEGAL AID CENTER

Teona Zakarashvili, Senior Lawyer, Tbilisi Office

In 2015, as in previous years, Transparency International Georgia's (TI Georgia) Legal Aid Center (ALAC) continued its advocacy work and represented citizens in courts of various instances. The main issues the center worked on were ownership rights, illegal dismissals from public service, and the legality of decisions made by staff selection commissions. Our lawyers offered legal representation to citizens in a total of 88 cases throughout the year.

Of special interest to us were the court cases where we appealed the decisions made by staff selection commissions. In almost every case, common courts judges annulled the appealed decisions by declaring them unjustified and illegal. We hope that this kind of court practice will lead to better protection of the rights of those individuals, who wish to enter the public service through competition.

Processes related to granting residence permits to foreign citizens were also important.

In 2015, as in previous years, our lawyers worked to defend the property rights of citizens. Such cases often involved the Public Registry halting and subsequently terminating the registration process. Our legal aid center provided legal advice and representation to citizens who faced these problems.

TI Georgia's Kutaisi, Batumi, Zugdidi and Tbilisi offices offered legal counseling to citizens via special hotline as well as face to face meetings, and assisted some of them with the preparation of legal documents.

FREE LEGAL AID HAS BEEN PROVIDED TO
4200 INDIVIDUALS



THE DISMISSAL OF NINO JAKONIA

Tamta Kakhidze, Lawyer, Kutaisi Office

On October 1, 2014, our beneficiary Nino Jakonia was illegally dismissed from Poti City Hall after serving as a department head for many years. We appealed to court and requested the annulment of the dismissal order, Jakonia's reinstatement, and reimbursement of lost salary. The dispute ended in 2015 with the court partially satisfying our claim by annulling the order and ordering the City Hall to reexamine its decision.

Despite the fact that the above court ruling was upheld by courts of all three instances, Poti City Hall refused to change its decision and reinstate the dismissed public servant.

In order to protect the interests of our beneficiary, we decided to resubmit the case to court. This time, the court fully satisfied our claim. The judge ordered Poti City Hall to reinstate the plaintiff, and fully reimburse her with the lost salary, including bonuses and salary supplements that were issued to all employees for public holidays.

The reimbursement amount currently constitutes GEL 27,000.



THE DISMISSAL OF SVETLANA GABUNIA

Ani Saldadze, Lawyer, Kutaisi Office

Since 2007, Svetlana Gabunia had served as head of the Social Affairs Department of Poti City Hall's Health, Social Affairs and IDP Service. In September 2014, Poti City Hall launched a reorganization process, which resulted in the transformation of the Health, Social Affairs and IDP Service into the Health and Social Affairs Service. No changes were made to the position and functions of the head of the Social Affairs Department.

Despite the above, on October 1, 2014, Svetlana Gabunia was dismissed from her position due to reduction of staff positions after the reorganization.

Svetlana Gabunia requested assistance from TI Georgia Kutaisi office. We appealed the order of Gabunia's dismissal to Poti City Court, and requested her reinstatement as well as reimbursement of lost salary. The dispute ended in Gabunia's favor in 2015.

Poti City Court annulled the dismissal order, and ordered Poti City Hall to conduct proper administrative procedures to issue a new act. This court ruling was upheld by the Kutaisi Court of Appeals, as well as the Supreme Court. However, Poti City Hall refused to reinstate Svetlana Gabunia to her position.

In order to protect Svetlana Gabunia's interests, we decided to resubmit the case to Poti City Court, where court proceedings on this dispute are still in progress.

72 INDIVIDUALS
HAVE BEEN REINSTATED BACK TO THEIR WORKPLACE



RESTORED PROPERTY RIGHTS OF TENGIZ GHVINJILIA

Lela Motsonelidze, Lawyer, Zugdidi Office

Tbilisi resident Tengiz Ghvinjilia was able to regain his property rights with legal assistance from TI Georgia's Zugdidi office.

In 2016, Tengiz Ghvinjilia purchased a piece of land in the village of Anaklia, Zugdidi municipality, and registered it through the public registry in full compliance with the law. In 2014, he applied to the Zugdidi Office of the Public Registry with a request to specify the exact boundaries and area of his property.

The Public Registry rejected this request due to overlap with state property. As it turned out, in 2009, the Public Registry had registered the piece of land purchased by Tengiz Ghvinjilia as state property upon request of the Ministry of Economy.

Tengiz Ghvinjilia requested assistance from TI Georgia. With the help of our lawyers, Zugdidi District Court satisfied Ghvinjilia's claim – state registration on the disputed piece of land was canceled and Zugdidi Office of the Public Registry was ordered to complete Tengiz Ghvinjilia's 2014 request for registration.



