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USAID/GEORGIA INTEGRATION:
FINAL REPORT ON THEMATIC EVALUATION

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DRG LEARNING, EVALUATION, AND RESEARCH ACTIVITY II

USAID/GEORGIA INTEGRATION:
FINAL REPORT ON THEMATIC EVALUATION

AUGUST 2022

Submitted by:

Melanie Reimer (Principal Investigator)
Shorena Kobaidze (Subject Matter Expert)
Anna Solovyeva (Senior Evaluation Expert)

Contractor:

NORC at the University of Chicago
4350 East West Highway, 8th Floor
Bethesda, MD 20814
Attention: Matthew Parry
Telephone: 301-634-5444; E-mail: Parry-Matthew@norc.org

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ABSTRACT

This thematic evaluation assesses the effectiveness of selected modalities in enhancing tolerance and integration of ethnic, linguistic, and religious minorities and the ability to resist attempts aimed at deepening gaps between minorities and the ethnic majority in Georgia. The evaluation studies two distinct USAID Activities: Promoting Integration, Tolerance and Awareness (PITA) on a national level and Pankisi Community Links (PCL), focused on the Pankisi Valley. The evaluation also assesses effects on selected stakeholder groups and analyzes results measurement methods and challenges.

Project training and exchanges for youth helped them develop skills, foster relationships, and boost some participants' tolerance and integration. Youth Task Forces were positively viewed, although effects on targeted audiences could not be established. Government internships were important opportunities for minority youth to gain experience, though access to employment was not in evidence. Diversity grants to civil society organizations were too small to achieve noticeable results.

Grants to Pankisi Valley businesses had positive economic effects locally but did not boost significant connections outside the Valley. There is little evidence that either project contributed to the private sector's role in integration. PITA's support to outreach by Youth Center members was generally valued as a means of promoting tolerance among others; however, evidence of impact was lacking.

Attempts by these projects and others to measure levels of tolerance, integration, and resilience to malign influence have faced challenges, which call for increased investment in monitoring and evaluating practices. The evaluation makes about 20 recommendations to strengthen future USAID activities related to tolerance and integration.

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LIST OF EXHIBITS

ACRONYMS

ANI	Advancing National Integration (USAID Activity)
AOR	Agreement Officer's Representative
CASI	Computer-assisted Self Interviewing
CATI	Computer-assisted Telephone Interviewing
CAWI	Computer-assisted Web Interviewing
CDCS	Country Development Cooperation Strategy
CNM	Council of National Minorities
CR	Council of Religions
CRRC	Caucasus Resource Research Center
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DEPA	Development Evaluation and Progress Assessment Consulting Ltd.
DRG	Democracy, Rights, and Governance
EQ	Evaluation Question
ET	Evaluation Team
EU	European Union
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
GoG	Government of Georgia
IDIs	In-depth Interviews
IP	Implementing Partner
IRMS	IT, Research & Metadata Solutions
KIIs	Key Informant Interviews
KRDF	Kakheti Regional Development Foundation
LER	Learning, Evaluation, and Research
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MDF	Media Development Foundation
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NGOs	Nongovernmental Organizations
NORC	National Opinion Research Center (NORC at the University of Chicago)
OECD/DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development/Development Assistance Committee
PCL	Pankisi Community Links (USAID Activity)

PI	Principal Investigator
PITA	Promoting Integration, Tolerance, and Awareness (USAID Activity)
SMR	State Minister of Georgia for Reconciliation and Civic Equality
SOW	Statement of Work
TIR	Tolerance and Integration Related to Minorities and/or Resilience to Malign Influence
ToT	Training of Trainers
UNAG	United Nations Association of Georgia
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
US$	United States Dollar
YCs	Youth Centers

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Successful integration of Georgia's ethnic and religious minorities into wider Georgian social, political, and economic life was a foundational element of the United States Agency for International Development's (USAID) 2013–2020 Country Development Cooperation Strategy. That strategy posited that greater integration of those minorities would contribute to democratic and economic development of the country. This thematic evaluation aimed to assess the effectiveness of selected modalities in enhancing tolerance toward and integration of ethnic, linguistic, and religious minorities and the ability to resist attempts aimed at deepening gaps between those minorities and the ethnic Georgian majority. To do so, the evaluation studied two USAID Activities: Promoting Integration, Tolerance and Awareness (PITA) and Pankisi Community Links (PCL). The evaluation also assessed programming effects on selected stakeholder groups and analyzed results measurement methods and challenges in these thematic areas.

PITA was a multifaceted US$6 million national integration project that ran from 2015 to 2021, implemented by the United Nations Association of Georgia (UNAG), a Georgian civil society organization. The evaluation focused on the project components that involved engagement with more than 5,000 youth activists through 14 Youth Centers across the country, support for youth internships, and monitoring of hate speech and propaganda. The evaluation did not include the project's support to the Government of Georgia (GoG) on policy development.

PCL was implemented by Chemonics International, Inc. from 2018–2021 with funding of US$1.5 million from USAID's Reconciliation Fund. It focused on the Pankisi Valley area, which has a unique mix of ethnic groups, including a large proportion of Muslim Kists. There, PCL aimed to forge linkages across age groups and religious affiliations within Pankisi and connect Valley residents to the rest of Georgia through economic and social opportunities.

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

This thematic evaluation employed a mixed methodology of quantitative and qualitative approaches, including comprehensive desk review, 46 interviews, and 14 focus group discussions. Thereafter, the evaluation team conducted a survey of 601 PITA Youth Center members. The team analyzed qualitative data using a hybrid approach involving Dedoose software and a data matrix, while survey data was analyzed using STATA.

Key limitations included: the complexity of studying two very different projects with objectives that went beyond the thematic areas of evaluation; social desirability bias affecting responses, especially given that a new integration activity has been solicited but not yet awarded; recall bias due to time elapsed since implementation; and significant gaps in monitoring data and reports.

KEY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

EVALUATION QUESTION 1: MODALITIES

1.a) To what extent have selected modalities used by PITA and PCL enhanced tolerance and integration of ethnic, linguistic, and religious minorities and resilience to malign external influence (herein abbreviated as "TIR") among those directly involved in those interventions?

MODALITY A. TRAINING AND EXCHANGES FOR YOUTH
PITA's training for Youth Center (YC) members was described as laying the foundation for the wider package of activities aimed at informing and mobilizing youth. Basic training on rights and diversity was standardized, and tolerance themes were mainstreamed in other training. PITA emphasized follow-up activities to share or apply training, which made it difficult to isolate the effects of training. PITA surveying indicated that YC members perceived themselves as much more tolerant than did the control group of nonparticipants, although attribution to training was not possible. YC members rated training courses lower than other activities, although scoring was still relatively high. Overall, we concluded that YC-based training and complementary activities helped develop skills of participants, but impact on TIR was unclear.

PCL took a distinct approach to training of youth (and others) in the Pankisi Valley, which did not directly address issues of TIR but rather aimed to erode barriers between ethnic groups by gathering them for training on other subjects. Training delivery by grantees meant that courses were short and not continuous, which limited impact. Overall, evidence showed that PCL's training appeared to foster new and pre-existing relationships, but their strategy was seriously undermined by COVID-19, and effects on inter-ethnic and inter-religious relations were difficult to discern.

Informants consistently stated that both youth camps and exchange visits with families of different ethnic composition had significant positive impacts on participants in terms of tolerance and integration. Exchanges were repeatedly noted as especially valuable. However, neither project was able to offer these opportunities beyond a small proportion of targeted youth, which limited impact.

MODALITY B. YOUTH TASK FORCES
In 2017, PITA launched the Youth Task Forces to raise awareness across remote communities on diverse issues, including European integration, education opportunities for ethnic minorities, gender equality, voter education, media literacy, and legal aid. Each Task Force cycle began with selection of volunteer YC members, who were trained and sent to conduct informational activities in targeted communities. More than 1,200 events reached an estimated 25,000 people across the country.

Many informants expressed broadly positive views of this approach, although it was difficult to point to observable changes in TIR on targeted audiences. Most informants opined that youth were the most suitable for sharing this information, with few voices of dissent. Concerns about the one-off nature of most visits were widespread; some Task Force members noted that "*our efforts were insignificant, and achieving better effects will necessitate more effort and more coverage.*" Potential synergies between PITA and the USAID civic education project were not developed.

MODALITY C. INTERNSHIPS

The goal of the government internships supported by PITA was "*encouraging employment of representatives of ethnic minorities in Georgia to promote their involvement and civil integration.*" They catered to ethnic minority students participating in the government's 1+4 higher education program. From 2017 to 2019, 295 interns were placed with government institutions. These were important opportunities to gain experience, although limited access to employment opportunities could undermine intern motivation.

Internships with the private sector were piloted by PITA in its final year, aimed at helping young people acquire skills and thus improving employment prospects. The placement of 29 subsidized interns was widely considered successful, including by host companies. Although PITA aimed for ethnic balance among interns, the pilot's primary focus was not on integration, and only one minority intern was engaged. Asked about engaging interns from minority groups in future, private sector interviewees said they had absolutely no objection, provided that interns were qualified and there was no additional cost.

MODALITY D. GRANTS

PCL awarded 90 grants to stimulate development of Pankisi Valley businesses and connections with other enterprises. Despite significant pandemic hindrances, PCL surveying of grantees showed positive impacts on their businesses. However, monitoring of economic effects of grants was minimal, and few appeared to support more than a single link in the value chain or extend beyond the bounds of the Valley. Grantee informants said they had not made any significant connections outside the region, citing obstacles such as low production capacity, other commitments, size of grants, etc.

PCL relied extensively on Pankisi-based partners to deliver activities, funded via 34 short-term "community project grants" to seven civil society organizations (CSOs) and two local councils. Informants agreed that working through well-established local entities was a sound strategy for gaining trust of the community quickly, despite concerns about brief/intermittent funding and rivalries among local CSOs.

PITA awarded 31 "Diversity Grants" on a competitive basis, aimed at enhancing capacity of ethnic, religious, and other relevant organizations. These small awards (most less than US$2,000) were much appreciated by recipients, but there are serious doubts about the results that can be achieved with such small amounts.

1.b) To what extent were <u>selected</u> public awareness campaigns or major awareness-raising interventions perceived as effective in enhancing TIR among those directly involved via other modalities and among other members of society?

Several PITA initiatives conducted research and aimed to promote public awareness on topics related to TIR. Comprehensive annual reports on hate speech in Georgia were published annually, as well as reports on anti-Western propaganda. Informants praised this reliable and systematic reporting, while wishing for further action on this information. The *No to Phobia* coalition of CSOs supported monitoring of media and public statements by officials and mounted pressure campaigns to combat hate speech. Complaints to regulatory bodies brought several successes, and informants remarked on a trend of media and politicians taking more care in recent years to avoid hate speech. In relation to misinformation from external sources, key stakeholders agreed that more government action was required to stem the tide of ever-growing Russian propaganda.

EVALUATION QUESTION 2: KEY ACTORS

2.a) To what extent has USAID programming increased recognition within the private sector in target communities of i) the importance of integration of ethnic, linguistic, and religious minorities, and ii) the role of the private sector in promoting such integration?

PCL's approach was not to directly raise awareness of or advocate for the private sector's role in integration of Pankisi in the wider society. Rather, it relied on people-to-people methods, hoping to strengthen communal (including economic) relations via direct interaction. Project data do not show how many new business connections involved more than one ethnicity or entities outside the Valley, and little evidence exists of foundations laid for future collaborations or partnerships. Focus groups noted that serious business linkages require financial commitments that Pankisi locals cannot afford, primarily due to low production capacity.

PITA's engagement with the private sector emerged in its final year and focused on the internship component. Given that PITA (and UNAG) had little previous contact with the private sector and COVID-19 was in full swing, this was very challenging. Interviews suggested that private sector actors would not be against a role in integration but need to be incentivized.

Based on all of this, the contribution of these two projects to the private sector's role in integration is difficult to pinpoint.

2.b) To what extent has USAID programming effectively supported youth in target communities to promote tolerance of ethnic, linguistic, and religious minorities among community members?

PITA provided diverse support to YC members to motivate or build their capacities to conduct effective outreach on various subjects, including tolerance. The YC package of activities positively affected members' self-confidence and public speaking skills, which helped them to share learning with others. The longer that respondents were YC members, the more likely they were to have tried to promote tolerance and integration among others. The evaluation survey showed that among YC members who promoted tolerance and integration with others, over 80 percent found PITA-funded support to be very useful for promotion of tolerance and integration. YC members have unarguably made a laudable effort to share their learning, and definite potential exists to further tap into their capacities.

2.c) To what extent have discrete USAID-funded activities generated "inkblots" – positive outcomes related to TIR with potential to resonate beyond the immediate participants?

The evidence showed that continuous application of YC "ink" over six years produced a cadre of active and informed members; some have emerged as leaders and influencers on TIR. Estimates show that YC members reached at least 85,000 individuals with TIR messages. Nevertheless, several informants in YC communities opined that it was difficult to see changes in society at large.

The numerical reach of task forces was significant if all thematic areas are added up (up to 11,000 participants), but informant data indicate that the "ink" of this modality was sprayed too widely, leaving a smattering of droplets across a broad area that left few discernible blots. Little ongoing engagement with targeted schools existed, along with no real investment in monitoring effects of visits.

Given that PCL engaged in some way up to half of Valley households, there was limited scope for inkblots. PCL's final household survey showed no observable change in relationships between residents and other ethnic groups. Those relations were seen by nearly 80 percent of the sampled population as friendly, although 18 percent reported no such relationships. Eighty-three percent of youth training participants said that PCL had a significant positive impact on relationships between Kists and Georgians. The sharp contrast with household survey data suggest that training youth via blended ethnic groups was effective in breaking down barriers. Economic benefits to Valley residents may have sustained effects and support social cohesion, although new linkages of local businesses with the wider Georgian economy were scarce.

EVALUATION QUESTION 3: MEASUREMENT OF RESULTS

How could USAID better measure results related to tolerance and integration of ethnic, linguistic, and religious minorities and resilience to malign external influence?

PITA made commendable efforts to periodically survey YC members about their own attitudes and behaviors. However, monitoring did not extend to indirect beneficiaries, which left significant knowledge gaps regarding broader effects on society. Reporting relied heavily on outputs and individual success stories, with little analysis. Tracking of indicators was virtually absent from PITA reporting; the allocation of only 1 percent of the budget to monitoring and evaluation (M&E) was a significant constraint. PCL reporting showed some similar challenges in weak analysis of outcomes, although progress on indicators was regularly reported. Three indicators were directly related to TIR outcomes, but attempts to measure them via household surveys met with difficulties due to lack of clear indicator definitions and poor question design.

Results measurement related to TIR themes is not easy, and the challenges will not be readily resolved. Surveying of samples drawn from the overall population does not adequately capture project results, and social desirability bias (among other challenges) tends to undermine data reliability. Both PITA and PCL paid insufficient attention to design and definition of realistic outcome indicators that could have provided informative data about TIR results. M&E plans, monitoring, and reporting practices were less than optimal, due in part to lack of M&E expertise.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Youth engagement: Continue support to YCs, with sharpened focus on integration and employment-related skills for youth and launch a YC in the Pankisi/Akhmeta area. Continue exchange visits by youth, considering expansion if careful monitoring of effects on visitors and host communities shows value added. YC members and graduates should be engaged as key change agents, but renewal or adaptation of task forces should be based on clear evidence of benefits in targeted communities.

Collaboration: Pursue dialogue with the Georgian government to enlist it as a firm ally in the escalating battle against external and internal misinformation and hate speech. Enhance collaboration with local government authorities and strategic information-sharing and coordination with other USAID activities to maximize results and sustainability.

Internships and investments: Continue support to private sector internships linked to YCs, with a focus on stimulating cross-ethnic interactions, accompanied by rigorous early monitoring and other

research to learn from this experience and feed into policy reform. Government internships should also be supported to ramp up the integration aspect and monitor job placement of interns. Provide or arrange financial support to stimulate promising investments and employment that cut across ethnic lines and opportunities for in-person exchanges among businesses. Ensure clearly defined strategies guide grant recipients, amounts and durations for grantmaking to business or civil society.

Results measurement and research: Require implementers to systematically track effects on participants and ramp up monitoring of indirect beneficiaries, using mixed methods to enhance data reliability and utility. Ensure focus on outcome indicators and adequate human and financial resources for measuring progress. Invest in refined survey instruments and methods for USAID programming, while also working with the government to increase availability of disaggregated statistical data on the majority and various minority populations.

Cross-cutting recommendations (focused on the new integration activity): Institute a multi-partite advisory body, require sensitization training for staff and partners, ensure attention to integration across all types of ethnic divides, and increase use of professional media expertise, including social and traditional media.

1. EVALUATION PURPOSE AND QUESTIONS

BACKGROUND TO EVALUATION

Successful integration of Georgia's ethnic and religious minorities into wider Georgian social, political, and economic life was a foundational element of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) 2013–2020 strategy for Georgia, contributing to enhanced resilience, stronger democracy, and a growing economy that benefits all Georgians. In line with the Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) theory of change for that period, and in light of the growing recognition by the Mission (including in the new CDCS) that greater integration of ethnic and religious minorities serves to mitigate their vulnerability to external malign influence, this evaluation was designed to generate actionable information and recommendations for USAID's consideration.

Specifically, this evaluation aimed to assess the effectiveness of selected program modalities in enhancing: a) tolerance toward ethnic, linguistic, and religious minorities; b) integration of such minorities in Georgian society; and c) ability to resist and counter attempts aimed at deepening the gap between those minorities and the majority of Georgia's population. This assessment is based on how those modalities were implemented in targeted communities through the Promoting Integration, Tolerance and Awareness (PITA) and Pankisi Community Links (PCL) activities. The evaluation also assessed programming effects on certain key stakeholder groups and analyzed results measurement in these thematic areas with a view to developing recommendations for improvement.

