

Examining the Necessity for Affirmative Action for National Minorities in Georgia

Interim Report
(July 20, 2006 – November 20, 2006)

Policy Research Center of Georgian Institute of Public Affairs (GIPA) started the implementation of the project upon the signature of the agreement with the Eurasia Foundation and the first transfer of funds. It was envisioned that during the first month preparatory work should take place including but not limited to purchase of equipments, announcement of vacancies, and preliminary research. Due to various reasons such as the necessary procedures for purchasing assets, and internal changes in GIPA management some changes in the schedule of work has occurred. Nonetheless, these changes are minor in terms of achieving the envisioned outcomes.

For the first two months only three persons were contracted and engaged in the project (Project Director, Project Advisor, and Project Accountant). This change was partly caused by the circumstances stated above, and partly by the programmatic needs of the research as ascertained through the work process. During this stage of the project preliminary research has been done regarding the history of affirmative action – its origins, varieties and forms used in various countries. At the same time, the appropriate statistical methods for analyzing the data were examined. Taking into consideration various approaches, and the pilot character of this research it was decided that we concentrate only on Armenian minority. Given the initial project idea that envisioned fieldwork in Tbilisi and Samtskhe-Javakheti region, such a development was in part implied, however, initially we did intend not to differentiate among the minorities. The latter was determined to be unfeasible, because of the necessity to discount for cultural factors, and the predominance of Armenian minority in Samtrskhe-Javakheti region. The latter condition would make the comparison between urban and rural population less convincing from sociological standpoint.

The next step was to determine the estimated optimal course of action. We assumed that the disadvantaged representation of national minority in Georgia in terms of holding public offices, and gainful white-collar employment was already established as demonstrated by the very existence of a special Parliamentary Committee dealing with this question. Thus, we have decided that in the present research we put more emphasis on finding the causes for such under-representation. Nonetheless, some baseline research involving the confirmation of the above stated condition had been included in the research plan. This part involved obtaining the information from Statistics Department of Georgia, and conducting field research in the areas not covered by the department. After the compilation and the preliminary analysis of the data it was decided to draft appropriate questionnaires to be distributed in the representative sample of population.

Following the establishment of the final plan the vacancy announcements for 2 researchers and a project assistant were designed and placed on www.jobs.ge. The selection process involved three steps: screening of the résumés, and motivation letters (there were around 100 applications submitted), written test (the applicants were tested on their English language skills, writing, analytical ability, and internet literacy/skills), and an interview. Ten people were selected for the interviews, and three were chosen. At this time (mid-September), we

were finally able to complete our asset purchase and we moved from preliminary research and planning to actual implementation.

Further research has been done on Affirmative Action, and it was established that although the term came into being in the 1960s by a couple of Presidential Decrees no scientific research had been done that would have establish the need for the measure. Rather, the decision was largely political, and in response to Civil Rights’ Movement that was taking place in the United States at that time. Research also established that although there has been no discourse on the issue prior to the implementation of the various aspects of Affirmative Action there has been extended, and intensive discussion on the nature of impact that these measures have had on the American society. The major tenets of public discourse that we were able to analyze, and follow from the mid-1960s to the present show that like any other aspect of social welfare policy Affirmative Action can also be subject to inappropriate use by the public.

As planned the research team set out to establish disparity between the ratio of Armenian minority to the whole population in Tbilisi and Samtskhe-Javakheti, and the ratio Armenian minority to the whole population in terms of employment, income, higher education, and enrollment in the universities. In order to do that twin strategy of gathering the information was implemented. On the one hand we looked to get the information from the department of statistics, and on the other we engaged in first-hand gathering of information.

From the Department of Statistics the information regarding the unemployment, and education, as well as medical expenses of the population of Tbilisi and Samtskhe-Javakheti was obtained. As expected the data showed the existence of significant disparities between the levels of education, medical expenses and employment of Armenian minority as compared to the whole population, and the proportional distribution of the former in terms of population. The data was arranged in excel data sheets in order to make the preliminary comparative analysis easier. The choice of these particular sets of data is largely self-evident. However, some clarifications are necessary to make. First, the entrenched disadvantages that a group might have could be best established by the representation of the group in decision-making structures of the public and private sphere. In the governing structures the groups integration is a verifiable indicator of the group’s capability to represent its interests. These interests can be successfully defended also if the group has economic might/parity as compared to the other groups. The employment data measures the trend that exists in this regard. The data on medical expenses serves as an additional variable demonstrating the levels of income associated with the particular groups. This measure is important because it demonstrates how gainfully the group is employed (given the subsistence level employment quite widespread in Georgia) when it is impossible to measure income disparities directly by the amount of the taxes paid, for example. The education variable was included on the assumption that holding a public office and or a white-collar job is directly proportionate to the level of education obtained. This assumption could be easily tested by establishing positive correlation between the level of education received and available income.

Nonetheless, the information obtained from the Department of Statistics provided solely an overall picture as expected. The data was useful without a doubt, but could not serve as a sufficient source to get the comprehensive view on the problem. That is due to the fact that employment data, for example, does not differentiate among white-collar and blue-collar jobs. As for the education the data received contained the degree/level of education obtained, and did not differentiate among the institutes of higher education that conferred the degree. This

variable we deemed important in terms of merit-based job recruitment. In order to amend these shortcomings we conducted field research in Tbilisi where we tried to obtain the data on employment and education. In terms of employment the researchers identified and contacted government agencies, public and private companies to gather information regarding the ethnicity, and positions of their employees. It was decided to concentrate on the entities employing at least 70 people. This limit was set to better safeguard against family owned businesses, and small enterprises where merit-base selection has a minor impact on recruitment. It has to be noted that some of the companies asked to keep the provided information confidential. In order to uphold this request we request the Eurasia Foundation to keep the info contained in the relevant annex attached to this report confidential. At the same time, the research team gathered information from the most prestigious institutes of higher education regarding the enrollment data on current students. The medical expenses/services data was compiled by contacting various health institutions/hospitals both in Tbilisi and Samtske-Javakheti. Besides the field work described above the research team complemented the information from diverse additional sources including but not limited to Address by the Public Defender (*First half of 2006*), Report by the Central Asia and Caucasus Institute (*Johanna Popjanevski, Niklas Nilsson, Conference Report, August*), Building Democracy in Georgia (*Ethnic Conflicts and Breakaway Regions in Georgia, Discussion Paper 9, May 2003, David Darchiashvili, Gigi Tevzadze*), Defusing a Ticking Bomb?, Disentangling International Organisations in Samtskhe-Javakheti (*Indra Øverland, Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, No. 646 . 2003*), Ethnic minorities in Georgia (*International Fact-finding Mission, Report n° 412/2, April 2005*), etc.

On the basis of the analysis of the data it can be successfully established that there is a high probability that the examined minority is insufficiently represented/integrated in the public and business life of the country. The identification of the causes for such development, and suggesting remedies to change it is the key issue that this research will address in the remaining period. To assure unbiased selection the field work shall take part both in Tbilisi and Samtskhe-Javakheti. The research team has come to conclusion that the most appropriate method to achieve this goal is to conduct interviews among focus groups in both locations. Two questionnaires were developed that will be used in Tbilisi and Samtskhe-Javakheti respectively.

It is to be noted also that the GIPA Policy Research Center established close cooperation with several NGOs, and institutes active in the area (Public Movement Multi ethnical Georgia, Civic Integration Foundation). Many of them provided us with advice, contacts, and missing statistical data. We hope that these ties will be upheld after the completion of this particular research.

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