THE CASE OF TENGIZ IAKOBASHVILI'S RESIDENCE PERMIT

Magda Jimsheleishvili, Lawyer, Tbilisi Office

On April 14, 2015, we filed a lawsuit against the LEPL Public Services Development Agency requesting the agency to revert its decision to refuse a Ukrainian citizen Tengiz Iakobashvili a permanent residence permit.

According to Georgian law, a permanent residence permit may be issued to a spouse, parent, and child of a Georgian citizen. Tengiz Iakobashvili met the criteria set by law to receive a permit of permanent residence in Georgia due to the fact that he was born in Georgia and, more importantly, his parents are still Georgian citizens.

The Agency's decision to refuse Iakobashvili the permit was based on Article 18, Paragraphs a) and c) of the Law on Legal Status of Foreigners and Stateless Persons, according to which, foreign citizens may be denied residence permits if an authorized body concludes that their activities or residence in the country would pose threat to national security and/or public safety. In other words, the above decision was based on a secret report by the Ministry of Internal Affairs Counter Intelligence Department.

Tbilisi City Court satisfied our claim, despite the fact that the Agency's decision was based on a secret counter intelligence report. The Court dismissed the Agency's decision as unsubstantiated and ordered the administrative body to thoroughly review the case circumstances and come to a new decision.

Based on the court decision, the Citizenship and Migration Service of the Public Services Development Agency re-examined our beneficiary's request and granted him a permanent residence permit.



PROPERTY RIGHTS HAVE BEEN RESTORED TO

139 INDIVIDUALS



DEFENDING RIGHTS OF PARTICIPANTS AT PUBLIC SERVANTS' COMPETITION

Oliko Shermadini, Lawyer, Tbilisi Office

In 2015, with the help of our lawyers Georgian citizens won a total of 15 court cases related to competitions for public service positions. In each case, the applicants disputed interview results, which they believed were based on subjective factors. Citizens disputed the results of staff competitions held by Tbilisi, Gurjaani, Sagarejo, and Kazbegi municipalities.

TI Georgia lawyers represented the interests of these plaintiffs throughout 2015. In the end, in each case, the court ruled that interviews were not conducted in compliance with the principles of transparency and objectivity, which cast doubt on the legality of their results. Therefore, the court ordered the staff selection commissions to repeat the interviews in compliance with the principles of openness, objectivity, and impartiality prescribed by law, and to come to new substantiated decisions.



THE CASE OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT AGAINST A PUBLIC SERVANT

Ana Berdzenishvili, Lawyer, Batumi Office

A female employee at the Department of Environment Protection and Natural Resources of Adjara, who asked to remain anonymous, was subjected to sexual harassment from a coworker. After informing the department head about the incident, the victim, who was pregnant at the time, was fired because of “unworthy behavior” and an alleged attempt to discredit the public service.

This illegal decision of the department was, in turn, upheld by the government of the Autonomous Republic of Adjara, which decided to abolish the public service position (Human Resources and Record Keeping Manager of the Administrative Service at the Department of Environment Protection and Natural Resources of Adjara) held by the plaintiff before her dismissal without providing any substantiation. The decision was aimed at denying reinstatement to the plaintiff in case she won the court case.

The dismissed public servant appealed to Transparency International Georgia for help. We took the case, represented the plaintiff in court, and managed to overturn the Kutaisi City Court decision denying the plaintiff reinstatement and full compensation of missed salary.

Eleven months later, Batumi City Court granted the plaintiff's claim and annulled the order of dismissal. The plaintiff was reinstated to the position of Chief Specialist of the Administrative Service at the Department of Environment Protection and Natural Resources of Adjara.

We believe that this court case clearly demonstrates the inexistence of a state policy against discrimination of women. There are no effective norms and mechanisms against gender discrimination and sexual harassment at the workplace, which was also confirmed by the Public Defender's recommendation. Instead of investigating harassment against a pregnant woman, the public service attempted to cover up the incident through unsubstantiated and illegal dismissal of the victim.



*We have been defending your and our rights
for the past 15 years!*



Malkhaz Chkadua, Batumi Regional Office Manager, joined TI Georgia in 2013

BATUMI OFFICE IN 2015

The Batumi office took on several important issues facing the Autonomous Republic of Adjara in 2015. These included: incomplete data and other shortcomings of asset declarations filed by public official, public procurement violations, issues related to municipal programs, insufficient transparency in staffing policies and investment management, and gender imbalance in the local government.