This evaluation, by design, does not evaluate the performance of either of the above-named activities, both completed in mid 2021, and thus did not include an in-depth review of the full range of program interventions nor a detailed comparison of results achieved versus their stated objectives and targets.

The following important terms were preliminarily defined by USAID/Georgia and subsequently refined by the Evaluation Team (ET):

- **Community/ies:** Consisting of majority and minority members of 12 geographically defined communities: 11 catchment areas of 14 youth centers (YCs), plus the Pankisi Gorge.
- **Tolerance:** People's perceptions, attitudes, and/or behaviors indicating that all citizens of Georgia, irrespective of ethnic, linguistic, and religious background, should be treated equitably and without discrimination. This applies to both minority and majority citizens.
- **Integration:** Levels of political, social, and economic inclusion and participation of ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities.
- **Resilience to malign external influences:** The ability to resist and/or counter factors that could deepen the gaps between minorities and the majority of Georgia's population, which may include but is not limited to disinformation about Georgia, targeted access to financial and educational resources from Russia to ethnic minorities, and the rise of radical Islam in Pankisi.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The key questions studied by this evaluation were originally proposed by USAID (see the Statement of Work in Annex A) and later defined and clarified by the ET in discussion with USAID/Georgia as well as representatives of the Center for Conflict and Violence Prevention and other USAID Democracy, Rights, and Governance (DRG) Center staff in Washington DC. The final questions are as follows:

1) Effectiveness of Modalities

1.a) To what extent have the four selected engagement modalities as used by PITA and PCL enhanced tolerance and integration of ethnic, linguistic, and religious minorities and resilience to malign external influence among the specific individuals who were directly involved in those USAID-funded interventions?

1.b) To what extent were selected public awareness campaigns or major awareness-raising interventions perceived as effective in enhancing tolerance and integration of ethnic, linguistic, and religious minorities and/or resilience to malign external influence among those directly involved via other modalities and among other members of society?

2) Key Actors

2.a) To what extent has USAID programming increased recognition within the private sector in target communities of i) the importance of integration of ethnic, linguistic, and religious minorities, and ii) the role of the private sector in promoting such integration?

2.b) To what extent has USAID programming effectively supported youth in target communities to promote tolerance of ethnic, linguistic, and religious minorities among community members?

2.c) To what extent have discrete USAID-funded activities generated "inkblots"—positive outcomes related to tolerance and integration of ethnic, linguistic, and religious minorities and/or resilience to malign external influence that have the potential to resonate beyond the immediate participants of a particular event/activity?

3) Measurement of Results

Based on the findings to the questions above and in the context of relevant USAID and partner methodologies, how could USAID better measure results related to tolerance and integration of ethnic, linguistic, and religious minorities and resilience to malign external influence?

2.   PROGRAM OVERVIEW

PROMOTING INTEGRATION, TOLERANCE AND AWARENESS (PITA)

PITA was a multifaceted, national-level project that ran from 2015 to 2021 with funding of nearly US$6 million. It built on previous programming by the same Georgian Civil Society Organization (CSO) implementer, United Nations Association of Georgia (UNAG), such as the predecessor project Advancing National Integration (ANI). Based on an overall goal of increased integration of minorities, PITA encompassed a wide range of interventions across most of the country, not all of which are relevant to this evaluation. One area not included in this evaluation by design was PITA's significant work with selected government entities, notably the State Minister of Georgia for Reconciliation and Civic Equality (SMR) and Tolerance Center, to support their ability to shape and implement policy among other objectives. Likewise, PITA's civil society capacity-building efforts were excluded. The following elements or results areas of PITA (drawn from the cooperative agreement) were most relevant to this thematic evaluation:

Youth as drivers of social change in promoting diversity: Fourteen Youth Centers nationwide directly involved about 5,000 youth age 14–25,[1] including approximately 1,000 representing ethnic minorities. Through a variety of practical activities, these young people engaged government, businesses, CSOs, and their communities in demonstration of the benefits of diversity. Young people were trained to amplify their voices through PITA-supported actions that allowed youth to partake in national and local debate and awareness-raising on diversity, gender equality, domestic violence, and other issues. Specific efforts were made to improve the academic and student life experience of minority youth.

CSO action on minority and diversity issues: CSOs took center stage in monitoring and combating hate speech and working to address the most egregious instances of discrimination and propaganda. Various CSOs were involved via PITA in such initiatives.

Diversity as an asset in professional environment: PITA worked with major agents providing employment—especially for youth—to engage young people through internships and employment. YC representatives and minority students were also coached and assisted in better presenting their skills and improving employment perspectives.

As detailed further under Evaluation Question (EQ) 2, a final year modification of PITA's cooperative agreement added a component of cooperation with the private sector that was also considered by this evaluation.

PANKISI COMMUNITY LINKS[2]

PCL was a three-year activity (2018–2021) funded with US$1.5 million by the Reconciliation Fund of USAID based in Washington DC, rather than by the USAID/Georgia mission itself. The implementer was Chemonics International, Inc., a United States–based company, which designed the project in response to an open call for proposals. The focus was specifically on the Pankisi Valley.

According to its cooperative agreement, PCL was designed to address two primary issues in the Pankisi Valley: inter-community divides and economic and social isolation from the rest of Georgia. The implementation approach was defined as two-pronged: 1) forging linkages across age groups and religious affiliations within Pankisi; and 2) connecting Pankisi citizens to the rest of Georgia through economic and social opportunities. The resulting interactions were meant to help create a more cohesive society within Pankisi and bridge the divide between Pankisi and surrounding areas, making the area more resistant to conflict. The design included a US$500,000 fund for grantmaking to local entities to support implementation.

The context for this narrowly targeted project is significant, as described in the cooperative agreement. Pankisi Valley residents occupy a distinct and parallel political, social, economic, and geographic space within Georgia. Nearly surrounded by uninhabited mountains and forests, their only physical connection

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[1] According to its final report, PITA planned to change the target age group from 14–18 in its predecessor project to 18–25 in PITA. This change met with difficulties in some small municipalities where PITA runs YCs, where a lack of institutions of higher education or vocational training leads many local youths to migrate to cities after they graduate from high school. This left PITA without a substantial group of local youths within the 18–25 age bracket, so more flexible targeting was adopted. As of 2020, about 70 percent of YC members were 18 to 25 years old, while 30 percent were under 18.

[2] The original name was Pankisi Eco Links Activity in Georgia; it was changed in 2019.

to the rest of Georgia is through the town of Akhmeta, although the drive to Tbilisi is less than three hours. The Valley is not strictly demarcated for administrative purposes, so population estimates vary; the ET used government census data to estimate a total of 11,000 residents in 15 villages. About 5,000 are Kists, whose Muslim religion and ties with Chechnya to the north distinguish them from the predominantly Orthodox Christian populations in the rest of Georgia.

Other Valley residents, particularly in Sakobiano, are Pshavi or displaced Ossetians. Recent household-level surveying by PCL indicated that the proportion of Salafist Muslims is small but growing (7.2 percent) compared to the more traditional Sufism that still predominates. The small valley's residents are engaged primarily in subsistence agriculture and often depend on remittances. Pankisi Kists rely on a traditional and informal judicial and governance system led by an all-male Council of Elders rather than Georgian local governance structures. The area is known for being culturally closed, and notably few residents leave for economic opportunity.

The PCL theory of change in the cooperative agreement posited, *"If mutual understanding and appreciation of shared challenges improve within Kist communities and between Kist and ethnic Georgian communities, and interactions based on common social and economic interests increase, then conditions to improve social cohesion will form, collaboration to enhance economic investments will rise, and increased trust in and access to social and economic spaces to participate in will decrease tendencies to resort to violence and make communities more resilient to conflict."*

3. METHODOLOGY

The evaluation has employed a mixed methodology of quantitative and qualitative approaches. The team started with a comprehensive desk review of program documentation, followed by in-depth interviews, which were used to inform focus groups. Following the focus groups, the NORC team conducted a survey of 601 PITA YC members.

The team developed an Evaluation Matrix in the design phase to serve as a key guiding document for the evaluation. The comprehensive matrix in Annex B reflects the ET's learning from the document review phase and discussions within the team and with USAID/Georgia on optimal approaches for the evaluation. In the matrix, the ET has further elaborated and defined each EQ to indicate clearly how the team would approach each question and what information would be sought in each case.

QUALITATIVE DATA COLLECTION

The qualitative approach for this evaluation involved focus group discussions (FGD) and in-depth interviews (IDIs), in addition to a desk review. The mutually reinforcing qualitative strategies provided valuable information regarding how and why processes and dynamics influence the Georgia Integration program and its stakeholders.

DESK REVIEW

From the outset of the evaluation in January 2022, the ET has reviewed available documentation on the PITA and PCL activities produced by the implementing partners (IPs) and other parties, including surveyors and evaluators. Key documents included cooperative agreements and their modifications, activities' annual and final reports, annual work plans and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plans, survey

reports, and prior evaluation reports. The ET also reviewed relevant USAID documentation, such as the 2020–2025 CDCS; the 2020 Democracy, Human Rights and Governance Assessment; and the Notice of Funding Opportunity issued in late 2021 anticipating a new integration-focused activity.

As well, the ET conducted a review of external publications, including the Government of Georgia (GOG) *State Strategy for Civic Equality and Integration and Action Plan for 2015-2020*; *Caucasus Barometer* survey reports by the Caucasus Resource Research Center (CRRC); *Taking Georgia's Pulse* survey in late 2021 and the *Public Attitudes in Georgia* 2019 survey report (both supported by National Democratic Institute); and *Georgia's Minorities: Breaking Down Barriers to Integration* report of June 2021, funded by the Carnegie Endowment. Annex C presents a list of documents reviewed.

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

The ET conducted 39 IDIs among PITA and PCL stakeholders and other informants in March–April 2022, as well as seven brief phone interviews with informants targeted for specific inputs. Participants included USAID/Georgia personnel, IP staff and contractors, international agencies, Georgian NGOs, and relevant private sector actors and government officials (see Annex D for detailed breakdown), with the majority of IDIs taking place in person in Georgia. The ET used inputs from IPs and USAID staff as well as document review to identify candidates for IDIs as well as for FGDs. The selection process was based on purposive sampling to ensure the most relevant sources were prioritized while also taking into account the engagement of a diverse set of informants with a broad range of perspectives.

Interview guides were designed in advance of all IDIs, based generally on the EQs but tailored to elicit responses on subjects of most relevance to each informant. Two illustrative IDI guides are included in Annex E. The IDIs were conducted by the Principal Investigator (PI) and Local Subject Matter Expert in Georgian, Russian, or English, based on the informant's preference. In almost all cases, both of those ET members attended each interview, with one taking the lead in questioning and the other responsible for timekeeping and notetaking. Brief phone interviews were generally conducted by one evaluator. Detailed notes were taken at all interviews, supplemented by audio recordings when suitable.

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Focus groups offer an opportunity to discover rich information on complex questions related to modalities and activities and the environmental, organizational, and individual-level factors that may have shaped their views. The ET conducted 14 FGDs, each organized around a specific target population. Selection of participants involved choosing individuals from lists of different types of participants in the target geographic regions, using a random sampling approach where feasible. The participant categories were PITA Youth Task Force members (also YC members); YC coordinators; community leaders in YC towns; PITA Diversity Grant recipient CSOs; PCL grantee businesses; and PCL youth training and exchange participants.

IT, Research & Metadata Solutions (IRMS), the Tbilisi-based research partner, implemented FGDs, using expert moderators for facilitation. The FGDs drew on discussion guides comprising approximately 10–15 open-ended questions. (Annex F presents two illustrative examples of those guides.) Emerging data from IDIs partly informed the guides, to seek clarifications and probe deeper into specific subjects of interest. Depending on the nature of the group and specific purpose of the discussion, the ET designed guides to respond to specific EQs of most relevance to that group.

The FGDs were conducted in Georgian and in other languages as needed (for example, Armenian, Azeri, or Russian), lasted 90–120 minutes, and took place either online (six FGDs) or in person (eight FGDs). The ET Local Subject Matter Expert observed the initial set of FGDs for purposes of quality control and analysis. Discussions were audio recorded with participants' consent to ensure accurate understanding and transcription.

QUANTITATIVE DATA COLLECTION

SURVEY DESIGN

Document review showed that PITA had already surveyed both YC members and control groups of youth, including the most recent survey in mid 2021, which generated considerable useful data about the self-reported attitudes and behaviors of those youth, including how YC members appear to differ in important ways from their non-YC counterparts. On this basis, the ET decided to focus on exploring the reasons that YC members appear to be more tolerant, more accepting of integration, and more resistant to malign influences and disinformation. With this survey, we aimed to uncover how the PITA activity and YCs in particular may have influenced attitudes, behaviors and practices, and tolerance and inclusion, with a specific focus on the selected modalities and promotion of tolerance among other citizens of Georgia.

Survey questions were designed after preliminary analysis of the qualitative data, to ensure a sharp focus on areas where supplementary data was most needed and suitable. The final survey instrument consisted of 29 questions, including around 10 demographic and 20 substantive queries, and various multi-component questions.

The ET's local research partner IRMS conducted the survey, which aimed to reach a sample of 600 members across all 14 YCs in Georgia. Due to the COVID-19 situation in the country and logistical reasons, the team used a mixed-mode approach, combining Computer Assisted Telephone Interviews (CATI) or Computer Assisted Web-Interview (CAWI)/Computer-Assisted Self Interviewing (CASI) for this survey.

SAMPLING

The survey sample was based on a multistage stratified sampling approach with random selection at each stage. The team received contact lists of over 5,000 members of YCs from UNAG. From the list, we dropped 294 observations with missing contact information (no phone numbers and no email addresses). We stratified by YC location and allocated the sample proportionally by sex and age. Based on past research for ANI and PITA, IRMS and NORC prepared for a large share of contacts being unreachable. We therefore decided to randomly draw a list of potential respondents that was three times the target sample size (around 1,800).

TRAINING AND TESTING

NORC developed the survey instrument in English. Once finalized, IRMS translated it into Georgian, Armenian, and Azeri. Five enumerators were trained using survey materials and protocols via Zoom. All enumerators were experienced interviewers who had conducted over 20 data collection projects prior to this survey. The NORC team pretested the survey, followed by a cognitive testing conducted by

IRMS to ensure that the survey instrument made sense to YC members. On April 23–25, 2022, interviewers completed four interviews, including two Georgian speakers, one Armenian speaker, and one Azeri speaker. The pilot revealed no issues with the data collection instrument.

DATA COLLECTION

Data collection began on April 28 and was completed on May 15, 2022. First, IRMS sent 308 unique survey links to respondents whose email addresses were available in the lists provided by UNAG. Expecting a low response rate, IRMS started reaching out via CATI to other respondents for whom phone numbers were available. When the survey team was unable to reach a YC member, it randomly chose another YC member of comparable YC location, age, and gender.

FINAL DATA SET CHARACTERISTICS

Dispositions of all attempted and completed interviews were recorded, as summarized in Exhibit 1. The final data set consists of a sample of 601 respondents. The maximum margin of error for this survey is ±3.7 percent.

Exhibit 1: Disposition Summary

DISPOSITION	COUNT
Complete interviews	601
Partial interviews	0
Refusal and break off	86
No answer	712
Turned off	423
Wrong number	486
Didn't participate in YC	339
Call back (or questionnaire link was sent as per respondent request)	91
Total sample used	**2,824**

Due to our sampling approach, the sample mimics the YC member listing in terms of distribution by YC location, gender, and age. Exhibit 2 shows the distribution by YC, which reflects the heterogeneity in sizes of YCs, with the cohorts in Kutaisi and Tbilisi being the largest ones.

Exhibit 2:   Distribution of Respondents by YC

Kutaisi	16%
Ilia State University	13%
Tbilisi State University	10%
Ninotsminda	9%
Akhaltsikhe	7%
Gori	7%
Telavi	6%
Batumi	6%
Ozurgeti	5%
Akhalkalaki	5%
Zugdidi	5%
Gardabani	4%
Marneuli	4%
Dmanisi	1%
Don't know	3%
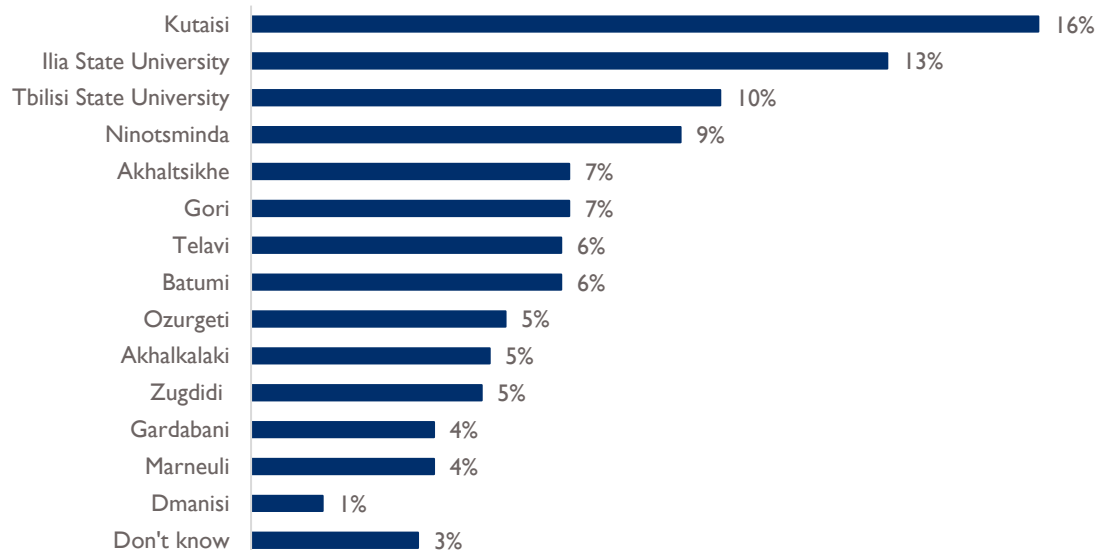
Note: N=601. Percentages do not add up to 100% due to some respondents having participated in more than one YC.

