

“Helping youth to build their future through solidarity - locally and countrywide”

Democratic action supported by Jean Jaures Foundation

Centre for Social Studies, Georgia

Georgia has always been an agricultural country due to its traditional rural specificity and its underdeveloped industrial sector. According to it, the main part of the population lives in the countryside. After the collapse of the Soviet Union the rural economy deteriorated and a big share of the country entailed population's migration. They didn't have the means to invest on economical development, because of changed conditions within the regions and around the country. Naturally, it is not only a Georgian phenomenon, but Georgia's rural population suffered much as long as the local governance did not develop, the infrastructure got destroyed, re-education possibilities became scarce, land schemes in small and local economies dried from money.

After the Rose Revolution bolstered by unlimited political power, a number of reforms were carried out at the beginning of the government of president Saakashvili. But a very little part of the reforms contributed to the countryside development. Instead of paying more attention to these phenomena in the regions, the efforts of the actual government is directed to reinforce the defence sector of the country at the expense of other most important spheres like education, medical treatments and development of economy, rural economy especially, and of local governance. Globalization brought some development to the capital, but most of provincial cities, as well as villages, fell into the "black halls of globalization", with the atomized local inhabitants, having neither experience of independent development, nor political power to make the state react on their misery.

The ultra neo-liberal politics of Saakashvili government doesn't leave space for the people from the rural regions, like "no space for looser". Horrible circumstances (no job, no facilities for leisure activities, no attention from the government) and inexperience in self-organization to face the challenges drove the majority of the young people from the regions to leave their homes and either to go abroad or come to the city to take a job and to realize themselves.

Above-mentioned circumstances were the reasons why our organization, the `Centre for Social Studies`, initiated this project that managed to encourage young people to take more collective responsibility and help them to build a strong community of people, who would be able to face challenges.

In frame of our project, several activities have been planned and implemented:

1. Establishing contacts with the young activists from the regions.
 2. Meeting the local partner youth communities to encourage them for further activities by means of debates and trainings.
 3. Tbilisi conference "Building future through youth solidarity - locally and countrywide".
- Participants from different local communities were invited to Tbilisi and two representatives from each community delivered a speech about their activities and their community. The conference goal was to establish a network of grassroots youth activists, to plan for joint activities and to popularize the initiative among other young people.

Thanks to Jean Jaures Foundation, implementing this project became possible. Our organization has conducted several projects, but this one was one of the most interesting and challenging because of its outcomes and feedbacks.

Project started in September and lasted 4 months. During the project we taught participants that if they want to accomplish their goals, they should pay attention to community's needs and interests as well as their own.

Every meeting was started with participants little scepticism, but at the end, they were trying to analyze discussed problems deeply. Every time our enthusiasm was spread out to participants and after every meeting we became more and more convinced that the project had to be done according to the present deeply nihilistic attitude towards their social and political lives in Georgia.

Certainly, from the beginning it was not so easy to convince participants that they had power to impact the development of the community and their native places, but at the end of the meetings we were managing to encourage them to become more active. For example, in one region called Martvili, our meeting was resulted in concrete activity – members of Martvili community with their own effort fixed irrigation system and built a meeting room for cultural events in the village school.

Our success is that we have fulfilled all goals and aims set in this project. We have built the space where the member of the community can discuss with each other general problems and challenges of community and native places.

Additionally, we have built the network of young people from different parts of Georgia and the result is already established in a non-governmental organization called “Youth for local development”. (You can contact them on their E-mail yld.georgia@gmail.com, or on their facebook profile: Youth for Local Development).

The project participants learnt to think about present situation and problems with the help of this project and good basis was prepared for future activities.

Local elections will take place in a little while and we are looking forward that the youth will keep the feelings they got through our project and take active participation in the elections and in several local initiatives that will impact their future lives in native places.