2015 was a busy year for our lawyers due to frequent cases of illegal dismissal from public service. In many of these dismissal cases Transparency International Georgia (TI Georgia) had a legitimate and well-founded doubt about political motivations behind the decision. On most of these cases the arguments presented by our lawyer Ana Berdzenishvili were accepted by the Batumi and Khelvachauri courts as well as the Court of Appeals. As a result of our work, 7 dismissal and 3 property recognition cases ended in favor of applicants.

Without the media it would have been very difficult for us to reach the public and especially those people who have the most need of our help. We built our relation with the media based on trust and mutual respect, which helped us succeed in a number of important initiatives. The Batumi office analyst Natia Zoidze thoroughly studied the Batumi City Hall program Cheap House - Standard Housing for Citizens, reviewed the international and local legislation, and prepared a report. Afterwards, we organized a discussion involving regular citi-

zens, specialists of the field, and public officials. This was the first time when potential beneficiaries of a municipal program were able to ask questions directly to the decision-makers. We believe that our efforts will help popularize this unprecedented municipal program in other self-governing cities.

In 2015, the Batumi office held a number of meetings with the population of mountainous Adjara, where living conditions are tough due to frequent landslides, dysfunctional road infrastructure, lack of access to municipal services, and unemployment. Considering the magnitude of the problem and our limited resources, we had to limit ourselves to advocating for solutions with the local and central governments.

The mountainous areas of Adjara also face problems related to education. Students want to know more about democratic values. Together with Independent Journalists' House we organized a lecture/discussion in the village of Ghorjomi (Khulo municipality) on early marriage and the need to increase women's role. The reaction and the interest of the audience strengthened our desire to continue visiting these areas and share our experience with young people, who refuse to marry at an early age, and want instead to become qualified specialists in various fields.

Discussions were also held in Batumi. We organized a meeting with the students of the local Shota Rustaveli State University and Art University, where we talked about secret surveillance and This Affects You campaign, and screened the film - The Lives of Others by a German director Florian Henckel. The film's plot is set in 20th century East Berlin, where the system of secret police surveillance was part of the state terror. A similar discussion was held at the Batumi branch of the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD). Towards the end of 2015, we organized a meeting between local students and the chairman of the Constitutional Court, and talked about several constitutional court cases prepared by TI Georgia. These court cases were drafted by the TI Georgia parliamentary group and Batumi office lawyer Tamar Charbadze, who has been a part of TI Georgia for more than 3 years.

Finally, I would like to mention Omar Rodonaia, a man who, despite hardship and solitude, found strength to bring his story out to the public first through an interview with the editor of Batumelebi Eter Turadze, and later through an article written by a reporter of the same newspaper Nana Kvachadze. Omar's story spread throughout the internet and sparked a charity campaign that included Georgian citizens in the UK. Omar's life was changed by this one article. The executive director of TI Georgia Eka Gigauri made a decision in December 2015

to employ Omar at the Batumi office, in order to help us create a database of disabled persons living in extreme poverty. We are also working on securing housing for Omar. The documentation has been filed, and we are currently waiting for Omar to receive the status of an internally displaced person, so that the government later provides him with permanent living space.

2015 was definitely an eventful year for the Batumi office. I am sure that 2016 will bring even more challenges as well as success.





Archil Todua, Zugdidi Office Coordinator, joined TI Georgia in 2013

ZUGDIDI OFFICE IN 2015

2015 was a productive year for TI Georgia Zugdidi office in terms of successfully completed court cases and effective monitoring of public agencies.

Our lawyer Lela Motsonelidze won a total of four court cases in 2015. Three of these cases were related to the illegal seizure of land in the village of Anaklia, and the fourth concerned an illegal decision by Mestia municipality staff selection committee to reject the candidacy of a citizen Tinatin Guledani. Guledani's case was precedential, since on no previous occasion had the court satisfied a plaintiff's claim on a similar case.

In 2015, the Zugdidi office published a total of 18 blogs, statements, and reports. Out of these 13 were prepared independently by the Zugdidi office, while the remaining 5 were collaborations with other TI Georgia offices. The most important report of the previous year was the study of bonuses and salary supplements issued by Georgian municipalities in 2012-2014, which revealed a possible corruption case in Senaki municipality. We also published a report on increased salary expenditures and number of staff positions in non-commercial legal entities of Guria and Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti regions.

Radio Atinati aired 40 live radio broadcasts with the Zugdidi office that reviewed important issues on a weekly basis.

In 2015, the Zugdidi office provided legal advice to up to eighty citizens. We helped them prepare statements and applications, and organize meetings with public agencies.

We also took part in the 2016 budget processes of Zugdidi city and community municipalities, and offered our recommendations.

With the help of the Public Defender's regional office, we worked with all of Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti municipalities on improving municipal social programs. It should be noted that the municipalities took a significant portion of our recommendations into account. Similar meetings were held regarding municipal and infrastructural problems, and issues related to internally displaced persons (IDP).

