



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**NDI POLL SHOWS LIVING CONDITIONS NOT IMPROVING AT LOCAL LEVEL; MINIMAL CONTACT WITH LOCAL GOVERNMENT BUT COMPETENT, RESPECTFUL SERVICE**

TBILISI – A nationwide poll released today by the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and CRRC Georgia found that Georgians believe their living conditions have stayed the same (47 percent) or worsened (43 percent) over the last year. Improving roads, water and gas delivery and eliminating pollution are top priorities. Respondents also believe that, while their village or town is safe (83 percent) and a good place to raise children (72 percent), employment opportunities are inadequate (80 percent). 66 percent consider themselves unemployed. They identify tourism, farming, livestock, and light industry as the main economic development possibilities for their communities.

This is the first survey released by NDI and CRRC Georgia that focused largely on local government issues. It included a representative sample for the self-governing cities of Tbilisi, Kutaisi, Batumi, Zugdidi, Gori, Telavi, Akhaltsikhe, Ozurgeti, Mtskheta and of the Gurjaani municipality.

Interaction between citizens and elected local government officials (mayors/gamgeoba, sakrebulo members, and governors) is infrequent. Only 6 percent of Georgians report having ever been contacted by *sakrebulo* officials, 3 percent by *mayors*' offices, and 1 percent by *governors*' offices. Knowledge of the work of these offices was also low, with approximately 60 percent of citizens reporting that they knew "nothing at all," and 83 percent unable to identify their *sakrebulo* majoritarian member. Citizen participation in public events, petitions and rallies is also low.

Despite this limited interaction overall, those who did engage with local government officials reported them as competent (69 percent) and respectful (88 percent). Further, citizens continue to rate highly the performance of emergency medical services and public service halls, with 89 percent reporting they were satisfied with the service they received at the public service halls.

"As previous polls have shown, Georgians are concerned about employment, living conditions, and the economic growth of their communities and would like to see improvements in basic infrastructure and a cleaner environment," - said Laura Thornton, NDI's senior director in Georgia. - "Across the country, there is minimal communication between citizens and their elected representatives but when such interaction takes place, citizens report positively. This presents important opportunities and incentives for local government officials to get out and talk to people more about what they are doing and to solicit public input."

NDI surveys public opinion to help Georgian stakeholders diagnose and address issues of public concern by providing accurate, unbiased, and statistically sound data. The poll was developed in consultation with party,

government, and civil society leaders and aims to capture the most relevant information to foster the development of responsive policies and governance. A wide range of leaders from across the political spectrum have reported that the polls are important to their work and encourage continued polling.

The results reflect data collected from August 8 to September 10 through face-to-face interviews with a nationwide representative sample of citizens of Georgia that included 4,448 completed interviews. The average margin of error is +/- 3.01 percent.

NDI's survey work is funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and carried out by the CRRC Georgia.

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*NDI is an independent, nonprofit, nonpartisan organization working to support and strengthen democratic institutions worldwide through citizen participation, openness and accountability in government. More information is available at [www.ndi.org](http://www.ndi.org).*

*CRRC-Georgia is a non-governmental, non-profit research organization with a mission to promote evidence-based debates on policy issues by providing reliable, up-to-date and accessible data and analysis. More information is available at <http://www.crrc.ge>*