

USAID RULE OF LAW PROGRAM



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Overview



The **USAID Rule of Law Program** is a five-year (2022-2026), \$25-million activity funded by the **United States Agency for International Development (USAID)** and implemented by the **East-West Management Institute (EWMI)**.

The **goal of the Program** is to strengthen the rule of law in Georgia by building the independence and effectiveness of justice sector institutions, enhancing access to justice for all segments of society, and increasing citizen and institutional oversight of justice sector institutions. **Key elements of the Program** include building the capacity of individual judges throughout Georgia and promoting a people-centered approach to legal and judicial reforms.

Program Objectives & Activities



OBJECTIVE 1: Independence and Effectiveness of Justice System Institutions Strengthened

The Rule of Law Program will **strengthen the independence and professionalism of the judiciary** by providing technical assistance and advocacy for needed legislative and regulatory reforms. To achieve this, we will:

- monitor and assist with the implementation of existing reforms and support future reforms, such as further improving the judicial appointment process and random assignment of cases;
- strengthen the capacity of the High School of Justice, which recently assumed the responsibility for admitting students who will become future judges;
- enhance the administration of justice and court management by developing improved national court administration practices and advising individual courts on improving court management practices, promoting bench-bar meetings, and introducing tools to enhance a people-centered approach to delivering justice to court users.



The Program will **build the capacity of individual judges** and others working in the justice sector, focusing on regions outside of Tbilisi. The project will:

- establish at least three Rule of Law Regional Hubs. The hubs will support linkages with and among the courts, Georgian Bar Association branches, Legal Aid Service (LAS) offices, Public Defender (PDO) offices, law faculties, CSOs, representatives of law enforcement bodies, and the private sector to ensure better delivery of justice;
- establish Rule of Law Practice Groups composed mainly of legal professionals, including judges. The group members will share experiences, identify challenges in certain legal areas, and develop recommendations on how to improve practices in specific areas of the law;
- provide technical assistance to the Constitutional Court of Georgia to improve case scheduling, ethics standards and enforcement of decisions;
- support the judiciary through providing judicial exchanges, including visits to the U.S. for Georgian judges, placing U.S. judges in Georgian courts, and seconding Georgian judges to U.S. courts for in-depth exposure to U.S. best practices.



Strengthening legal education is also a significant part of the Program's activities. In this regard, we will:

- improve national standards on legal education and law school accreditation, and introduce courses and clinical programs previously developed with USAID support to law schools outside Tbilisi;
- work with multiple law schools to develop a collaborative network of “street law” programs through which law students will gain experiential skills by teaching practical law-related lessons in secondary schools and communities around the country.

OBJECTIVE 2: Equal Access to Justice for All Enhanced



The Rule of Law Program will **remove barriers to justice** by:

- working with the Parliament, the PDO, the LAS and CSOs to improve access to justice for all in Georgia;
- advising the Gender Equality Council of the Parliament and the Legal Issues and the Human Rights Committees of the Parliament;
- collaborating with the PDO to organize a national, multimedia campaign to inform citizens of their rights and of the PDO's role in enforcing them;
- working with the LAS to strengthen its legal aid quality assurance system, mentor LAS lawyers, strengthen the LAS training department, and support collaboration between the LAS and CSOs to address barriers to access to justice.



The Program will **support strategic litigation**. We will:

- support CSO strategic litigation in vital substantive areas, such as freedom of expression, freedom against discrimination, right to fair trial, and protecting the rights of women, children, persons with disabilities, marginalized groups and minorities (e.g., ethnic and religious minorities and LGBTQ representatives);
- hold grants competitions for CSOs to address barriers to justice and raise awareness of women, minorities, and other marginalized persons on their rights and how to better exercise them.



The Program will work to **improve access to justice by strengthening mediation and other types of ADR**. We will:

- promote needed legislative and regulatory changes, improve the functioning of existing court-annexed mediation programs, and support the institutional development of the Mediators Association of Georgia (MAG) and Georgian Association of Arbitrators (GAA);
- work to integrate ADR into the university curriculum, establish annual national arbitration and mediation competitions, and develop an externship program to place students with MAG or court-annexed mediation centers;
- support outreach initiatives to improve awareness of the benefits of arbitration and mediation.

OBJECTIVE 3: Citizen and Institutional Oversight of Justice Institutions Increased



The Program will **strengthen institutional oversight mechanisms** by:

- building the capacity of the Parliament's Legal Affairs and Human Rights Committees to review judicial and High Council of Justice candidates;
- supporting the PDO to develop an internal judicial monitoring strategy and mechanism.



The Program will **encourage civil society engagement with justice institutions** to increase the quality of court services and ensure better treatment of disadvantaged groups, as well as increase the public's engagement with courts and understanding of legal proceedings. We will:

- support the Coalition for an Independent and Transparent Judiciary in its advocacy efforts;
- work to improve the public's ability to monitor the operation of judicial institutions by supporting innovative Justice Reform Impact Assessments that will allow civil society groups to assess the actual impact of justice reforms with their stated objectives;

- promote CSOs' collaborative initiatives with justice institutions aimed at increasing the quality of court services and ensuring better treatment of disadvantaged groups;
- organize Legal Tech Hackathons to develop creative solutions to policy problems in the justice sector;
- support mechanisms that allow citizens to oversee the operation of local court and other core justice institutions, and encourage courts to conduct periodic court user surveys;
- support systemic trial monitoring initiatives, as well as innovative trial monitoring that allows litigants who suspect they will not be treated fairly for political or discriminatory reasons to request a watchdog group to monitor their case;
- support People-Centered Justice Assessments to determine the extent to which individual courts meet the needs of court users and support the implementation of initiatives responsive to the assessment recommendations.

Program Partners



EWMI's consortium of partners for implementing the Rule of Law Program include:



Rule of Law Initiative

American Bar Association Rule of Law Initiative (ABA ROLI) has worked for more than 25 years to strengthen legal institutions and advance legal education globally. ABA ROLI will organize study visits and other exchanges for Georgian judges, and provide U.S. judges to be posted in Georgian courts for long-term assignments. It will also assist in improving national standards on legal education and law school accreditation, and assist with clinical legal education development.



International Legal Foundation (ILF) has extensive experience helping lawyers provide high-quality representation that transforms justice systems and strengthens the rule of law. ILF will provide staff and fellows for long-term placements to provide mentoring to the LAS and other legal aid providers.

STREET LAW^{INC.}

Street Law, Inc. creates responsive justice and legal systems and knowledgeable and confident citizens by partnering with law faculties to establish high-quality learning initiatives that benefit both law students and the communities they serve. Street Law will institutionalize “street law” programs at five Georgian law schools.

Northwestern PRITZKER SCHOOL OF LAW

Northwestern University’s Pritzker School of Law is a recognized leader in clinical legal education in the United States and abroad, including in Georgia. Northwestern will provide mentoring to the Ilia State University Human Rights Clinic and help replicate the clinic’s success at other Georgian law schools.

Center for Court Innovation

Center for Court Innovation (CCI) is a world leader in the field of problem-solving justice, helping courts create innovative, community-centered solutions to justice challenges. CCI will help develop community-led strategies to increase trust in and accessibility to Georgia’s courts.



European Human Rights Advocacy Centre

European Human Rights Advocacy Centre (EHRAC) has more than 15 years of experience conducting capacity building for human rights lawyers. EHRAC will build the capacity of Georgia’s human rights lawyers to conduct strategic litigation before the European Court of Human Rights and other international mechanisms via long-term in-depth mentoring.

USAID RULE OF LAW PROGRAM IN GEORGIA

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