Notably, a significant majority of respondents (87 percent) reported they were no longer active members of any YC, while the remaining 13 percent perceived themselves as current members of a YC (Exhibit 3). This data should be considered in the context of PITA ending in June 2021, which means the YCs had had no USAID funding for almost a year at the time of the survey. Although qualitative data indicated that host organizations of most YCs continued to offer some support for YC members (such as space for meetings), YC activities had been much reduced and new recruitment of members had stopped. Most respondents (59 percent) participated in YCs for 1–2 years (Exhibit 3).

Exhibit 3:   YC Membership: Active vs. Former and Number of Years

Active members 13%

Former members 87%

Under 1 year	1 year	2 years	3 years	4 and more years
9%	34%	25%	17%	14%
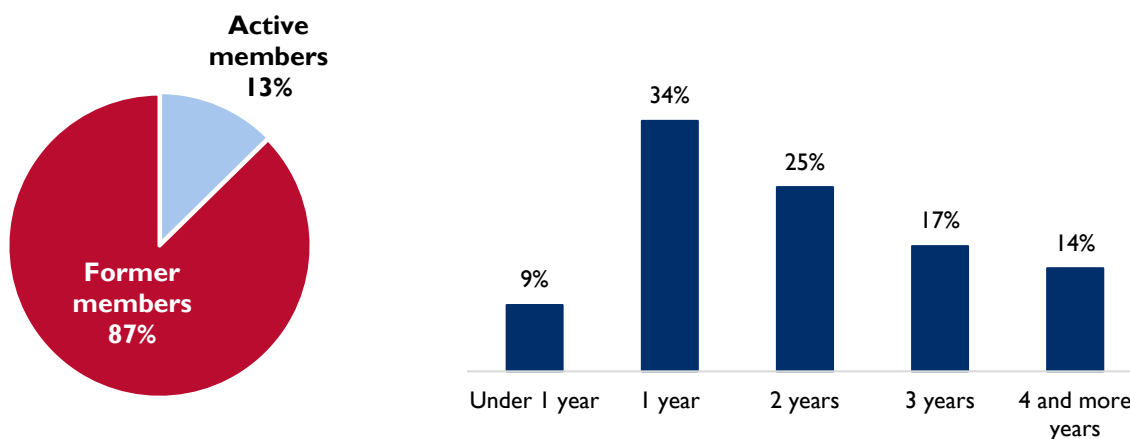
N=601(left) and 527 (right)

As shown in Exhibit 4, there are significantly more females compared to males among the respondents (66 vs. 34 percent). The majority of respondents (74 percent) are currently between 18 and 25 years old.

Exhibit 4:   Age and Sex Distribution of Respondents
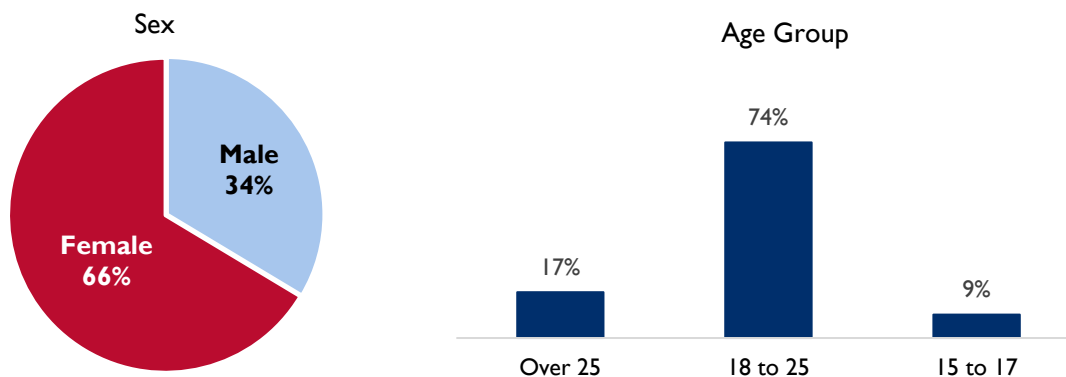
N=601

The majority of respondents in our sample are of Georgian ethnicity (64 percent), while ethnic Armenians represent 21 percent and Azeris 14 percent (Exhibit 5).

Exhibit 5:   Ethnicity of Respondents

N=601

Most respondents (60 percent) reside in urban areas, while 37 percent live in rural areas, and the remaining 3 percent are in semiurban areas (Exhibit 6).

Exhibit 6:   Type of Area of Residence of Respondents

N=601

DATA ANALYSIS

For selected key IDIs and all FGDs, NORC's qualitative analysts coded transcripts using a deductive coding scheme in Dedoose qualitative analysis software. The coding scheme was developed using an iterative testing process to ensure inter-rater reliability. The coding allowed for the extraction of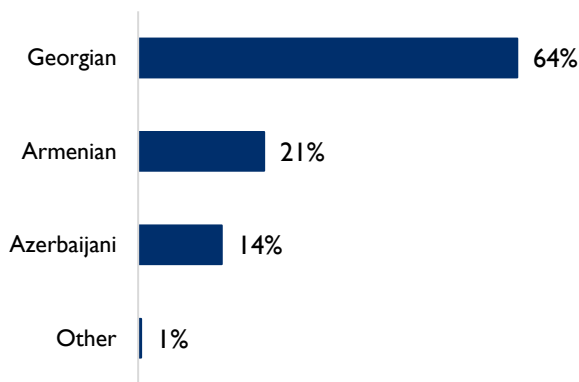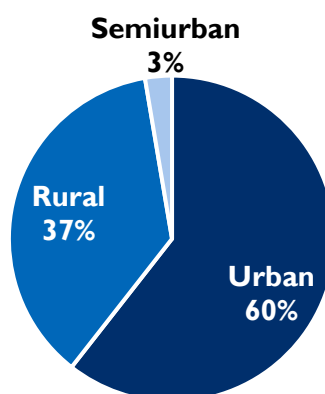 relevant excerpts by theme and evaluation question. These excerpts were analyzed to find points of convergence and divergence among respondents and to extract information to answer the EQs. Illustrative quotes to demonstrate viewpoints were identified as appropriate to enrich the findings.

The NORC team used a hybrid approach in which some IDIs were analyzed using a data matrix organized by evaluation question and various sub-themes because content analysis using Dedoose is best suited for transcripts, rather than interviewer notes. IDIs were categorized for analysis using these two methods based on three criteria: 1) whether the interview was recorded; 2) whether a high-quality transcript was available (see limitations section for a note on transcript quality); and 3) whether the knowledge of the informant and kind of information provided meant that it was important to showcase the respondents' own words verbatim. Twenty-one IDIs and 14 FGDs were analyzed using content analysis in Dedoose, while 16 IDIs and 5 brief interviews were analyzed using other methods.

NORC analyzed the quantitative data using STATA. Cross-tabulations of data and regression analysis were done based on consultations with the ET members collecting qualitative data, as the body of evidence emerged and new angles of inquiry appeared. The survey, FGD, and IDI data were used to establish converging lines of evidence (triangulated) with the reviewed documents to ensure the findings were as robust and accurate as possible. The ET integrated data from this variety of approaches and sources into coherent conclusions and recommendations by aggregating and synthesizing findings.

EVALUATION LIMITATIONS

Despite the multidimensional methodology, we identified some limitations inherent to the design and context of this evaluation:

- ***Focus on two very distinct projects, neither entirely focused on tolerance, integration, and resilience.*** Inherent in the nature of this thematic evaluation was the coverage of two projects that

used very different methods to work in quite distinct communities. While a certain amount of overlap existed between their objectives and methods, the differences were greater than the similarities. This entailed additional time and effort to gain an in-depth understanding of project details and stakeholders, and a division of the total informants into "PITA-aware" and "PCL-aware," as very few were positioned to comment on both. As well, because certain elements of each project were not relevant to this evaluation, it was at times challenging for the ET and interviewees to maintain focus on the aspects of key interest.

- *Social desirability, or halo bias.* Respondents may have under-reported socially undesirable answers and altered their responses to approximate what they perceived as the social norm. The extent to which respondents were prepared to reveal their true opinions may also have varied for questions that called upon them to assess the attitudes and perceptions of their peers or people upon whom they depend for employment, funding, or services. To mitigate, the ET provided appropriate confidentiality, anonymity, and data protection assurances to all respondents. As well, questions were worded to avoid suggesting the most desirable or expected responses.

  One specific manifestation of this type of bias was expected and observed when interviewing informants who had some stake in the outcome of the USAID/Georgia solicitation for a Civic and Economic Integration Activity, for which the Request for Applications was issued in November 2021. The IPs of both PITA and PCL are bidders under that solicitation, and various other Georgian stakeholders, such as project partners and subject matter experts, also have an interest in the pending project. Since the award is still pending, the responses of a significant proportion of individuals interviewed via IDIs and some involved in FGDs may have been influenced by this factor. This was especially evident in the uniformly very high ratings given by IP staff when assessing the effectiveness of various core project activities. For this reason, the ET has opted not to utilize those ratings in its analysis.

- *Recall bias.* The elapsed time since certain activities were conducted and since programming ended appeared to have a negative effect on accurate recall by some informants of the relevant interventions funded by USAID and their effects, strong and weak points, etc. Some appeared to have difficulty remembering specifics and distinguishing interventions or outputs supported by PITA/PCL from other projects. This was especially evident for informants familiar with both PITA and ANI and those involved in both PCL and Zrda project (both implemented by Chemonics, with some staffing overlap). This created difficulties for the ET in some areas of analysis, where it became clear that informants had not differentiated between projects, e.g. the confusion over summer camps, which were organized under ANI but replaced by PITA with another type of youth gathering.

- *COVID-19 pandemic.* Georgia experienced its fifth peak of the COVID-19 virus in February 2022. Fortunately, numbers declined by the time of data collection, and no curfews or travel restrictions affected the evaluation. As a result, in-person meetings were possible in most situations, based on the informants' preferences. However, the pandemic did influence the decision to use remote methods for the survey, which may have hampered respondents' comprehension of certain questions or terms and limited the ability of interviewers to pick up on non-verbal cues that clarifications may be required. All research staff diligently used best practices recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to minimize the chance of transmission in the course of data collection.

- *War in Ukraine and political destabilization in Georgia.* The outbreak of war in Ukraine shocked most European countries—especially those sharing aspirations to integrate with Euro-Atlantic structures. Although the ET faced some early delays in responses of IPs and their ability to concentrate on research issues under the circumstances, there appeared to be no significant effect on the evaluation.

- *Project progress reports and indicator data.* Progress reporting by both implementers was less than optimal, making it difficult to discern outcomes and interpret the significance of the various activities described. This was exacerbated by monitoring indicators that were either poorly defined, poorly understood, or poorly tracked/reported, or some combination of those failings. Few indicators aimed to measure outcomes. The implications for the evaluation were that annual and final reports, which would ideally be a valuable source of information on results and lessons learned, provided only a limited amount of useful data.

- *Transcription of IDIs for Dedoose analysis.* Since the evaluation budget did not support English language transcription by human transcribers, the interview audios in English had to be run through machine transcription software, which resulted in poor-quality transcripts. Thus, the analysis team relied on interviewer notes for English language interviews and could not refer to the respondents' own verbatim words.

- The **hybrid approach of machine and traditional analysis** of IDI and FGD data posed a challenge for synthesizing data and meant that different forms of analysis fed into the findings for this report, which could detract from overall flow and cohesiveness. As well, some IDIs could not be recorded, therefore we relied on interviewer notes instead of the respondent's own verbatim words, which could have introduced bias or inaccuracies through paraphrasing.

By taking remedial measures where possible, the ET minimized the impact of these challenges on data collection and analysis to ensure reliable results.

4. FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

In this section, the key data related to each of the core EQs and sub-questions are presented.

EVALUATION QUESTION 1: EFFECTIVENESS OF MODALITIES

1.a) To what extent have the four selected engagement modalities as used by PITA and PCL enhanced tolerance and integration of ethnic, linguistic, and religious minorities and resilience to malign external influence among the specific individuals who were directly involved in those USAID-funded interventions?

Before discussing specific findings related to the selected modalities, the effects of **the COVID-19 pandemi**c since early 2020 should be underlined. The pandemic restrictions had a limiting effect on implementation and monitoring of both projects, though PCL was more affected due to its short duration; approximately half of its three-year implementation period was spent under COVID-19 constraints (compared to PITA's six years). Both IPs adapted by adjusting certain approaches and moving activities online when feasible, but the reach of many activities was hampered (including limiting

participation by those without easy access to Internet), the effectiveness of activities may have been reduced, and in-person follow-up and monitoring processes were often not possible.

Another cross-cutting observation is that although these two projects had a great deal in common in terms of their stated objectives, the IPs and their teams appeared to have almost no interaction or exchange of experience. This includes modalities with which PITA had considerable experience prior to the start of PCL, such as youth camps and grant-making to community organizations. There is no evidence that PITA learning and methods were shared with the PCL team, via USAID intervention or otherwise.

MODALITY A. TRAININGS AND EXCHANGE ACTIVITIES FOR YOUTH

This modality encompassed various learning activities and related interactions focused on promoting tolerance and integration related to minorities and/or resilience to malign influence ("TIR"), especially among youth.

PITA's training for YC members was a centerpiece of the project, described by the IP as laying the foundation for the wider package of activities aimed at informing and mobilizing youth in their target areas, which went well beyond TIR subjects. Training topics were wide-ranging based on different priorities in diverse population areas, but basic training on rights and diversity was standardized, and tolerance and inclusion themes were reportedly integrated in many training events as cross-cutting topics. Media literacy topics aimed at limiting the impact of external propaganda and misinformation were ramped up in the training agenda during the second half of PITA, as they became of greater interest to USAID.

Training relied largely on participatory methods, often including follow-up activities to share or apply training content (such as peer education and civic projects). As a result, it was difficult for informants and monitoring data to separate the effects of training from other linked activities in which youth participated. One informant from UNAG offered the view that **only 30 or 40 percent of the overall impact of the YCs was due to training itself**, as the other elements were vital to achieving results as part of PITA's holistic approach.

When asked about training effects on YC members, informants both internal and external to PITA highlighted individual success stories, providing considerable anecdotal evidence of certain participants becoming "model citizens" after their involvement, although there was no clear connection to training or any other modality. Informants noted that the **informal education provided by PITA was an important complement to the school system, providing key life skills, boosting self-confidence, and enhancing critical-thinking skills**. One parent in an FGD remarked that: "*This program assisted my child in developing critical thinking skills, civic responsibility, approaching any issue from a nondogmatic point of view, and becoming accustomed to multidimensional thinking.*" In terms of tolerance specifically, it was said that YC members in majority Georgian communities "*had their eyes opened*" via training and related activities to the challenges faced by ethnic and religious minorities. Informants also indicated that media literacy training for young people was a key element, as they can readily adopt skills and knowledge that allow for recognition and rejection of fake news and propaganda, thus limiting its spread and impact.

The PITA final survey of over 2,000 youth indicated that **YC members perceived themselves as much more tolerant than the control group of nonparticipants, although attribution to training or other activities was not possible.** FGD data gathered for this evaluation also showed that YC members see themselves as more tolerant, although discussions suggested that some members still held an attitude of merely accepting those who are different from themselves or their peers, without necessarily fully embracing the equality of all ethnic and religious groups.

PITA formulated two key questions for YC members that tracked perceptions regarding civic activism and tracked them through baseline, annual participant surveys,[3] and endline: a. "*Do you agree/disagree that diversity strengthens/weakens the country?*" and b. "*Do you believe you can make a difference?*". All questions used a scale of 1–1,0 and results were disaggregated by year, gender, ethnic belonging, and key modalities. UNAG provided analysis of the life-of-project data to the ET, as shown in Exhibit 7 below. Response patterns indicated that training courses and seminars were rated lower than several other types of activities, although 8.17 and 8.20 were still positive scores out of 10. It should be kept in mind that this data relates to <u>all</u> training organized under PITA for YC members, which went well beyond the TIR subjects that are the focus of this evaluation.

Exhibit 7:   YC Member Perceptions of Effects of Diversity and Ability to Influence Change
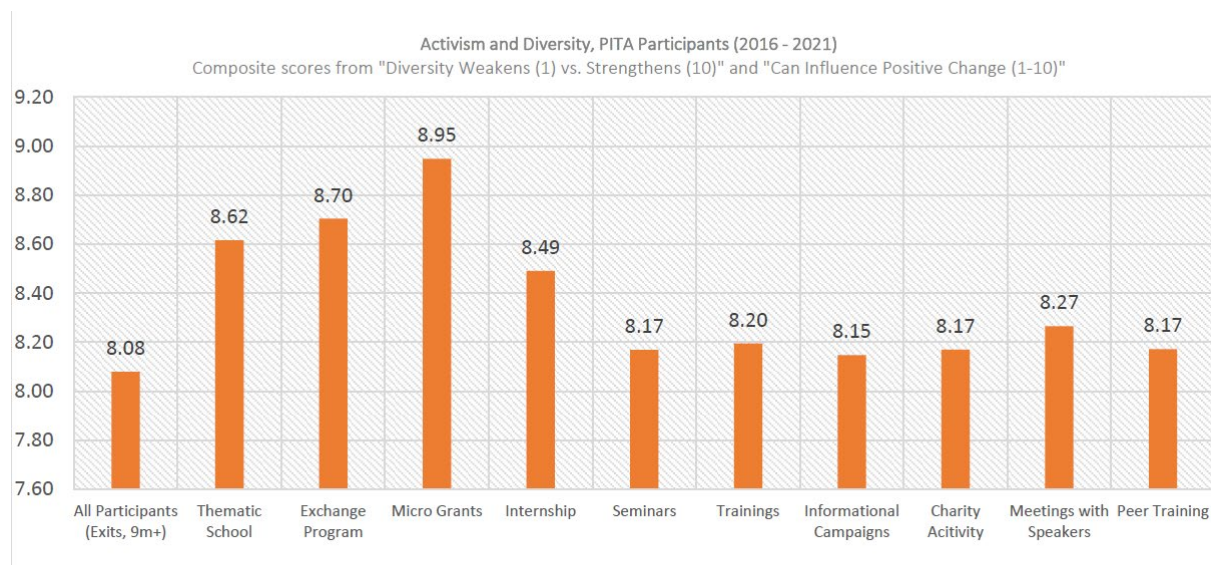
Source: Data summary provided by UNAG, undated.