We regularly attended the sessions of Zugdidi city and community councils, periodically engaged in discussions, and offered our suggestions.

We also monitored the interim parliamentary elections in Martvili municipality.

The Zugdidi office organized several stages of public lectures concerning various topics for the students of both local universities.

The office also organized discussions in the Zugdidi Center for Civic Engagement on the following topics: local anti-corruption system, issues of IDP accommodation, needs and problems of small-scale fishermen in Anaklia, Georgian media ownership, Georgian electoral system, outcomes of the local government reform, citizen participation, media relations, secret surveillance, obligations of public servants during elections, municipal social programs, and so forth.

In 2015, our office once again examined the involvement of women in the local government decision-making in west Georgia municipalities. Coinciding with the renewed country-wide public support for introducing quotas for women in the political system, our research helped spark discussions on this topic in the region.

Finally, throughout the year, our work was reported by more than 200 media articles and television reports.





Zurab Zambakhidze, Kutaisi Office Coordinator, joined TI Georgia in 2015

KUTAIISI OFFICE IN 2015

2015 was an eventful year for the Kutaisi office both in terms of analytical studies as well as legal assistance.

The office provided legal advice to dozens of citizens, and won a number of important court cases. Our legal advice was mostly related to the process of candidate examination and selection in the public service, legal disputes on labor conditions, and property and social rights issues.

Worth mentioning are two specific cases, successfully completed by our office, related to the process of candidate examination and selection in Samtredia, where candidates successfully appealed the decision of the local government to reject their candidacies.

The Kutaisi office successfully completed two other cases in Poti, where our lawyers provided legal representation to public servants dismissed on the basis of reorganization. In one of these cases, the Mayor of Poti was obligated by the court to reimburse GEL 14,000 of missed salary to the dismissed public servant, in addition to reinstatement.

Our lawyers were also involved in a legal dispute related to overlapping borders on real estate. The case was completed successfully and the citizen was able to register the property.

In 2015, the Kutaisi office began monitoring the activities of the local government in several key areas: the legal side of reorganizations carried out in non-commercial entities subject to the local government, activities of the local municipal council,

transparency of municipal procurement, and the local government's infrastructural and financial activities.

Throughout the year we actively held meetings with various City Hall representatives to try to convince the local government to act on their commitment to take part in TI Georgia's Fix My Street project and start responding to citizen reported problems.

The Kutaisi office prepared a report on violations identified during the reorganization process inside Kutaisi municipal kindergartens, and presented its recommendations to the media and the public. The report drew a lot of public interest, which, in turn, encouraged Radio Dzvelli Kalaki to air the story on its radio show Transparent Policy - Informed Citizens Control the Government.

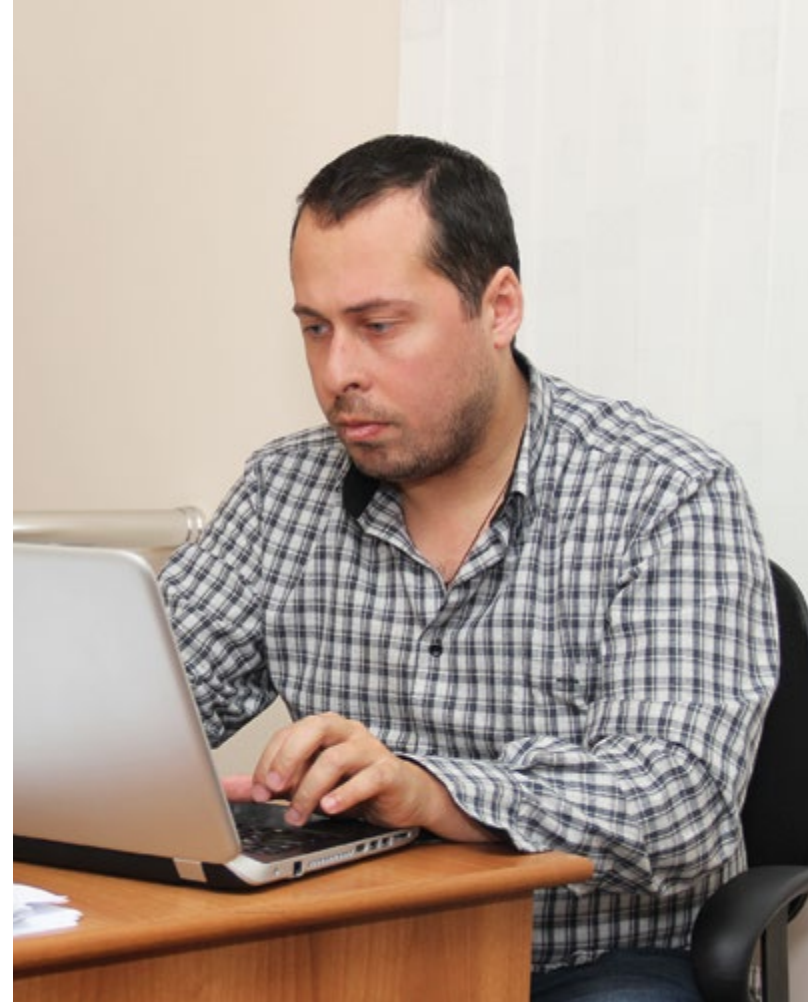
In addition to covering our evaluation of municipal performance, local radio stations also reported on the interests of Baghdati municipality officials in local tenders, infrastructural problems in Kutaisi, the anti-corruption assessment report prepared by TI Georgia, and issues related to media freedom in the region and the country.

