Project Title: National Minorities and Civic Integration in Georgia: Moving Multicultural Democracy Forward

Client/Host Agency: United Nations Association of Georgia (UNAG)
www.una.ge

Background: Activities of the United Nations Association of Georgia (UNAG), a reputable NGO in Georgia and South Caucasus established in 1995, span four priority program areas: Democracy and Governance, Youth and Education, Refugees and Migration, and Information and Analysis. UNAG has been a member of the World Federation of United Nations Associations (WFUNA) since 1996.

In two decades UNAG has transformed from a start-up organization into a democratic governance and civil society knowledge management hub and clearinghouse with a national and regional, South Caucasian scope. The 35 member staff in the head office in Tbilisi provide cutting-edge expertise and professional consultation to its stakeholders and beneficiaries. UNAG maintains an operational network of communication and collaboration with partner civil society organizations in the regions of Georgia, covering the whole of the territory of Georgia, including its remote, hard-to-reach regions. UNAG is audited annually by an international auditor and UNAG financial statements and audit reports are publicly available on UNAG’s online resources (www.una.ge; www.facebook.com/una.ge).

UNAG has implemented large-scale projects that deal with different aspects of rule of law, human rights and good governance. To name the few:

- The National Integration and Tolerance in Georgia (NITG) program is one of the most complex projects (USAID-funded, USD2.7 million 4 year project) implemented by the organization in 2006-2010 to promote the increased sense of national unity among the citizens of Georgia through media programming, development of civil society capacities, provision of comprehensive support to the Government of Georgia in formation of its National Concept and Action Plan for Tolerance and Civic Integration, and empower
people and organizations to effectively discuss, debate, and facilitate building of a cohesive multi-ethnic nation.

- Advancing National Integration (ANI) is a USD3.75 million USAID funded project (2011-2015), implemented by UNAG. The project renders a complex set of activities that aim to support civic integration across diverse ethnic and geographic boundaries in Georgia. The project introduces NGO-based youth clubs throughout Georgia; furnishes local NGOs with advanced capacities to manage diversity and civic participation more effectively; exploits social media and social exchange to establish active connections between the young boys and girls of Georgia from different regions and ethnic communities; builds awareness and stimulates national debate through Our Yard weekly TV talk show and other media production on local and national television; and supports the Public Defender's Tolerance Center and the Civic Integration and Tolerance Council of the President of Georgia to advance sustainable capacities on local and national levels.

These projects, being collaborations between USAID, UNAG, local civil society organizations and the Government of Georgia, heralded unprecedented mobilization of human and financial resources in Georgia and all for good reasons: Georgia, an ethnically, culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse country that hosts 9 major ethnic groups has been making strides to build a cohesive civic identity and a culture of tolerance over two decades. However full integration of all ethnic minorities still remains a challenge. Lack of infrastructure for development, language and education as well as the absence of a culture of tolerance and participatory policy-making and weak institutions, all to a variable degree contributed to the situation. This dynamic was accompanied by drastic decline of the share of ethnic minorities in the population of the country (from 30% in 1989 to 16% in 2002).

Currently, the attention of the outgoing government is focused on education, including teaching of the State language, professional and vocational training and training of public officials and employees belonging to national minorities, as well as preservation of cultural diversity. The biggest challenge facing the government of Georgia is the development of communication and infrastructure. The government is engaged in active work aimed at developing new programs of teaching the State language, which will allow national minorities to become bilingual.

Given UNAG’s experience and the high stakes involved in Georgia’s democratic transformation, especially after the recent power transfer through the recent 2012 parliamentary elections, minority policies should remain in the forefront of the national discourse. This provides a rationale for UNAG to commission an assessment study of the National Concept and Action Plan for Tolerance and Civic Integration.
(NCAP) and draw relevant follow up recommendations.

In the context of the project objectives (see below), UNAG in partnership with a SIPA team would in particular engage with the Minister for Reintegration, Office of Public Defender of Georgia, Parliament of Georgia, USAID, relevant agencies and other international donors and stakeholders.

Objective: UNAG would like to invite a SIPA team to conduct an assessment study of implementation of the National Concept and Action Plan for Tolerance and Civic Integration, focusing on its main components – rule of law, education and state language, Media and Access to information, political integration and civic participation, social and regional integration, culture and preservation of identity.

The assessment study will determine a. how effective the National Concept and Action Plan for Tolerance and Civic Integration (NCAP) has been; b. how it is perceived by beneficiaries; and c. to what extent has civil society been involved in the process of annual civil monitoring and advocacy. More specifically, the study will consider:

1) NCAP Effectiveness and Implementation - measured against the objectives set in the strategy;
2) NCAP Monitoring and Advocacy – the level and effectiveness of CSO efforts in revealing and advocating for the adequate solutions for key shortcomings in NCAP implementation.
3) Impact - as measured against the objectives of the strategy - to support the building of democratic and consolidated civil society based on common values, which considers diversity as a source of its strength and provides every citizen with the opportunity to maintain and develop his/her identity.

As the current National Action Plan expires in early 2014, the proposed assessment study will provide crucial policy recommendations for the design of a follow-up National Strategy and Action Plan in 2014-2015.

Deliverables: The expected deliverables include: (1) a detailed work plan; (2) draft report outline; (3) draft report; (4) final report; (5) presentation of initial findings to UNAG in March 2013; and (6) presentation of final findings and recommendations at SIPA in late April 2013.

Requirements: Ideal candidates for the project team (of approximately six students) would have the following interest, skills and experience:

- Background in governance, development and/or regional (Eastern Europe/South Caucasus) studies;
- Familiarity with the political, legal and human rights situation and development issues in Georgia is desirable;
- Knowledge of English (knowledge of Georgian would be an asset);
• Good analytical and writing skills; and
• Ability to work effectively in a team.

Logistics: The student team will conduct desk research and informational interviews in New York City beginning in November 2012.

Subject to further consultation with UNAG, the team will conduct field research in Georgia in early January and March 2013. The team will complete its final report by early May 2013.

As a client organization, UNAG is committed to be a resource and facilitator for the students’ field work, including arranging meetings and interviews, advising on substantive and programmatic aspects of implementation of the project, and providing other logistical support for the team’s work.