Similarly, the survey of 601 past and present YC members conducted for this evaluation indicated that **training usually ranked lower than other types of PITA-supported activities** in terms of influence on the respondents' attitudes or behaviors related to tolerance and integration, although more than 90 percent still considered that training had either moderate or strong influence (Exhibit 8).

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[3] PITA administered entry and exit questionnaires once every year. The questionnaires included self-reported duration of membership in the YC, as well as self-reported participation in different PITA modalities. The project regarded 0–3 months of membership as "entry" and 9–12 months as "exits" due to the difficulty of surveying youth after they were no longer actively engaged in the YC.

Exhibit 8:   Influence of YC activities on respondents' own attitudes or behaviors related to tolerance and integration of societal groups and disinformation/hate speech[4]
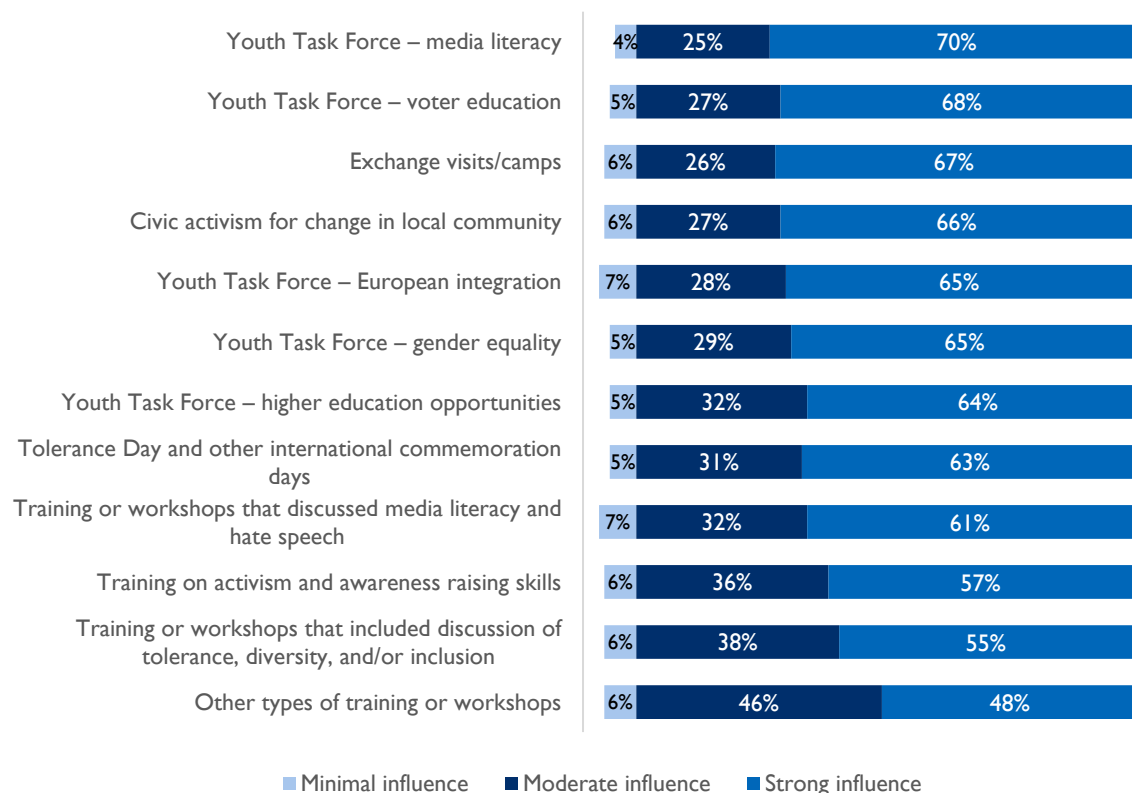
Note: N is between 202 and 426.

With respect to immediate or subsequent changes in actual knowledge or understanding of specific subject matter, the ET found that assessments or measurement of learning via training activities were not systematically carried out for most PITA training. Trainers and staff described feedback discussions that were primarily oriented toward assessing satisfaction and interest levels of participants so as to inform subsequent events, as compared to measurement of learning levels.

The PITA mid-term evaluation made the following observation that bears on the question of efficacy of YC training.

> *"Many youth expressed strong appreciation for the personal advancement opportunities afforded by the YCs, ranging from academic support to information and guidance about scholarships or academic exchange programs to career development opportunities. Indeed, these individual advancement*

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[4] During analysis of evaluation survey data, it was noted that the proportion of respondents indicating participation in Youth Task Forces on different topics was higher than expected, given that only 242 of more than 5,000 YC members were listed by UNAG as having been members of those task forces. This could be due to a misunderstanding of terminology, recall bias or social desirability bias, or a combination thereof. This discrepancy should be kept in mind when considering evaluation survey data related to the task forces.

opportunities, along with social interaction with peers, often seemed to be the major factors attracting youth to the centers—as well as securing the support of their parents—more than a specific interest in diversity or inclusion across ethnic and religious lines. However, in the process, students eventually come to discover and embrace the values of diversity, multiculturalism, and tolerance almost as a byproduct of the personal advancement."

PCL took a distinct approach to training of youth (and other participants) in the Pankisi Valley, which did not directly address issues of diversity and inclusion but rather aimed to erode barriers between different ethnic groups in the Valley by gathering them together in cohorts for various training subjects. One informant close to PCL commented that "*improving skills was a secondary goal,*" i.e. less important than promoting integration and harmony. Consistently achieving a mix of ethnic groups in training cohorts was seen as challenging, since Kists are the largest single ethnic group in the area.

Much of the youth-focused training was delivered by PCL's civil society grantees, some of whom observed in interviews that quality and **impact of training was compromised by short grant durations and amounts**, which were not conducive to effective learning. One grantee representative observed about a course that ended in just four months: "*We just breathed once, and it was over.*" Training topics ranged widely, from English language to sewing and from business skills to dancing.

Several informants highlighted English study as having enabled students to achieve greater integration in Georgian society, though the English programming funded by PCL was only a fraction of the overall offering by Roddy Scott Foundation, the grantee focused on that subject. Informants in the Valley underlined the **lack of vocational training** in subjects typically of interest to males; PCL staff explained this was related to lack of suitable facilities and equipment, which resulted in a focus on sewing and other skills more popular with females. Several interviewees observed that it was difficult to engage males (especially older ones) in <u>any</u> kind of training activity, as they showed little interest in what was offered.

Participants in one FGD of PCL youth trainees felt that topics were not designed based on their interests and mentioned that some attended "*just to be polite.*" Project monitoring captured little data about participant learning acquired via training, whether delivered by grantees or others:

> *"The final survey didn't capture the numbers of those who applied the new skills. We were keeping in touch with most beneficiaries but not tracking numbers of how many persons applied those skills in some way."* (PCL staff member)

Informants observed that **the transition to online training and other activities due to COVID-19 hampered the PCL approach considerably**, as Georgian and Kist (and other) participants from the Valley were not able to physically meet for a significant period of implementation. Thus, the anticipated level of personal interaction was not possible. Data from PCL's final beneficiary survey showed that 31 percent of youth training participants considered that training supported building friendly relations among the participants—a relatively low proportion, possibly affected by the switch to online training. When asked if they would like to increase their connection with different ethnic groups (in future), the majority (95 percent female and 74 percent male) confirmed that they would, and 83 percent said that PCL had a significant impact on the improvement of relationships between Kists and Georgians (although not specifically tied to training activities).

This modality also encompassed **youth camps, exchange visits (PITA), and excursions (PCL)**. Informants consistently considered that both youth camps and exchange visits (which involved individuals going to stay with a family in another region, typically majority youth to minority area or vice versa) had a significant positive impact on participants in terms of tolerance and integration. That finding is consistent with the high level of influence assigned to these activities by YC members surveyed for this evaluation, as shown above in Exhibit 8.[5]

Several informants expressed regret that there were fewer of these two types of activities during PITA than during its predecessor, ANI. Only 125 YC members were sent on exchange visits over the six years of PITA implementation, and 140 went to thematic schools that took the place of camps under PITA. A UNAG staff member explained that: "*USAID didn't want us to increase the number of exchange activities and camps. That was mainly due to the risks of frequent travel ... but we did not stop either.*"

Several informants pointed out that **exchange visits had the advantage of a ripple effect on the hosting family and community**, as the youth visitor had prolonged contact with various residents, although camps were excellent for promoting interactions among a diverse set of youth of various ethnicities in a collegial environment. One observed: "*Cultural familiarity was the biggest plus of exchanges. It undermines the myths; they realize the differences and similarities.*" For both modalities, personal connections were emphasized as key to the advancement of tolerance and integration. When YC coordinators in two FGDs were asked to rank six core activities of PITA, six out of seven selected the exchange visits with homestays as having the most important and sustainable impact on participants— double the votes given to any other activity on the list.

PITA's final survey found that YC members were more likely to report having friends from different ethnic, religious, or sexual identity groups, compared to the control group of nonparticipants—which for some may be linked to camps/thematic schools or exchanges. The PITA mid-term evaluation underlined this conclusion with respect to exchange visits in particular, naming them as the most valuable activity in the eyes of YC coordinators and members. Exchange visits were the second-highest-rated activity (after micro-grants), according to amalgamated data from PITA's surveys of YC members, as seen in Exhibit 8 above.

PCL was only able to organize one youth camp via a community grantee organization before COVID restrictions were imposed. However, it generated widely positive feedback about friendly relations that were engendered between Kist and Georgian participants and between boys and girls as well. It was held in the Pankisi Valley with only local residents, to minimize resistance from parents. One organizer considered that the **single camp had more effect on promoting integration than all of the PCL training for youth**. Participants of FGDs conducted by contractor Development Evaluation and Progress Assessment Consulting Ltd. (DEPA) at the end of PCL highlighted the importance of joint

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[5] It must be noted that the summer camp modality used in ANI was replaced by "thematic schools" in PITA, which were smaller (25–40 instead of 100+ participants) and focused on developing specific knowledge of participants to act as multipliers and activists as compared to social interaction aimed at enhancing tolerance and integration. Unaware that camps had been completely phased out by PITA, the ET continued to use that terminology during data collection—as did informants, including from UNAG. It is unclear whether they did not recall that camps had not taken place since ANI or if they considered that thematic schools were equivalent to camps.

summer camps as an effective way of connecting Georgian and Kist youth.[6] A camp organizer reported hearing a male participant of Georgian ethnicity say to his Kist counterparts: "*It is good to know you better: you are not killers.*"

PCL did not organize any exchange visits for youth to stay with families in other villages but instead conducted several excursions of youth to Tbilisi. Both internal and external informants described these visits as an important opportunity for Pankisi youth to see the capital (some for the first time), but they were hard pressed to specify what benefits had been gained. A PCL staff member summed this up as follows:

> "*I don't know what the effect is exactly. But bringing the youngsters to travel with their peers outside the Gorge was worth it.*"

Another person close to PCL commented that while excursions were positive, they could have had more impact by involving more youth from other regions and including home stays. However, commenters mentioned challenges with obtaining consent from parents in conservative communities (both receiving and sending youth) as a constraint on future exchange visits outside the Valley, especially given the negative stereotypes that often are assigned to the Pankisi population.

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[6] DEPA presented the overall findings, conclusions, and recommendations of its PCL-related research in a detailed report titled "Final Evaluation of the Project USAID Pankisi Community Links Activity in Georgia," dated July 31, 2021. However, the ET was advised that DEPA was not engaged by either PCL or USAID as a project evaluator as such, so the document may be more accurately described as a research report.

MODALITY B. YOUTH TASK FORCES

This modality focused on a specific approach developed by PITA to ramp up outreach to smaller communities, as detailed in the text box.

Youth Task Force Concept

In 2017, PITA Program designed Youth Task Forces as an innovative way to raise awareness across remote communities (including in regions dominated by ethnic minorities) on six diverse issues, including Georgia's Euro-Atlantic choice, higher and vocational education opportunities for ethnic minorities, gender equality, voter education, media literacy, and legal aid. This was intended to combat the limited access to mainstream communication channels that affects remote and other areas where fluency in Georgian language is variable.

New task forces were trained each year, and a specific topic was promoted by PITA with this method. Each cycle began with selection of young leaders from PITA's Youth Centers, who were provided with intensive training of trainers (TOT) by teams of experts and assigned as volunteer members of a certain task force. TOTs imparted both substantive knowledge and pedagogical skills to participants. In all, 242 YC members were trained, including 60 who served on more than one task force. Generally, the task force members worked in pairs, one belonging to an ethnic minority (speaking either Armenian or Azerbaijani) and the other ethnically Georgian, in order to connect well with diverse communities and make presentations in two languages as needed. Depending on the topic, target audiences were usually schoolchildren and teachers, with a lesser focus on parents and community leaders. The Ministry of Education facilitated access to public schools. In all, Youth Task Forces conducted over 1,200 informational events, reaching an estimated 25,000 people across the country, concentrated in remote areas and villages compactly settled by ethnic minorities.

Interviews and FGDs (including four FGDs with task force members) indicated **that task force outcomes were of two distinct categories: effects on target audiences and effects on the task force members themselves.** With respect to target audiences, many informants expressed broadly positive views of this approach. As an informant from USAID explained: "*They could bring policy issues to life, take the messages to the people at grassroots who are hard to reach.*" Informants offered consistent praise for the approach of sending young task force members to their own regions and municipalities of origin as a way of opening doors and minds and leveraging the bond between audiences and someone of their own area and own ethnicity. This was particularly noted in relation to gender equality, the first topic taken up by task forces, where young women of Azeri ethnicity were perceived to have made strong impacts on their counterparts in Kvemo Kartli region. PITA reporting indicated a significant uptick in reporting of domestic violence to a hotline tracked by another USAID project, and government informants described positive changes in awareness of women's rights in minority-dominated regions, in the rate of early marriages, and in the number of applicants for the 1+4 university program for non-Georgian speakers; these were seen as due in part to PITA's task forces.

The ET enquired specifically about the effectiveness of youth as messengers on these important and complex subjects. The majority of informants opined that **youth were the most suitable for transmitting this information to both young and older audiences**, based on their high motivation and openness to new ideas. However, voices of dissent were heard as well, especially in

relation to approaching teachers on the subject of misinformation from Russia. Considerable challenges were faced in targeting teachers with new information and ideas, although when repeated visits to the same schools were possible, it was reported that resistance was gradually overcome. Media literacy was seen as a subject on which youth were especially well positioned to inform others, given that the younger generation tends to have a higher level of familiarity with information technology and social media. However, some suggested that a diverse group including older team members could be more effective, especially on certain topics, and expressed concern that the Task Force influence on the older generation had been minimal.

In spite of the general positivity, **it was difficult for informants to point to measurable or observable change in tolerance, integration, and/or resilience** to malign influence among the targeted audiences in communities. One informant close to the YCs commented that:

> "*We don't know if the audience liked or not. If they liked—what then? It was like showing a carrot and snatching away, these were one-off events… The teams generally did not return to the same villages.*"

Multiple informants, including Task Force members via FGDs, echoed concern about the scattershot nature of these activities. They observed some encouraging changes in attitudes due to their work in villages, while noting that "*our efforts were insignificant, and achieving better effects will necessitate more effort and more coverage.*" Their doubts were echoed by YC coordinators; only one of seven FGD participants selected task forces as having important and durable results, far behind other key approaches, such as local peer education activities, civic activism, and exchange visits.

Several **informants highlighted the increased engagement with the Ministry of Education** via this modality, which had not previously featured prominently in PITA's and ANI's work via the YCs (with bureaucratic processes often cited as a key limitation). Informants expressed mixed feelings in this respect, with some underlining the benefits of closer ties with the Ministry (enabling easier access and greater collaboration with schools as a means of reaching more children and youth), while others were concerned about how schools in some cases obligated pupils to attend PITA events and imposed a more rigid structure. Informants observed an unintended benefit in some schools, where teachers showed great interest in the pedagogical style of the task force presentations and reportedly learned a more participatory or dynamic approach from that example.

Several interviewees directed the ET's attention to the **USAID-funded civic education activity** called *Momavlis Taoba*, which operated in 480 schools countrywide from 2014 to 2021 (a new follow-on activity was recently launched by the same IP[7]), in collaboration with 11 regional partner NGOs. Targeting students age 15 to 18, the purpose was to: 1) promote greater civic engagement of young people; and 2) enhance civil society's role in promoting transparent and accountable governance by expanding and institutionalizing secondary school civics education curricula and practical applications. Momavlis Taoba produced various manuals and other materials for pupils and teachers to guide their civic engagement both within and outside the school walls and included tolerance and integration

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[7] The new USAID Civic Education Program has three main directions, according to staff: 1) To introduce democratic culture in schools; 2) to involve private sector as a supporter of school democracy and civic education; and 3) to support students to use technology in civic education. The first objective is carried forward from Momavlis Taoba, albeit with a broader focus, while the latter two objectives are new.

themes in some activities. Several informants suggested that **synergies could have been developed between PITA and that project** in order to leverage the knowledge, materials, and contacts of each. The evaluation team found no evidence that any meaningful interaction or sharing had taken place between these two interventions.