The Kutaisi office also wrote a blog on the local homeless animal shelter, which was failing to meet the required standards. Animals in the shelter were held in horrible conditions, and nobody responded to reports on homeless animals. The above problems lead to a death of a young child, who contracted rabies after being bitten by a homeless dog. Our involvement resulted in greater attention being paid to this problem. The shelter has since been transferred under municipal control. Currently, the local government takes full responsibility for its proper functioning.

Together with other regional offices we paid special attention to municipal spending on bonuses, salary supplements, and business trips. For this purpose, we requested information from Imereti, Shida and Kvemo Kartli region municipalities. The resulting report revealed large-scale administrative costs in these municipalities.

In 2015, the Kutaisi office was also actively involved in the process of informing the public about election recommendations developed by TI Georgia. For this purpose, we organized a large-scale presentation together with International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED) and Georgian Young Lawyers' Association.

Towards the end of the year, we held meetings with the Akaki Tsereteli State University administration regarding the renewal of cooperation and regular meetings with students.





Nana Lobzhanidze, Communications Officer, joined TI Georgia in 2006

BE AN ACTIVE CITIZEN AND STAND UP FOR YOUR RIGHTS

In 2015, as in previous years, the main objective and challenge for Transparency International Georgia (TI Georgia) was to raise the public's awareness about our work and main messages. In order to achieve this objective, we closely work with the media and consider journalists to be our main partners.

In 2015 we published 93 blogs, and 204 statements and press releases on important issues of the day. Our reports, statements, blogs, and other activities were **reported in 1,629 TV reports, 1,428 internet articles, 547 radio programs, and 497 print articles.**

However, we don't rely on the media alone, and make additional effort to try to provide people with information about our activities in an easily understandable language. Our reports and blogs are often long and saturated with legal terminology, so from time to time we make short videos to try to easily convey our messages through specific examples and true stories. We make active use of Facebook and Youtube to disseminate our stories. We also make video instructions on a variety of topics. For example, in 2015, we made 4 video instructions on: how to find legal documents, information on owners of television companies, public procurement, and private property. In 2015 we also prepared two videos promoting active citizenship, the main message being – 'be an active citizen and stand up for your rights'.

Another specific objective TI Georgia set out for itself in 2015 was to provide the public with detailed information about their rights, and services provided to them by the state. For this purpose we printed brochures on several important issues: how to register land ownership, how to join the state insurance program, how to receive social assistance, and the rights of citizens when dealing with the local government. We organized meetings with the population of mountainous areas of Adjara, where we distributed our materials, talked about problems facing the country, how we think these problems should be tackled, and the need for European integration.

Of special importance was the May 19 Riga Conference organized by TI Georgia and our partner organizations, where we discussed Georgia's progress in terms of the EU Association Agenda. The participants tried to answer the following questions: To what extent did Georgia fulfill its commitments prior to Riga Summit? What is the future of Georgia-EU relations? What are the prospects of the Eastern Partnership?

In June 2015, we also took part in the America Days event organized by the US Embassy, which launched on June 2 in Zugdidi and concluded on June 6 at the Tbilisi Rike Park. The information fair covered all of Rike Park and provided interested citizens with information about all the projects and exchange programs funded by the US Embassy. During the event, TI Georgia presented our work within the framework of the USAID funded program - Promoting Rule of Law and Protecting Human Rights in Georgia.

As in previous years, we also organized advocacy campaigns. One such campaign was to get the government to criminalize nepotism. We have long studied the appointment and dismissal of public servants and have defended their rights when need be. Our research showed that the staffing policy in the public service is often conducted with disregard to principles of transparency. This is largely due to legal loopholes and lack of regulation, which, in turn, encourages nepotism and patronage. For this reason, TI Georgia came out with a proposal to criminalize nepotism in the public service. Our videos on the topic gathered 23,929 views on Youtube.