Turning to the second key aspect of Youth Task Forces, the ET noted a **high level of consensus and enthusiasm among informants regarding the benefits flowing to task force members** through their participation. Informants across the board emphasized that members had developed better skills in participatory awareness-raising and public speaking, increased levels of confidence, and strong bonds via extensive teamwork with their fellow Task Force members (including across ethnic lines). The ET heard repeated comments from FGD participants, such as:

> *"Training made us connect. We learned about different topics, other views, and attitudes from each other."*

> *"The experience gained there helped me become more social and more integrated into society. Moreover, I got more comfortable and self-confident when communicating with various organizations. It had a lot of positive aspects."*

Some were noted to have gone on to other types of success.

> *"Task forces had a significant influence on youth. It was a motivation for all parties. Some continued working in non-formal education, and some established NGOs. A few even won the project of USAID, visited US, and several beneficiaries became coordinators of YCs."*

Although these "secondary effects" were limited to the 275 youth who served as task force members, and probably varied based on the extent of their involvement and other factors, they are very relevant to topics explored under EQ 2, with respect to USAID support to youth promoting tolerance and the inkblot or ripple effects on other members of society.

MODALITY C. INTERNSHIPS

Under this modality, the report will consider two very different types of internship, both under the auspices of PITA: ethnic minority student internships with government since 2017 and PITA-organized internships with private sector entities in the final year of the project.

Government Internships

This internship program is generally viewed as a PITA success story, as a project-led initiative that was later adopted by the national government and institutionalized under the auspices of the SMR, which continues to administer the internships in collaboration with other government entities. According to the concept description, the goal was "*encouraging employment of representatives of ethnic minorities in Georgia to promote their involvement and civil integration.*" These internships are available exclusively to participants of the government's 1+4 program for ethnic minority students who are not fluent in Georgian, with the first year of university study dedicated to boosting their language skills. They were designed to complement the general government internship program,

because these students would usually not be able to successfully compete against ethnic Georgians and other native speakers for those opportunities.

PITA reports indicate that from 2017 to 2019, 295 interns were placed with a wide range of national and local government host institutions. Placements were suspended in early 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The diverse hosts ranged from the Ministry of Justice (national and decentralized offices) to various municipal administrations, while a significant proportion of interns worked in schools. These unpaid internships were usually for a period of three months.

Informants underlined that **these internships were important opportunities for minority students to gain work experience**, both for the exposure to a workplace environment and for the addition to their curricula vitae. This was also a chance to try out working in a particular type of work or sector, before deciding on a career path. As one informant close to the program noted:

> *"This program addresses the fundamental exclusion of minorities from employment… It makes the soil fertile for more integration, less isolation from society in general."*

However, the program garnered considerable criticism from informants; **many said there was little evidence confirming interns' access to employment opportunities**—either with the same entity or another employer. Repeated attempts—by a researcher engaged by PITA/SMR to conduct an early review of the initiative in 2019, by Tolerance Center staff, and by this ET—failed to obtain data from the SMR on the number of interns subsequently employed by the government in some capacity. This is apparently due to the lack of a cross-cutting human resources system within government that could capture this kind of data.
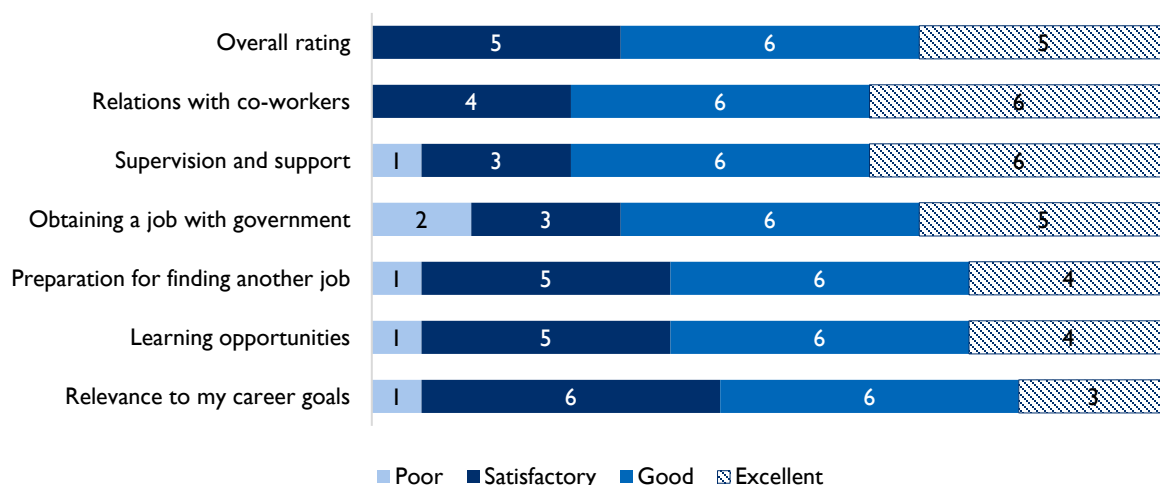
This data gap obviously limited the possibility of determining the effect of internships on employment (a stated goal of the program) and integration. **The general consensus among informants was that few interns were, in fact, offered jobs by their host institutions; whether true or not, the perception alone was reported to ultimately undermine the motivation level of prospective interns,** who hope for not only work experience but also real job prospects. Informants referred repeatedly to the "mismatch of expectations" between interns and hosts, who were seen as not considering interns as future employees and often were not paying sufficient attention to ensuring a learning experience. Few ethnic minority students were placed outside their areas of origin, as the only budget available for related expenses was US$5,000 annually from PITA; this presented a limitation to the integration objective of the program, as experience with other ethnicities and regions was not being actively promoted.

In terms of feedback from interns, the 2019 assessment contracted by PITA observed that SMR was gathering data from interns via an evaluation form on completion, but that tool focused on social skills rather than professional learning or integration, and no follow-ups were made to verify later effects on employment opportunities. It does not appear that SMR adopted the various recommendations of that assessment in this respect. One UNAG staffer estimated that only 3 percent of interns were dissatisfied with their experience but admitted they only reviewed feedback forms "*to spot issues; we did not analyze overall across the interns to see trends.*" The YC members surveyed for this evaluation included 34 who

indicated they had participated in these internships.[8] Of the minority interns, about half were Armenian and half were of Azeri ethnicity.

Although our survey sample did not include a large number of interns, their ratings of the internship experience are nevertheless informative. **Four out of 16 minority participants of government internships reported being employed by the same institution** or entity after the internship. Generally speaking, their views of the experience were positive, with few assigning "poor" on any parameter, and the majority choosing either good or excellent on all parameters (Exhibit 9).

Exhibit 9:   Internship Experience Ratings (among 16 minority government interns)

	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent
Overall rating		5	6	5
Relations with co-workers		4	6	6
Supervision and support	1	3	6	6
Obtaining a job with government	2	3	6	5
Preparation for finding another job	1	5	6	4
Learning opportunities	1	5	6	4
Relevance to my career goals	1	6	6	3

■ Poor   ■ Satisfactory   ■ Good   ▨ Excellent

N=16

A source familiar with the internships and SMR's work commented as follows on the limited scope of these internships in relation to the significant cross-cutting challenges to integration of minorities:

> "*Only this one element cannot surely increase level of political participation of ethnic minorities as it is reflected in state strategy and relevant action plan. When we are talking about political, economic, and social participation of minorities in our country and then look at the relevant strategy and action plan, we see that the only way of multidimensional integration is an internship. That is absolutely not enough.*"

The overall consensus among informants was well summed up by one informant from an external organization: "***This is worth continuing, BUT they have to encourage the employment side.***"

Private Sector Internships

This initiative was launched in the 2020–21 extension year of PITA, as a pilot to test the waters of youth internships with the Georgian business sector. PITA staff developed the concept and guidelines with

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[8] Eighteen respondents indicating Georgian ethnicity indicated they had participated in this internship program aimed at minority students, which suggests a misunderstanding of the question. Analysis focused on the respondents who indicated non-Georgian ethnicity.

inputs from USAID contractors more familiar with the private sector and networked with business associations to identify host companies. The **stated purpose in the concept was to help young people acquire the skills needed in the labor market** and thus improve their employment prospects. As one PITA partner explained: "*Every employer is asking for experience, and this experience is not falling from the sky. You need to build this somehow. And these internships are a good tool....*"

Interns were recruited and screened with significant effort by PITA based on the needs of the hosts—if possible, placing YC members, who constituted about 60 percent of the 29 interns ultimately placed. PITA provided job readiness training and subsidized 80 percent of the modest salaries for these internships, which lasted three to six months. Eleven companies participated, with three playing a dominant role by engaging 17 of the interns. On completion of internships, **approximately a third (10 interns) were hired as staff** by their respective host companies. Due to PITA ending, no further data were available on subsequent employment of other interns.

The pilot was considered successful from various perspectives, including host companies, some of which had a pre-existing practice of engaging interns. The pandemic imposed serious constraints on profitability at the relevant time, so these companies welcomed the chance to have heavily subsidized additional staff through PITA. Interviews with representatives of three host companies indicated they were satisfied with the quality of interns and open to more such internships. The **interviews also explored their willingness to engage interns from minority groups in future; all three said they had absolutely no objection, provided that interns were qualified to perform the work and there was no additional cost to the company** (for example, for transport or accommodation).

Although a heading in the modification of PITA's cooperative agreement with USAID refers to "minority internships," there were no other references to these placements being focused on minority youth. In reality, all 29 interns were placed in cities where the Georgian majority is predominant (and where interns resided), and only one appeared to be of minority ethnicity. Thus, **there was no evidence of tolerance or integration being promoted either in the design or the implementation of this component, which limited its relevance to this evaluation**.[9]

MODALITY D: GRANTS

The ET analyzed three distinct types of grants to study their potential contribution to TIR themes. The first two, business grants and community grants, were administered by PCL, while diversity grants were a PITA component.

PCL Business Grants

Two sub-types of grants were awarded by PCL to businesses based in the Pankisi Valley:

- Seventy-seven **small value chain grants** up to $3,250 to support local entrepreneurs with technological or equipment upgrades, input purchasing, process improvements, market research,

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[9] The concept note developed by UNAG to describe the goals and methods for these internships included only one reference to ethnicity of interns, as follows: **Note**: *When choosing interns, ethnic and gender balance will be taken into account, as well as for distribution to the reception organization—the actual residence address of the intern.*

identification of buyers, and strengthening of business relationships inside and outside of Pankisi Valley. The final PCL report highlighted seven or eight diverse grants, ranging from a guesthouse to a strawberry farm.

- Thirteen **market linkages grants** up to $8,400 to help upgrade and connect Pankisi businesses with others outside the Valley. The final report mentions only two highlights of these grants, neither featuring links beyond the Pankisi Valley.

PCL provided training to all grantees, ranging from basic marketing and business planning to food safety and use of online accommodation booking platforms, depending on the type of business. As with youth training, this was switched to an online format in 2020, which meant that "*you don't get the same benefits, people chatting and getting to know each other,*" in the words of one informant. According to informants, the COVID-19 pandemic greatly affected the effectiveness of these grants and related activities, which destroyed the tourist trade from early 2020 onward (many supported businesses were guesthouses or otherwise dependent on tourism), undermined other types of business, hampered the organization of exchanges among businesspeople in and outside the Valley, and necessitated remote monitoring and post-grant consultations, among other effects.

Grantees consulted via FGDs were generally positive about PCL's support and satisfied with the grants process. Other informants in the Valley observed that some individuals received more than one grant (confirmed by PCL staff and records), which frustrated other applicants. This was exacerbated by the lack of publicly available information about grants, which apparently contributed to the flow of rumors and inaccurate information. PCL data indicates that about 75 percent of grantees were of Kist ethnicity and 25 percent of Georgian ethnicity. As Kists dominate the population of the villages that were primarily targeted, this is evidence of PCL striving to be inclusive of that population and thus minimize the chances of unintentionally creating conflicts.

The majority of grantees surveyed by DEPA for PCL in 2021 confirmed that grants had a positive impact on their business activities. They cited changes including "*increased quality of product/service (21 percent), new business connections within and outside of Pankisi (18.6 percent), creation of a new and significant source of revenue (18.5 percent)....*" The FGD respondents of that study said that the grants had created new business and job opportunities for youth and women in particular and helped local businesses to cope with the pandemic period.

PCL staff noted that **grants monitoring was difficult due to COVID-19,** and one remarked: "The grants were very popular, although we have never measured the results of the grants. It is hard to do something wrong with money that is given." This attitude seems consistent with the overall approach to these grants, which informants external to the project described as lacking a clear strategic vision of how modest financial support to many diverse small businesses (new and pre-existing) would contribute to the dual goals of PCL—to build social cohesion among Pankisi residents and to foster economic and social linkages with the rest of Georgia.

Although a value chain analysis was conducted at the outset of PCL, the ET found **few examples of grants that supported more than a single link in the chain**. As one interviewee described it, PCL seemed to be simply spreading funds around the Valley, allocating grants in both Kist and Georgian villages, in the hopes that this would build cohesion. For example, at least 11 grants went to support new or upgraded guesthouses, and seven were allocated to other businesses directly dependent on

tourism, which even PCL staff recognized as overly optimistic in terms of demand for such facilities, given the generally low level of tourism in the country as a whole. Another informant noted that:

> "*Economic support is important, but they need a more systematic approach. Support to individual businesses, without support to the overall economic situation or attention to social policies, is problematic.*"

An FGD participant grantee expanded on this theme: "It is quite challenging to run small and medium businesses in the Pankisi Valley. It has quite a complex geographic landscape. There are not enough consumers here so you have to sell it elsewhere or online. Even with the right planning, financial calculations, and modern technology, Facebook, advertising, or something else it is still tricky." On the other hand, baseline and endline surveying for PCL by **DEPA found that the sampled population showed a drastic decrease of unemployment over three years, from 33 percent to 16 percent,** and a notable increase in share of self-employed population (from 8 percent to 18 percent). It is possible that the grantmaking by PCL contributed to these significant changes, though other international actors were also supporting development in the Pankisi area. The ET was not able to find data on how many grantee businesses were still active at the end of PCL nor at the time of evaluation.

Two FGDs with grantees indicated that they had made **no significant connections outside the region, citing various factors,** including: small production capacity, not enough time (other business interests), grants too small, too costly to ship, etc. However, the DEPA final beneficiary survey found that for 81.5 percent of respondents, participation in PCL significantly increased their chances of starting a business or establishing a friendly relationship with a representative of another ethnic group <u>in the future</u>. Asked specifically about existing relationships between Kists and Georgians, about half of respondents said that those relationships improved as a result of PCL (55.4 percent), while 36.9 percent found it difficult to answer and 7.7 percent answered that the project has not changed anything.

PCL Community Grants

PCL relied extensively on locally based partners, mostly NGOs, to deliver a range of project activities and services, including most PCL-funded training. Those partners were primarily funded by "community project grants"; over three years, **34 short-term grants were allocated among seven NGOs and two local councils**. One organization, the Kakheti Regional Development Foundation (KRDF), received 18 (more than 50 percent) of these grants, which ranged in value from US$2,000 to US$21,000. Two more grants went to the newly founded Youth Alliance founded by KRDF staff. Activities funded by grants were highly diverse, ranging from awareness campaigns on women's rights and summer camps to vocational training and dancing classes.

These grants and related activities received mixed reviews from informants. Interviewees pointed to **several achievements related to tolerance and integration**, **including a more empowered Women's Council** that was able to influence some traditional law tenets to enhance equality of women (though implementation remains inconsistent, according to sources in the Valley). Grants also contributed to **high levels of English fluency** that enabled youth to more easily gain access to work and study opportunities outside the Valley. One informant remarked that: "*Many of the four-year English course grads have now jobs in Tbilisi. They say: 'you were right, English was really important.'*" Creation of the Akhmeta Youth Alliance was touted by some as a key success, whose founding members participated in PCL training before getting grants to launch the organization. However, its membership appears

unstable, and sustainability is hard to predict after its first major activity had to be cancelled due to the pandemic.

There was general consensus that **grantmaking to well-established local entities was a sound strategy** for gaining trust of the community quickly, which was crucial for a three-year project trying out essentially untested methods. That said, informants voiced concerns about rivalries among the local NGOs and the dominance of KRDF, as well as the small size and short duration of grants, which undermined the continuity of programming. Grantees explained that for training in particular, the **stop-and-start grants made it difficult to follow a curriculum and achieve measurable results among participants**. They suggested that longer-term grants for more experienced organizations would allow for better planning and enhanced results and support a stronger partnership approach with local stakeholders. As well, several informants commented that sustainability could have been boosted by greater engagement with local authorities and national government entities, such as the Ministry of Education.

PITA Diversity Grants

PITA awarded 31 "**Tolerance and Diversity Grants" to 23 different CSOs** on a competitive basis. The total awarded was approximately US$68,000, with the stated goal of enhancing capacity of ethnic, religious, and other relevant organizations (especially members of the Council of Religions and the Council of National Minorities, under the auspices of Public Defender's Office) in order to promote tolerance, diversity, gender equality, media literacy, Georgia's Euro-Atlantic choices, and other critical directions. The highly varied topics addressed by these grants included inter-religious dialogue, restitution of religious buildings confiscated during the Soviet period, economic empowerment of minority youth and women, and countering far-right groups. Most focused on awareness raising, using a wide variety of approaches for diverse audiences and purposes.

The PITA final report underlined that state programming related to civic integration was focused on the "big" minority groups (in terms of number of people), i.e., Azerbaijanians and Armenians, while support for small minority groups was almost nonexistent. Therefore, the selection process for these micro-grants (mostly less than US$2,000) gave preference to those groups that were otherwise neglected. One informant close to the grants component said that **there might not have been a big impact because these organizations normally had very small platforms, but these grants gave them a wider reach** and ability to distribute information to students and teachers and organize exhibitions to showcase various religions.

One participant in the FGD of these grantees described the situation of one small minority, whose members were deprived of opportunities to meet even with each other and know more about themselves. The minority members were excited about the chance to discuss and display their own culture to others. Another FGD participant observed the limitations of impact of these grants: "*As the facility serves smaller type of projects … there was no possibility to address those challenges and do something bigger due to the grant/financial limitations. We have held just discussions and some new areas of interest arise as a result of those discussions.*"

Several interviewees highlighted effects of these small injections of funding that had little to do with the actual activity carried out, such as boosting the credibility and image of the grantees, providing new or inexperienced organizations with a first grant experience, and making tiny minority populations feel

recognized and important. Others emphasized the need to preserve culture and language of tiny minorities (some of which are very integrated into Georgian mainstream society) as an equitable measure to ensure these small ethnic/religious groups are not entirely forgotten.

The ET found from interviews a blurred understanding of the overarching goal of these grants; one CSO informant queried: "What is the goal? They are not achieving tolerance or integration. It is to keep alive these organizations? Not with $2,000. Mostly they are one-person shows with no budget anyway." Others agreed that many members of the Council of National Minorities (CNM) are not actively functioning as organizations, so the argument for boosting their capacity and credibility was not persuasive. The ET found no evidence to indicate that any grantees had gone on to secure larger amounts of funding, and there was little data in PITA reporting about the reach and results of these grants nor their effects on TIR.

PUBLIC AWARENESS INTERVENTIONS

1.b) To what extent were selected public awareness campaigns or major awareness-raising interventions perceived as effective in enhancing tolerance and integration of ethnic, linguistic, and religious minorities and/or resilience to malign external influence among those directly involved via other modalities and among other members of society?

To answer this sub-question, the ET focused on several specific PITA-funded initiatives that aimed to promote public awareness on TIR topics. However, it is worth noting that public awareness was a major element of various other modalities and activities discussed elsewhere in this report, such as Youth Task Forces in EQ1 and youth promotion of tolerance in EQ2. In fact, the YCs and their members were the primary channels by which PITA carried out awareness raising with the public, while PCL did not feature public awareness raising as a significant area of activity.

No to Phobia and Monitoring of Hate Speech and Propaganda

The *No to Phobia* campaign or platform is a coalition of 13 Georgian NGOs launched in 2014. It supports monitoring of media reports and public statements by officials and mounts pressure campaigns and public awareness actions to combat incidents of hate speech. Most actual monitoring was (and is) done by the Media Development Foundation (MDF) and Georgian Democracy Initiative (GDI), who as PITA sub-grantees provided the necessary data and often took the lead on advocacy supported by the group. **MDF also produced comprehensive annual reports presenting the key incidents of hate speech** in Georgia from 2016 to 2021, as well as separate annual reports on anti-Western propaganda. These reports were listed on the No to Phobia website.

The mid-term evaluation of PITA in 2018 noted that media monitoring efforts and related public awareness of hate speech had led to some dramatic results. Data compiled by MDF at that time demonstrated a reduction by two-thirds in the number of incidents of hate speech and discrimination during primetime news programs and talk shows over the years 2014–2017. In addition, a pressure campaign aimed at the Deputy Minister of Diaspora Issues following his repeated homophobic and xenophobic remarks led to his resignation in 2016—a success also mentioned by informants of this evaluation.

MDF and other organizations active in the No to Phobia platform lodged a series of formal complaints about intolerant or discriminatory reporting with media self-regulation bodies (such as the European Charter for Media Ethics and the Georgian Public Broadcaster complaints mechanism), many of which have been upheld according to interviews. The PITA mid-term evaluation also reported that several key informants had noted that **hate speech among media figures as well as politicians was markedly decreasing.** They attributed this change directly to No to Phobia's efforts because there was little objection to hate speech in the past—although it is worth noting that Council of Europe implemented a related project from 2018–21, which may have influenced the situation of hate speech. Several informants of this evaluation also mentioned these trends, with one remarking that: "*Politicians started to become more careful … once they saw public shaming,*" although others doubted that these individuals felt any shame.

In general, **stakeholders interviewed for this evaluation saw the No to Phobia platform and related monitoring as effective for taking the first steps toward holding media and public figures accountable for what they say and write.** One informant commented that "*The No to Phobia platform was a vocal platform for raising up local issues. The united voices of leading NGOs lend it more weight.*" There was broad consensus that MDF was doing high-quality systematic monitoring and reporting, which publicized exactly who was responsible for hate speech and discriminatory public statements in the face of considerable pressure.

On the other hand, informants expressed concerns about various limitations. The monitoring was focused on Tbilisi-based and Georgian-language media and public statements, so the **reach to minority areas and other regions was constrained.** As well, **reporting had a limited audience of interested readers**, consisting largely of the international community (embassies, donors); NGOs involved in related subjects; journalists; specialists; and "*Russians taking note of these (anti-propaganda) reports to inform their future strategies.*" Informants felt that this information did not reach the grassroots at all, even with online publication, and that government officials were also not reading this information.

The ET recorded a perception prevailing among key stakeholders in this area that the efforts of civil society projects were no longer able to stem the tide of ever-growing Russian propaganda, which was becoming steadily more sophisticated. One informant bemoaned the fact that CSOs, media, and educators were the ones fighting this flood and wondered aloud: *"How can we fight this huge machine of disinformation?"* Others echoed her concern and noted the lack of government action against both hate speech and disinformation in Georgia.

Tolerance Day and Tolerance Champions

According to project reporting, PITA and the Public Defender of Georgia in partnership with CNM and Council of Religions (CR) annually marked the International Day for Tolerance. Each year on that day, the Public Defender presented the human rights condition of ethnic and religious minorities in Georgia. In addition, the SMR reiterated the GoG's commitment to promotion of diversity in Georgia on that day. Annually, CNM and CR also recognized Guardians (or Champions) of Tolerance in four categories: individual, media, organizations, and public servant, to acknowledge their dedication and work toward promoting tolerance in Georgia.

Most interviewees of this evaluation considered both Tolerance Day and Tolerance Champions as positive activities that served to maintain public awareness and simply keep tolerance on the national radar. One informant familiar with these events observed that national-level or capital-based activities to promote Tolerance Day were more impactful, and the events had **less resonance in other parts of the country.** Although informants were not able to point to any particular outcomes of these celebrations, they commented that: "*it is better than doing nothing*" and "*these events can add up over the years to make a difference.*" YC coordinators engaged via FGDs were asked to rank the importance and sustainability of six different types of activity involving YC members; the option of "special celebrations such as Tolerance Day" was the lowest-ranked choice.

With respect to **Tolerance Champions or Guardians, opinions of informants varied**. Most felt this was a useful way of recognizing people and organizations working hard to promote tolerance and combat discrimination and saw the award as prestigious. Minority groups and individuals were able to receive national acknowledgement of their contributions in the field, and the awards also served as a reminder to government officials in general about the important role played by the SMR. It was noted that the general public probably had very little awareness of these awards, while the key audience was decisionmakers/those in positions of authority at national level who were reminded of ongoing efforts to advance tolerance.

YC members were asked by our survey about these activities; more than half of respondents were somehow involved in Tolerance Day, with lower percentages (between 23 and 34 percent) of involvement reported for other key types of PITA-led public awareness. When all respondents were asked "*What effect did these activities have on you?*" and "*What effect do you think those activities had on people that you know?*", they indicated low levels of impact, as seen in Exhibit 10.

Exhibit 10:   Lack of Effect of Public Awareness Campaigns, Platforms, and Activities
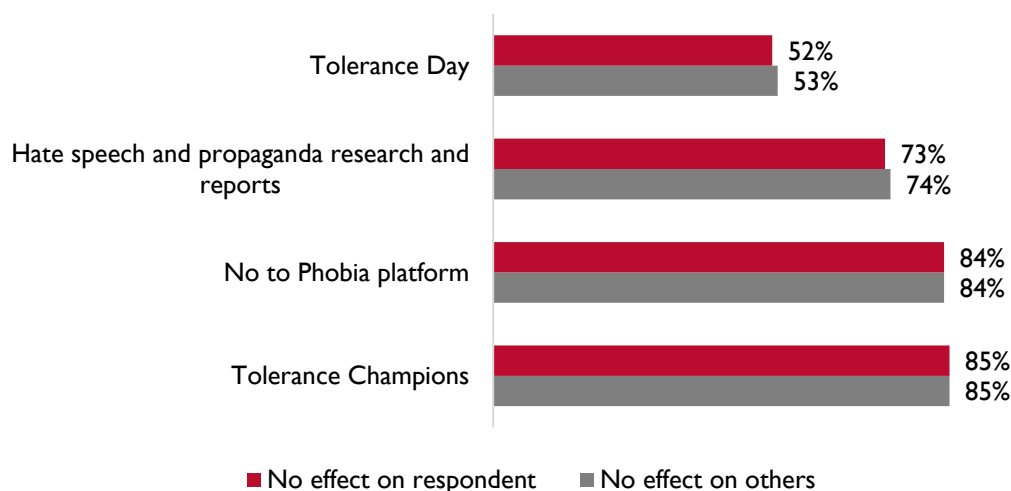
N=601

CONCLUSIONS

For PITA, there are considerable qualitative indications of the contribution of training at the level of YCs in developing civic activism, critical thinking, media literacy, and leadership skills of participants, coupled with other complementary activities that enabled youth to put the training into action. There is less evidence that training had any impact in terms of tolerance and integration; a foundation may well have been laid via training, but other activities that involved direct contact with other ethnicities and religious groups appear to have had much more impact, at least from the perspective of participants.

PCL's approach of using a range of training courses as a means of **grouping Valley residents around subjects of shared interest appeared to meet with some success** in terms of fostering new and pre-existing relationships among participants, though this people-to-people strategy was seriously undermined by COVID-19 restrictions. Participants generally seemed to appreciate the opportunity for training, despite the rather ad hoc approach of short courses that made little effort to measure actual learning. Overall, the effects of training activities on inter-ethnic and inter-religious relations were difficult to discern either from primary or secondary data.

Camps for youth[10] from multiple ethnicities and backgrounds were highlighted in both PITA and PCL as a modality that had **lasting positive effects on participants' attitudes** toward those belonging to different societal groups than their own. The prolonged interaction in an atmosphere of structured activities and unstructured free time was conducive to breaking down barriers across ethnic and religious lines and thus made a marked contribution to tolerance of the participants.

PITA-run **exchange visits by individuals to communities of other ethnic or religious groups were also seen to have significant effects on tolerance of YC members**, with additional benefits flowing to the host families and communities. It is likely that integration was also advanced by this modality, especially as minority youth experienced life outside of their ethnic "bubble," in many cases for the first time, and majority-dominated villages were also exposed to individuals from communities with which they had no previous interaction.

PITA's **Youth Task Forces were a promising attempt to leverage the capacities of YC members** to extend the reach of the program in various thematic areas. The efforts received general praise but had serious limitations as a modality for promoting TIR. Trained pairs of youth volunteers were capable messengers in most cases, and the task force members themselves definitely reaped personal benefits from the experience. However, the **one-off nature of these informational visits combined with the lack of monitoring data on after-effects** of those sessions puts the impact of the entire modality in question, in terms of learning retained by audiences. The effects on tolerance and integration were even more difficult to establish. The stronger linkage with the Ministry of Education was a positive aspect, but the failure to collaborate with USAID's civic education programming was a major missed opportunity to strengthen the impact of both projects.

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[10] Note previous footnote that explains the confusion between summer camps held during ANI and the thematic schools that replaced them in PITA.

Government internships for minority students were universally acknowledged as an important initiative with excellent potential to advance integration in particular, while also recognized as having serious drawbacks: primarily, the perceived paucity of employment opportunities flowing from these experiences and limited possibilities for interns to be placed outside of their home municipalities—both **undermining the potential benefits for tolerance and integration**. Systemic issues underlie the data gaps on subsequent employment of these interns by government, and most informants agreed on the need for policy change to provide incentives or pathways for minority (and majority) interns to obtain suitable jobs and for this program to make a genuine contribution to integration.

PITA's pilot of private sector internships showed that certain Georgian businesses were open to engaging interns at low cost and offering jobs to those who perform well. However, there was no focus on minority integration. All evidence indicates that while the private sector was not opposed to hiring members of any ethnic group, they were not willing to foot additional costs to achieve a more balanced workforce or provide more opportunities to minorities. Consensus among informants was that **concerted policy action** (including incentives) at national level would be required to engage the Georgian business community in a meaningful way in promotion of tolerance and integration, whether via internships or other initiatives.

Small grants by PCL to Pankisi-based businesses appear to have contributed to some positive economic effects (though definite attribution is not possible) and were well received by the targeted communities. However, the dual nature of the grants (and indeed the entire project), with competing economic and social objectives, meant that the selection process was not always based on rigorous analysis of realistic economic prospects of applicants. As with PCL training, priority was given to what local residents wanted to do, which may be laudable in terms of participatory principles but led to a **somewhat random array of supported businesses, most with limited chance of sustained economic success,** especially given the pandemic conditions. While gathering solid data on tolerance and integration benefits of PCL was a challenge (more details in EQ3), PCL's final beneficiary survey did suggest that relationships between Kist and Georgian residents had improved.

PCL community grants were probably the best possible mechanism for conducting activities with Valley residents, especially for a project lasting only three years. The grants contributed to some positive outcomes in terms of tolerance and integration, although those aimed at training provision met with certain challenges and were not directly linked to TIR.

The **diversity micro-grants supported by PITA were greatly valued by recipients** and probably contributed to slightly increasing exposure of the Georgian populace to information about minority issues and cultures—especially "fringe minorities" with very small populations. That said, there are serious doubts about the results and reach that can realistically be achieved with such small injections of funding and the viability of many grantees as organizations. Because the grants were so small, rigorous measurement of results by grantees was not really feasible, so **little information was available on their effects on TIR** or other objectives.

EVALUATION QUESTION 2 – IMPACT ON KEY ACTORS

EQ 2.a) To what extent has USAID programming increased recognition within the private sector in target communities of i) the importance of integration of ethnic, linguistic, and religious minorities, and ii) the role of the private sector in promoting such integration?

PANKISI COMMUNITY LINKS

Of the two projects, **PCL was much more focused on the private sector**, as they worked to stimulate small business in the Pankisi Valley and facilitate business-based linkages beyond the Valley. Their approach was to provide grants, training, and technical assistance to those ends; the grants component has been described under EQ1. PCL did not directly emphasize the "awareness of integration" aspect or openly advocate to increase the role of private sector actors in relation to integration of Pankisi residents (especially Kists) in the wider society of Georgia. Rather, as with PCL training, they focused on people-to-people methods, hoping to strengthen communal (including economic) relations via direct interaction of different ethnicities. Thus, PCL primarily advanced the integration agenda with the private sector by: 1) encouraging joint Georgian-Kist (or other multi-ethnicity) business initiatives within the Valley, including via grants; 2) physically bringing Georgians and Kists from the Valley together for business-related training and related events; and 3) organizing information exchanges and meetings and providing grants to support collaboration between businesses in the Valley and those in other parts of Georgia.

PCL monitoring records showed that their support enabled 16 market linkages (defined as connections between two or more individuals, companies, CSOs, or governmental agencies that result in tangible investment or commercial transaction) **and 55 market referrals** (connections or relationships between two or more individuals, companies, NGOs, or governmental agencies). Unfortunately, indicator data were not disaggregated to show how many new connections and relations involved more than one ethnicity or entities from outside of the Valley. As well, **PCL reports lack details about joint undertakings** launched with grant funding; **only one multi-ethnicity business was highlighted in the final report** and one mentioned by a grantee in the beneficiary survey report.

PCL's final report noted that "*a full understanding of the impact of these meetings is difficult to observe, as the majority of the benefits will be seen in the longer term after the project has ended.*" Little information was available from reports or informants about tangible results for the targeted businesses or in relation to integration of Pankisi residents in the wider Georgian economy. A PCL grantee commented during an FGD that: "… *the* **linkages among the locals (businesses) and private sector are not mature enough to develop independently into sustainable partnerships**." FGD participants noted that serious business linkages require financial commitments that Pankisi locals can't afford yet, primarily due to the low capacities in production. This limitation was recognized in PCL's final report: "*Development in Pankisi region should take a systems approach, working not solely in Pankisi, but also with key economic partners that can provide economic resources and inputs for the region and its residents.*"

PITA

PITA's active engagement with the private sector emerged in its final year via a cooperative agreement modification, which added the internship component and set out other "illustrative activities," such as new public–private partnerships involving minority youth and facilitation of investments in minority-

dominated areas. Given that PITA (and UNAG) had little previous contact with the private sector, and that **COVID-19 was in full swing at the time**, **this new direction was reported to be very challenging.** One informant from USAID went so far as to say: "*We were not realistic in what we asked UNAG to do.*" A community leader from Batumi observed that PITA had approached private businesses to receive funds for YC activities, but he felt that human resources at regional level were insufficient for this outreach, saying: *"It cannot all be done by one person"* (referring to the YC coordinator's various responsibilities).