TI Georgia turned 15 in 2015. In early December we concluded the anti-corruption week with a photo exhibition and a reception titled - 15 Years of Civil Activism. The exhibition displayed 150 photos depicting our activities since 2000. The event also included a screening of a short film about TI Georgia. Guests included the Members of Parliament, representatives of international organizations, partner non-governmental organizations, and journalists.





*Paata Lokhishvili, Human Resources Manager,
joined TI Georgia in 2011*

CAREER IN TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL GEORGIA

For me, as the human resources manager, 2015 was a year full of novelties.

Transparency International Georgia (TI Georgia) developed and launched a variety of new methods and processes for improving and increasing the effectiveness of human resources management. More specifically, we updated our internal databases, operating regulations, professional development program, motivation system, recruitment process, and internship program. In addition, we put considerable effort into improving and optimizing various processes of human resources management, which we incorporated into our methodology and fully implemented in practice. This has clearly made our management more transparent and brought it in line with modern standards.

Throughout 2015 TI Georgia announced more than 20 vacancies for our offices in Tbilisi and the regions. These vacancies included positions in research-analysis, finance, administrative and legal fields. Recruitment was conducted through an open and transparent system, where we introduced new methods of selection and assessment. Each job announcement included a detailed description of the position both in Georgian and English, and was published on popular job search websites as well as social networks. Potential applicants included Georgian as well as foreign citizens. The recruitment process is composed of several stages that are based on a unified internal standard.

Successful applicants were given equal opportunity to start working and develop their career in TI Georgia. More specifically, a comfortable working environment and clearly defined tasks allowed new members of our team to contribute to the successful implementation of our various projects and activities, while also allowing them to gain useful experience and professional skills. In addition, through vocational training and career development our employees were given the opportunity to raise their qualification and participate in various training courses in and outside the country.

One of our priorities in terms of human resources management is the internship program, which is announced several times a year and includes internships in our offices in Tbilisi and the regions, as well as internships in the framework of our parliament and court monitoring programs. The internship program is available for all interested persons. Notifications about the announcement of the program are also sent to the country's leading educational institutions based on previously signed memorandums of cooperation. Overall, in 2015 more than 50 young people, including foreign students, were given the opportunity to participate in our internship program, familiarize themselves with the specifics of our work, and gather useful experience. Out of last year's interns, 5 of the most distinctive and successful candidates were later employed on full-time positions.