Besides internships, PITA also organized a one-day training event for 25 human resources personnel from the private sector, which included integration and diversity management as topics. The aim was to plant the seeds of basic awareness amongst those key professionals, but it was not followed up in the time remaining in the project. Informants involved in that training observed that these topics were entirely new to the participants, and much remained to be done to prepare the private sector to take a role in integration and embrace the value of internships (without cost subsidies).

Interviews with private sector intern hosts and a national business association included discussion of the sector's role in promoting integration. One response was typical of their reactions:

> "*A secondary role might be played by private sector. But it is the Government of Georgia that has to hold the leading role in promoting integration. I don't really believe business would differentiate its employees on the ethnic basis. Business has different aim. They need professionals and need to minimize their operational expenses.*"

In other words, the private sector would not necessarily be against integration but recognizes the challenges (and costs) of bringing change and does not see itself as responsible for achieving integration. CSO informants tended to concur with this view, citing the overall low level of economic development in Georgia and a weak sense of corporate social responsibility.

EQ 2.b) To what extent has USAID programming effectively supported youth in target communities to promote tolerance of ethnic, linguistic, and religious minorities among community members?

This sub-question focused on PITA because PCL did not include structured or formal support to youth participants to promote these topics in the Valley (although ripple effects of youth participation in training, camps, and excursions are possible). It is, however, worth noting that PCL fostered creation of the Akhmeta Youth Alliance, a nascent NGO including a mix of ethnicities from the municipality that includes the Pankisi Valley. One objective of this promising group is to promote tolerance and integration, though early efforts were hampered by the COVID-19 pandemic.

PITA provided diverse types of support to YC members to motivate or build their capacity to conduct effective outreach to others on various subjects of interest, including the theme of tolerance of diversity (the focus of this sub-question). The rationale for this overarching strategy was described by a PITA staff member: "*There was too much demand for YC events and services, so we adopted a cascade approach, using YC members to spread the word to others that we could not touch directly.*" Broad consensus among informants was that these trained and motivated youth were effective at transmitting information and ideas to both younger and older audiences, especially when targeting their own communities.

In a general sense, **the ET found the YC package of activities for youth positively affected the members' self-confidence and public speaking skills,** which helped them to share tolerance (and other) messaging and learning with peers, families, and other community members. Informants repeatedly remarked upon this, and it also emerged clearly in PITA surveys of YC members over the years. As noted in EQ1, YC members tended to develop into leaders and active citizens, which also would have boosted their credibility and ability to influence others.

Involvement by YC members. Not surprisingly, not all YC members were equally active in sharing what they learned with others. A slight majority of respondents (61 percent) to our survey of YC members said they tried to promote tolerance and integration among their peers, families, and communities. **The longer that respondents were YC members, the more likely they were to have tried to promote tolerance and integration among others:** an additional year of YC membership was associated, on average, with 11 percent increase in the likelihood of promoting tolerance and integration among others. More details on the numbers of those reached by YC members are described below under EQ2c.
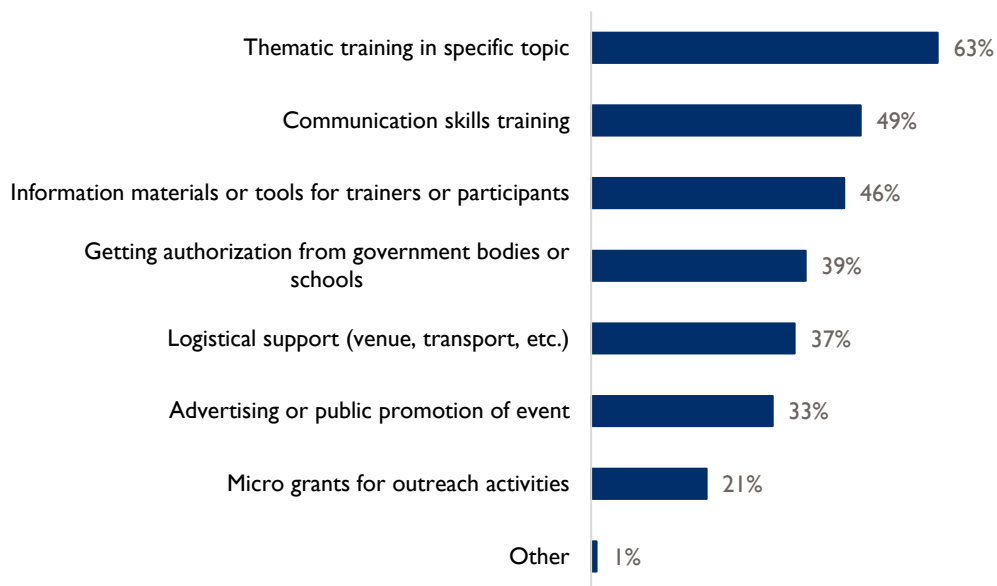
Methods of promotion. Follow-up questions for survey respondents who said they had tried to promote tolerance and integration with others showed that **86 percent used informal or impromptu discussions,** while more structured approaches including peer training and community meetings were less common but still widely used. By their nature, those would have required more YC support to organize. Peer education was strongly encouraged by PITA's YCs, with reports indicating **more than 1,000 peer education activities by members**. The importance of peer education was highlighted in FGDs by YC coordinators, when asked to rank core PITA-supported activities in terms of importance and sustainability of effects. The responses of seven coordinators related to dissemination activities showed that exchange visits were most important, followed by peer education activities, while Youth Task Forces were assigned low importance.

Social media sharing was also used by more than half of those respondents. Youth Task Forces were a significant PITA outreach strategy using selected teams of youth, though they did not overtly address issues of tolerance. More details on that modality can be found in EQ1 Findings.

Types of support. Among those who promoted tolerance and integration with others, over 60 percent reported thematic training in that specific topic, nearly half had communication skills training and 46 percent received information materials or tools, as shown in Exhibit 11. The **majority of this group (over 80 percent) found this support very useful for promotion of tolerance and integration**. For 125 YC members (about 20 per year), those activities were funded by micro-grants on a competitive basis, although those grants were also for advocacy and activism.

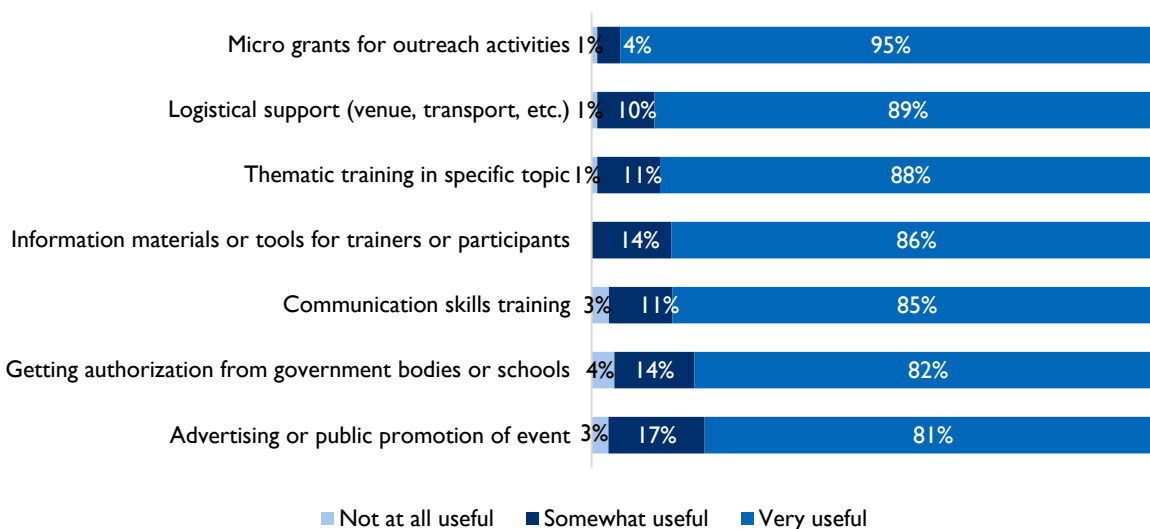## Exhibit 11:   Support from PITA and YCs to Promote Tolerance and Integration

Thematic training in specific topic — 63%
Communication skills training — 49%
Information materials or tools for trainers or participants — 46%
Getting authorization from government bodies or schools — 39%
Logistical support (venue, transport, etc.) — 37%
Advertising or public promotion of event — 33%
Micro grants for outreach activities — 21%
Other — 1%

N=366

YC coordinators also **highlighted the micro-grant program as being impactful,** not just because of the activities it funded but also because it built the capacity and confidence of youth. Community leaders in one FGD agreed, with one leader asserting: "*An important activity was also the implementation of micro-projects. The children themselves planned and implemented the projects and had a positive impact on the broader masses, the community as a whole, and the schools where these projects were implemented.*"

YC members surveyed for this evaluation also highly valued the financial support from PITA, as shown in Exhibit 12 below. While micro-grants for outreach activities were the least common type of support (received by 76 respondents), they appeared to be exceptionally useful, as 95 percent of those recipients said they were "very useful."

Exhibit 12:   Ratings of Support Received from PITA and YCs to Promote Tolerance and Integration

	Not at all useful	Somewhat useful	Very useful
Micro grants for outreach activities	1%	4%	95%
Logistical support (venue, transport, etc.)	1%	10%	89%
Thematic training in specific topic	1%	11%	88%
Information materials or tools for trainers or participants		14%	86%
Communication skills training	3%	11%	85%
Getting authorization from government bodies or schools	4%	14%	82%
Advertising or public promotion of event	3%	17%	81%

■ Not at all useful   ■ Somewhat useful   ■ Very useful

Note: N is between 76 (micro grants) and 232 (thematic training). Responses of those who received each type of support.

Several informants cited one outstanding example of YC members proactively promoting tolerance and resistance to hate speech via social media. They described how early cases of COVID-19 infection had emerged in Kvemo Kartli region, which is predominantly settled by ethnic Azerbaijanis, and this led to an eruption of hate speech on Facebook and other social media in which that ethnic group was blamed for spreading the virus in Georgia. PITA reacted quickly by providing accurate information to interested YCs and their members, who launched a positive campaign in support of the Kvemo Kartli population, including via the YC Facebook pages.

EQ 2.c) To what extent have discrete USAID-funded activities generated "inkblots" – positive outcomes related to tolerance and integration of ethnic, linguistic, and religious minorities and/or resilience to malign external influence that have the potential to resonate beyond the immediate participants of a particular event/activity?

This sub-question has already been partially addressed by EQ1 and the preceding sub-questions, which to some extent addressed the issue of actual or potential effects on indirect beneficiaries and/or the broader society of Georgia. Thus, the brief findings here focus on identifying selected outcome areas in which informants and/or documentation indicated that positive ripple effects related to TIR have been observed or demonstrated among those not directly targeted or where such effects are likely to flow in the foreseeable future. Using the inkblot analogy, these can be likened to drops of ink splattered in target areas: some already showing signs of spreading, while others may need more ink or different colors of ink to prevent them fading away completely—especially in a context of anti-Western propaganda that includes messaging against tolerance and integration of minorities.

PITA INKBLOTS

There is strong evidence that continuous application of Youth Center "ink" in 14 locations over six years (and previously via predecessor projects) produced a cadre of active and informed former YC members, some of whom have emerged and are predicted to continue as leaders and influencers on TIR in their communities and beyond. As one community leader stated: "*As far as I am aware, each of the former beneficiaries is actively involved in resolving issues concerning religious and ethnic groups, as well as tolerance and awareness-raising in general. Even now, they are engaged in many civic activities.*" An external informant familiar with PITA's work in Samstkhe-Javakheti observed in relation to integration of ethnic Armenian youth: "*Besides being trained, these youngsters are also taught how to exchange what they have learned. They are doing brilliant presentations. I know most of them.…They know Georgian very well; they have many Georgian friends. It is a very good approach in terms of integrating those young people in wider society. They started to work in the local municipality, banks, faculties at universities. The program has increased their self-confidence and motivation.*"

Despite that level of engagement and evidence of more than 1,100 peer education activities, several informants in YC communities opined that it was difficult to identify changes in society at large, as evidence of wider impact was weak or absent in terms of both tolerance and integration. Surveyed YC members who said they had promoted tolerance and integration among others were asked **how many people they had targeted with those topics**, to get an approximate idea of the reach. To allow for the difficulty in recalling exactly with whom they had communicated on these subjects, respondents could choose among several numerical ranges. Forty percent indicated they had reached out to more than 50 people.

Exhibit 13:   Number of People with Whom Respondents Shared Their Learning on Tolerance and Integration
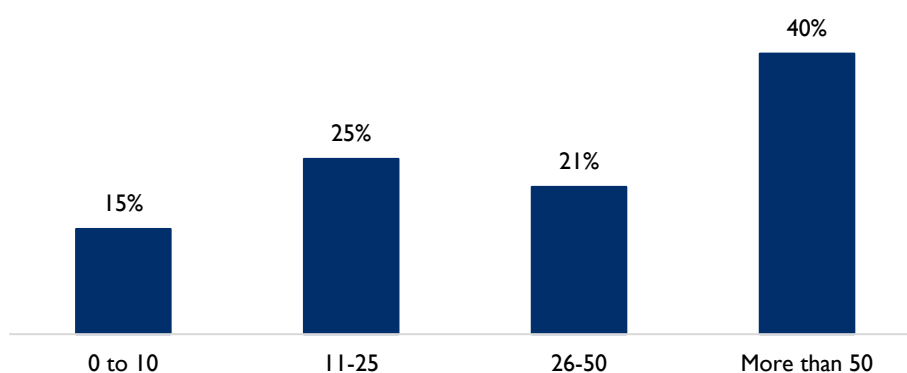
N=366

To estimate the total number of people reached with messaging on these subjects, the ET extrapolated from this sample of 366 respondents to the entire YC membership of 5,036. Based on those calculations, **the ET estimates that YC members reached at least 85,000 individuals with messages about tolerance and integration** (see Exhibit 14 for the calculation).

Exhibit 14:   Estimation of the Number of Individuals Reached by YC Members about Tolerance and Integration

NUMBER OF PEOPLE REACHED	MINIMUM OF THE RANGE	PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS WHO CHOSE THE RANGE	APPLYING PERCENTAGES TO THE TOTAL NUMBER OF YC MEMBERS	EXTRAPOLATING NUMBER OF PEOPLE REACHED
0–10	1	15%	451	451
11–25	11	25%	738	8,118
26–50	26	21%	623	16,198
More than 50	51	40%	1,189	60,639

Note: Extrapolation presented in the right-most column is calculated by multiplying the number of YC members (column 4) with the minimum of the range (column 2).

However, the following caveats should be considered in relation to this data and the related extrapolation: 1) social desirability and recall biases from respondents' side may have inflated these estimates; 2) extrapolation to the total YC population should be taken with caution because survey respondents might be more active than the overall YC population; and 3) some double-counting is likely due to individuals being reached by more than one YC member. As well, there is no data to demonstrate the effects on those secondary beneficiaries and whether they in turn shared tolerance messaging with others in their own networks.

Some of the most motivated and confident YC members were recruited to the Youth Task Forces described under EQ1, where their skills and knowledge were developed even further. **The numerical reach of the Task Forces to the population was significant** if all thematic areas are added up (estimated at 11,000 participants), but evidence from various informants indicates that **the "ink" of this modality was sprayed too widely, resulting in a smattering of droplets across a broad area that left little or no discernible blots or stains.** As noted in EQ3, PITA made no real investment in monitoring effects of these one-off visits on audiences; in the words of one project staffer: "*We always had a multiplication element in our activities … but had not enough resources in PITA to measure effects of that element.*"

Moreover**, the ET found no evidence of any ongoing engagement with the targeted schools** or teachers, either directly or via the USAID civic education activity. Several informants familiar with the school-based outreach by YC members observed that teachers (especially older ones) were the most difficult target group, who tended not to listen to their students or other youth and were generally resistant to new ideas. One YC coordinator quoted a teacher as saying: "*In the USSR I had a diploma and guaranteed job. Now I have to learn a lot, why?*"

One civil society activist recommended that to fully maximize the "inkblot" effect of activities, youth should be required to disseminate learnings in their local educational institutions: "*When talking about peer education, schools, professional colleges, universities should be engaged as much as possible. For instance, a student benefiting from the project should be obliged to spread the knowledge at schools. Moreover, in some*

villages there is no internet connection, which means that socially unprotected persons/youth do not have access to information. Therefore, it is very important that trained students go and share knowledge with those groups."

Turning to another PITA method, both camps and exchange visits appear to have had considerable positive effects on YC members, in terms of tolerance and integration, although participant numbers were limited. The evidence is strong that the intensive application of high-quality ink via these two methods paid off in terms of breaking down stereotypes and stimulating bonds between individuals of majority and minority ethnicities and religions (and between different minorities, in the case of camps). The impact of youth camps was also demonstrated by PCL in Pankisi Valley, albeit on a pilot basis. Exchange visits had the added value of an immediate ripple effect or spreading of ink beyond the direct participants. However, in terms of inkblots, there was insufficient data to indicate to what extent changes were engendered at community level or beyond the direct participants and host families of the exchange visits.

Another area of key relevance to the spread of inkblots is social media. **PITA in particular made notable steps toward leveraging the powerful potential of Facebook**: each YC had a dedicated Facebook public-facing page, as well as private groups of YC members that coordinators used to get ideas from members, to send out invitations to events, etc. Numerous interviewees mentioned these channels as a way for youth to maintain contact with those of other ethnicities after project-supported events and a means for YC operators to keep an eye on how current and former members were progressing in their lives. At times, PITA used this platform to quickly and easily share publications, memes, and other materials with YCs, who in turn shared with their members, who were then free to disseminate to their contacts. Although we lack data on the reach of that messaging or the size of networks of active YC members, the potential for dissemination of positive TIR information and ideas appears to be significant.