2015

IDEAL GENDER BALANCE IN TI GEORGIA

24 ♀ | ♂ 24



OUR 15 YEAR ANNIVERSARY



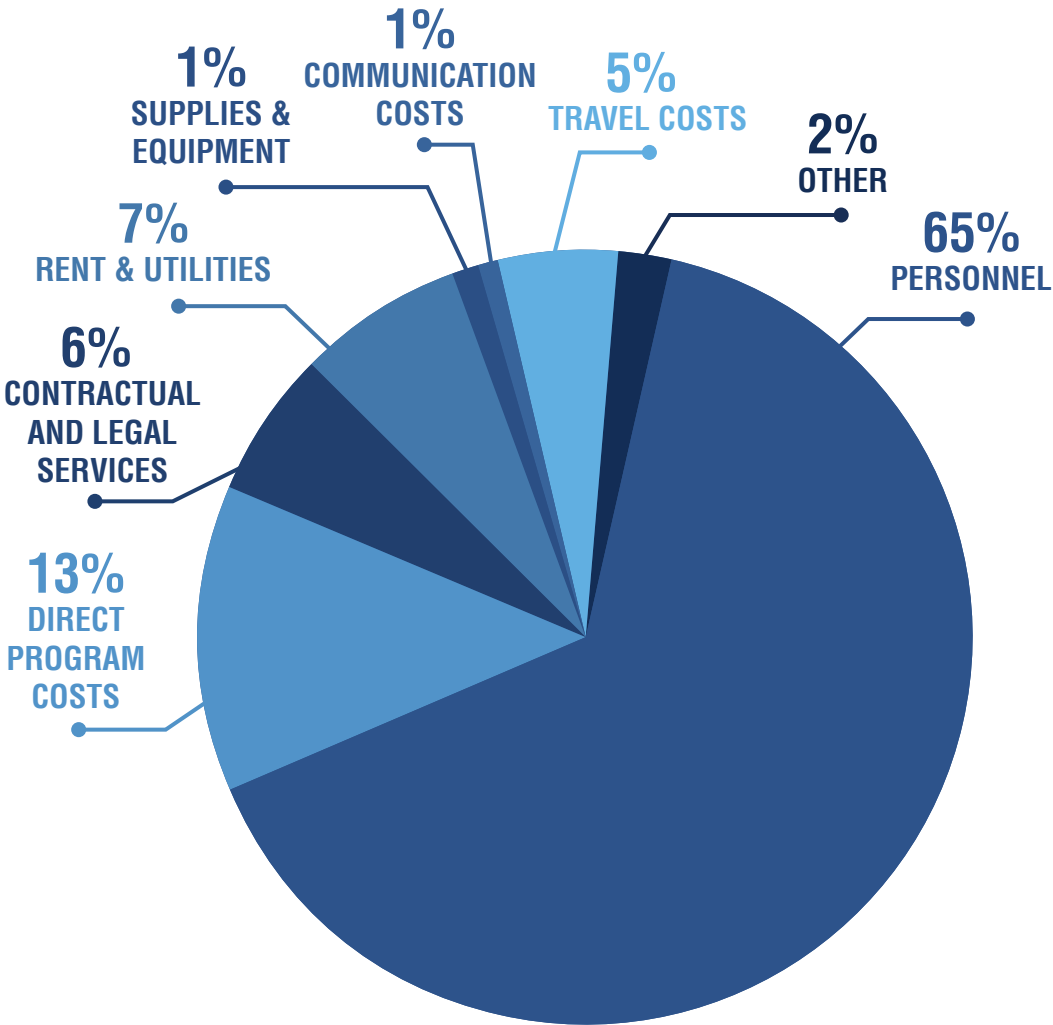
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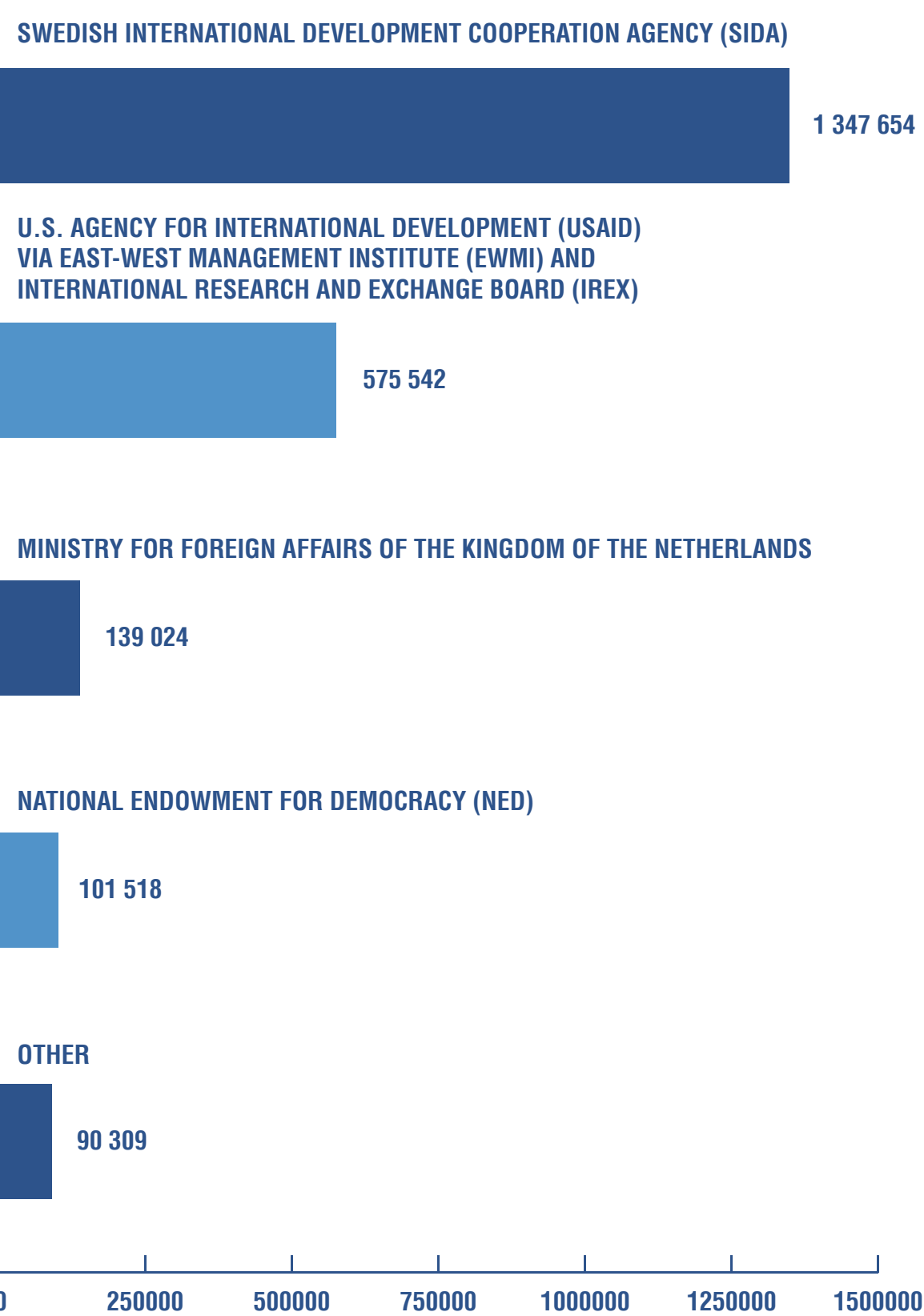


FINANCIAL DATA

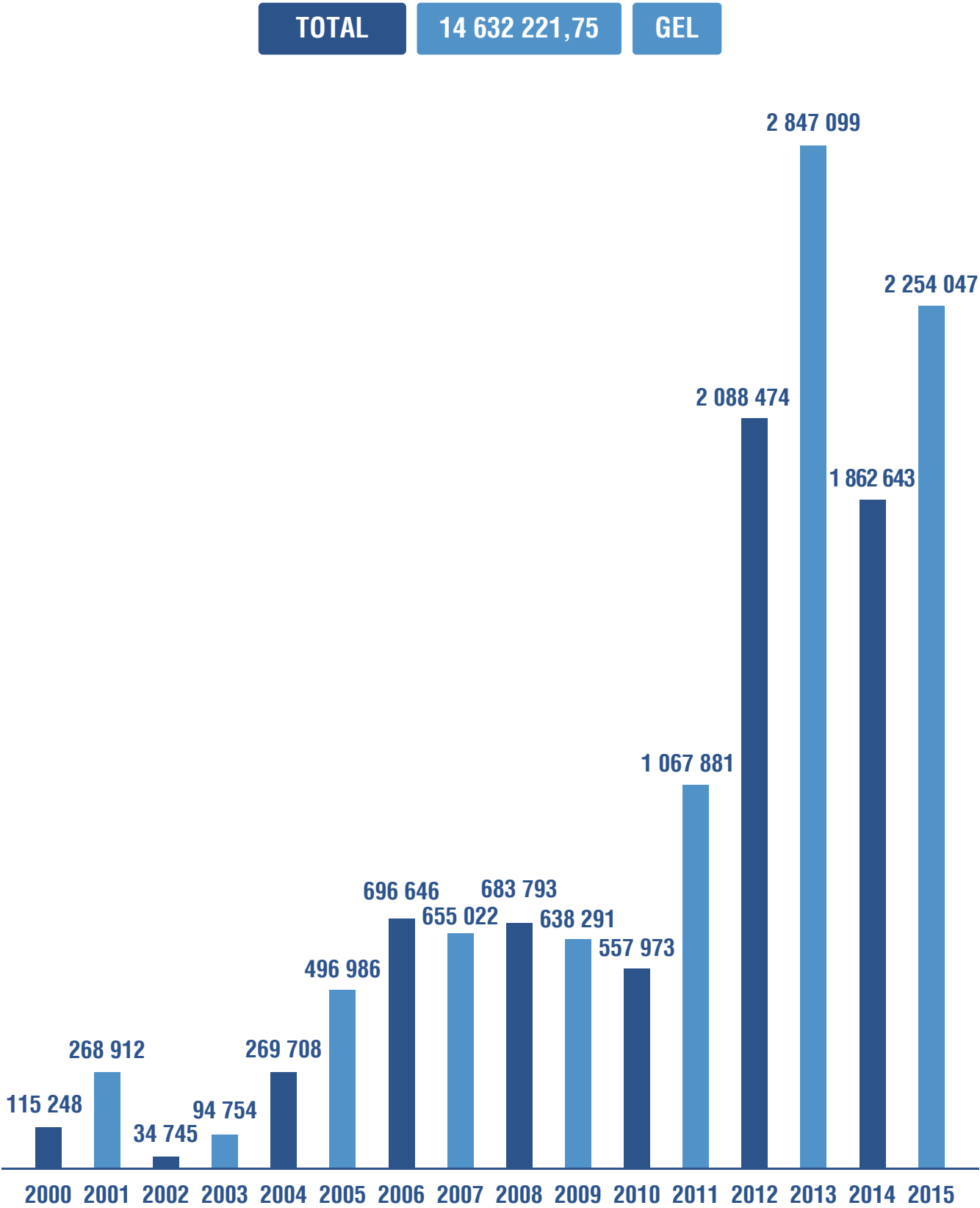
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TBILISI
2016