Although sustainability of outcomes was not specifically included in the scope of this evaluation, the issue naturally arose during discussions with informants, and there is a clear connection with the creation of inkblots. Because PITA stopped funding YCs about nine months prior to data collection, relevant informants were asked about the continuation of YC activities. Although the data are not comprehensive, it suggested that the level of ongoing activity was variable, largely depending on the funding situation of the host organization and their consequent ability to support YC members interested in pursuing activities of the kind supported by PITA.

That said, it was **difficult for informants to gauge the likelihood of YC hosts, members or others continuing with similar interventions** because the COVID-19 pandemic had already severely limited the level of activity at the time when PITA ended. What clearly emerged was that former YC host organizations were not able to continue with recruitment of new YC members and any activity requiring travel or other expenses unless those could somehow be covered from other budget resources. As well, any ongoing activity by or support to former YC members would not necessarily be related to TIR themes.

One noteworthy YC-related inkblot concerns the establishment of **YCs in two Tbilisi-based universities**. The evidence indicates that those YCs **attracted a large contingent of members and served as important resources for minority students in particular** to connect with peers and generally adjust to life in the city far from their places of origin. Both tolerance and integration were fostered by these YCs due to the mix of youth they involved, and informants suggested that the

universities themselves could and should build on their success by taking more ownership of the YCs as part of their responsibility to support a diverse student body. It appeared that this model was ripe for replication in other universities, even those with smaller proportions of minority students.

The evaluation's survey of YC members explored what changes they would recommend to enable YCs to have more influence on community members' knowledge and attitudes. The respondents were strongly in favor of many of the options listed as potential changes, as seen in the graph below (Exhibit 15).

Exhibit 15:   Recommended Changes for YCs to Have More Influence on Community Members' Knowledge and Attitudes
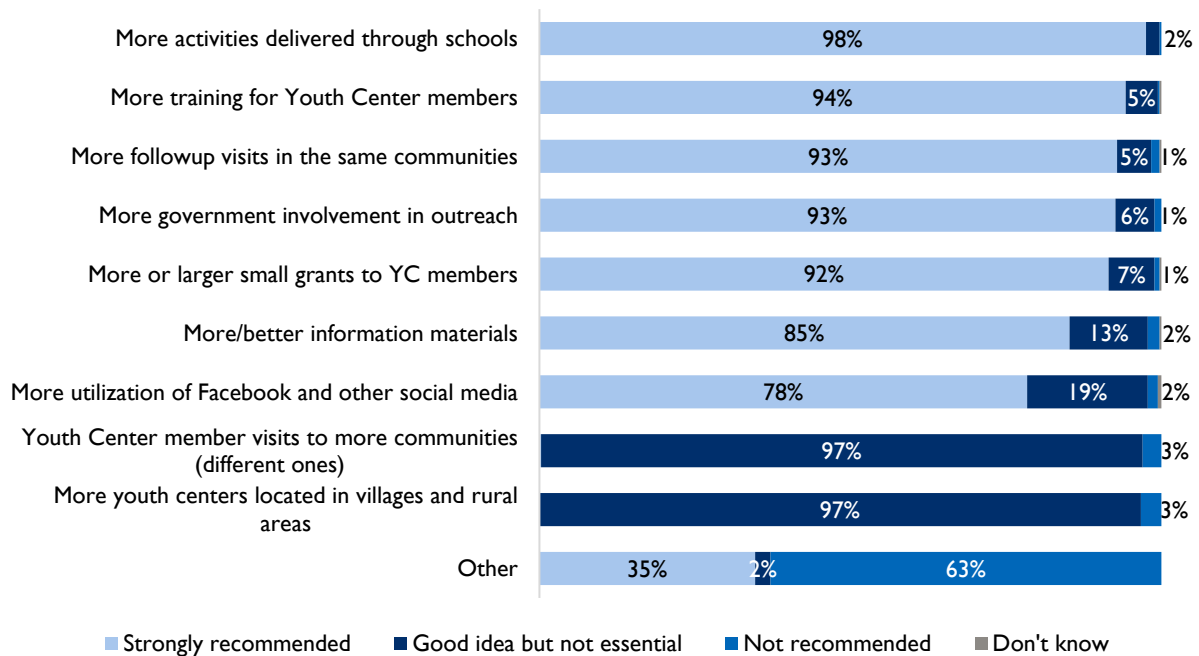

N=366

Most notably, **98 percent of respondents recommended more activities delivered through schools.** More government involvement was also a popular choice (93 percent), as were more training and grants for YC members. An interesting contrast emerged between the 93 percent who strongly recommended more follow-up visits to the same communities versus the much cooler endorsement of visits to new/different communities, which no respondents recommended strongly (although 97 percent saw this as a "good idea but not essential"). The same ambivalence appeared toward the idea of more YCs in villages and rural areas. The low level of engagement with local government emerged in several FGDs and interviews as well, where informants expressed an understanding of the challenges of such engagement but also stressed its importance for boosting reach and sustainability of project investments. In fact, the ET faced difficulties in obtaining names from PITA and its partners of relevant representatives of local authorities to include as informants.

PCL represented a very distinct scenario in terms of ripple effects on secondary beneficiaries, given that the project "*had a broad coverage and most villages in the Valley had chances to participate and benefit from PCL*," as one staffer explained. Of the estimated 11,000 residents of the Valley, the PCL final report indicates that 936 participated in "USG-supported events, trainings, or activities designed to build mass support for peace and reconciliation."[11] Considering that the average household size in Pankisi Valley is 4.36, according to the 2014 general population census cited by the DEPA final report, it is likely that up to half of Valley households were somehow touched by PCL activities.

PCL's household-level perception surveys implemented by DEPA at baseline and endline of the project proved to be a useful source of data on the broader effects of its interventions on Valley residents. Those surveys were wide-ranging and included questions on economic well-being as well as social relations, posed via face-to-face interviews with 340 households in Pankisi Valley. **According to DEPA's final research report (2021), there was no observable effect on the relationships that residents reported with other ethnic groups.**[12] Those relations were described by nearly 80 percent of the sampled population as friendly, although 18 percent said they have no such relationship (Exhibit 16).

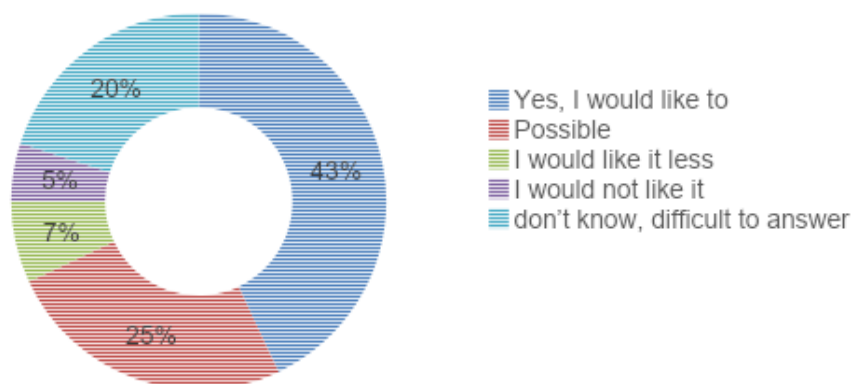**Exhibit 16:   Existing Relationship with Other Ethnic Groups**
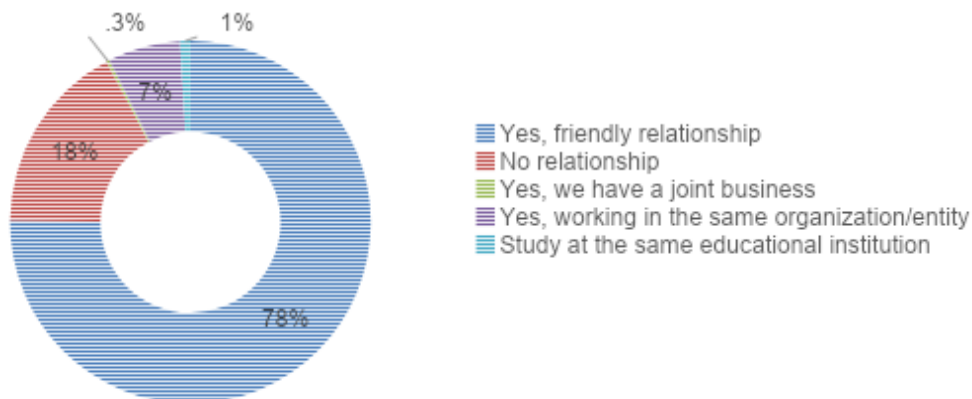
Source: Final Evaluation of the Project USAID Pankisi Community Links Activity in Georgia, by DEPA (2021), p. 32.

Those reporting that their family had no business or friendly relationships with representatives of other ethnic groups were asked if they would like to set up such relationships in future. The response data did not indicate any clear tendency from baseline to endline: more respondents expressed clear readiness (9 percent more than the baseline), but the proportion of those opposed to setting up business or friendly relationship also increased by 8 percent (Exhibit 17).

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[11] This indicator language was interpreted broadly, according to the relevant PIRS for Indicator 2: Cumulative number of people participating in USG-supported events, trainings, and activities implemented by Eco-Links directly and/or through Community Projects grant recipients, including community forums, cultural events, etc. It is not clear whether participants in business-related activities were included.

[12] The question posed by the survey asked about any family members of the respondent having these kinds of relationships.

Exhibit 17:   Willingness to Have a Relationship with Other Ethnic Group

Source: Final Evaluation of the Project USAID Pankisi Community Links Activity in Georgia, by DEPA (2021), p. 32.

With respect to the **economic status of Valley residents**, the household survey showed a significant improvement over the course of the project. DEPA's final report noted: "*Comparison of the baseline and end-line survey results on employment status of the total population of Pankisi gorge, shows drastic decrease of the unemployment from 33% to 16%, while there is visible increase in share of self-employed population (from 8% to 18%) and slight increase among all others (pensioner, housewife, socially vulnerable and employed as hired staff). According to these figures, project intervention can be assessed especially positive owing to the small grants and other income generation activities.*" Although economic gains were not the primary purpose of PCL according to its design documents, **these advances (if sustained) could potentially have positive repercussions for social cohesion in the Valley**, even if the linkage to tolerance and integration is ambiguous.

DEPA also conducted a post-implementation beneficiary survey and several FGDs among PCL business grantees and youth participants to get more specific data on PCL's effects on direct participants, in September 2021. The survey component targeting business grantees was consistent with the above-noted positive changes in employment, with **upticks noted in the number of both short-term and long-term employees of those businesses**. This data suggests possible economic inkblot outcomes of PCL, despite the limiting effects of the pandemic. The beneficiary survey also explored whether youth participants wanted to develop and increase their connections with different ethnic groups. A significant majority of those surveyed (95 percent female and 74 percent male) confirmed that they were interested in developing those relationships, while 26 percent of male respondents were not sure/found it difficult to answer this question.

Moreover, 83 percent of youth training participants said that the project had a significant impact on the improvement of relationships between Kists and Georgians. While this high percentage should be treated with some caution, it presents a sharp contrast with the household survey data above. Taken together, this suggests that direct targeting of youth via training with blended ethnic groups was effective in breaking down barriers.

Additional signs of promising inkblots amongst the Valley's female population emerged in a group interview with several members of the Pankisi Women's Council, a PCL grantee. They said that after vocational training for youth and business grants, they observed several other women in the community

opening up new shops due to an expansion of women's empowerment and economic experiences in the Valley. DEPA also held an FGD with Women's Council members, who commented that initially the council was founded for and by Kist women, but later meetings in connection with PCL included women from Georgian villages; now, the council has representatives from all Pankisi villages, and both Georgian and Kist women are members.

Informants of this evaluation repeatedly mentioned the achievements of local youth in learning English, in part owing to PCL funding. They underlined the **significance of English fluency in relation to awareness of the world beyond the Valley and the opportunities available to local youth** in Tbilisi. One informant even felt that this exposure had played a role in undermining recruitment by fundamentalist Muslim factions, linking new influences and avenues for personal fulfilment with an increased ability to recognize and resist manipulation and misinformation being spread by recruiters.

Similarly to PITA, the ET noted a generally low level of engagement by the PCL team with local government, with the notable exception of supporting the fledgling Akhmeta Youth Alliance to sign a Memorandum of Understanding detailing planned collaboration with the municipal authorities. The PCL focus on the Pankisi Valley, which forms only a small part of the municipality, was indicated as a sensitive subject that may have hindered a more collaborative approach.

CONCLUSIONS

The contribution of these two projects to recognition by the private sector of the importance of minority integration and the role of the private sector therein is difficult to pinpoint, as their objectives and activities were not specifically aligned with that goal. **For PITA in particular, engagement with the private sector was very late and very limited**, so little could be expected during the modification period. Their primary initiative was to arrange work experience (and even jobs) for about 30 youth, which had no observable connection with integration. Private sector informants indicated willingness to demonstrate equal treatment for minorities - but only to the extent that would not involve any additional cost or other burden. Incentives would be needed to boost their involvement in integration, e.g., subsidies to intern salaries, tax breaks, loans to support investment in minority-dominated areas, etc.

PCL was more focused on support to the private sector, although the integration aspect of their activities was almost invisible. Although the PCL final report alluded to the benefits of interactions between Pankisi businesses and larger enterprises from elsewhere in Georgia being seen in the longer term, there was little or no evidence of foundations having been laid for future collaborations or partnerships. Based on a totality of evidence, it appears that PCL was operating without a clearly defined set of priorities, wavering between the desire to keep peace in the Valley by spreading around resources even-handedly and the competing aim of promoting sustainable economic development.

PCL's design and implementation may not have sufficiently taken into account the uniquely self-sufficient context of the Pankisi Valley, where a more collective mindset prevails, and people are more comfortable conducting business with people they know on a small scale. **The focus on seed funding for many small businesses scattered around the area, although well received and apparently successful in terms of boosting employment and micro-enterprise, came at the expense of more significant investment in enterprises** that could develop the scale and quality needed to have a genuine chance of integrating into the wider Georgian economy.

With respect to USAID's support to **youth as volunteer promoters of tolerance, a strong foundation was laid by PITA** through an approach that combined thematic training, communication skills training/TOTs, camps and exchange visits, materials and ideas for peer education outreach, and funding and advice for micro-projects in communities, among others. Most YC members carried out some outreach about tolerance to others outside the program, using informal and/or structured methods, and found the YC support to be very useful in this respect. Micro-grants were especially useful to help defray costs and enable young volunteers to reach more people. As noted in EQ1, there was broad consensus that more exchange visits would have allowed more YC members to have prolonged people-to-people interaction with families and communities of other ethnicities and religions, boosting their own tolerance and influencing others through their actions and mere presence.

YC members have unarguably made a laudable effort to share their learning with others, based on survey data and other sources. **There is definite potential to build further on the capacities and positive attitudes of these youthful leaders** as they continue to mature and move on to new phases in their lives. However, relying heavily on volunteer contributions will limit the options for leveraging this valuable human resource, as these individuals take on full adult responsibilities, start families, etc. While some advantage was taken of social media platforms for project purposes, there is room for more strategic approaches to systematically engaging youth and providing them with a steady stream of suitable (and interesting/eye-catching) memes, GIFs, TikTok clips, links, etc.

The current state of suspended funding for YCs means that the benefits that flowed from YCs in relation to TIR (and other subjects) will steadily diminish as former members move on and are not replaced by new recruits. Thus, the inkblot effect described above, based on the cadre of energized, open-minded, and informed former YC members across the country, may fade relatively quickly if additional resources and structure are not available to sustain the momentum—by re-engaging former members or mobilizing new members, or both.

The **potential for ink spots left by Youth Task Forces to persist among participants and/or spread to others is in doubt**, given the fleeting nature of these thematic visits to targeted schools and communities. Although efforts were made to engage teachers and parents as well as pupils, they are unlikely to have taken up the role of multipliers without additional support. Although various informants opposed working in a more concerted way with the formal education system, citing its bureaucracy and formality as obstacles, many more recognized the **necessity of schools as a vehicle for sensitizing a wide swath of the Georgian population** on TIR. The latter group included the preponderance of surveyed YC members, who favored more outreach via schools. It emerged from interviews that the very limited human resources available to PITA at the level of YCs and UNAG headquarters likely constrained collaboration with schools, simply because of the time and effort required to get the necessary permissions via the Ministry of Education system.

Given that PCL activities engaged a significant proportion of the Pankisi Valley population and given the insularity of those close-knit communities, there was limited room for inkblots spreading in the sense of untouched individuals receiving flow-through benefits or messaging. There are signs of economic benefits to Valley residents, which may have sustained effects and help to support social cohesion. However, the hoped-for linkages of local businesses with the wider Georgian economy are not yet in evidence, which means **the tolerance and integration effects of PCL were largely confined to intra-Valley connections between Georgian and Kist neighbors**—including youth, women, and

other population segments. In that respect, there were promising signs of rapprochement across ethnic and religious lines, though those did not carry through to the household survey results, suggesting that improved relations were largely confined to direct participants.

EVALUATION QUESTION 3 – RESULTS MEASUREMENT

EQ3. Based on the findings to the questions above and in the context of relevant USAID and partner methodologies, how could USAID better measure results related to tolerance and integration of ethnic, linguistic, and religious minorities and resilience to malign external influence?

To respond to this question, the ET adopted a multi-pronged approach that included a context review of several prominent examples of ways in which overall levels of tolerance and integration have been assessed in Georgia in recent years (although similar measures of resilience to misinformation and hate speech were not identified). Those methods, though not necessarily linked to USAID programming activities and results, nevertheless constituted resources available to USAID and other stakeholders interested in the evolution of TIR at national or sub-national level.

Next, the specific strategies and methods used by PITA and PCL were analyzed with a view to identifying strengths and weaknesses in M&E of tolerance, integration, and resilience elements of their work. Finally, the ET developed recommendations to inform future planning and decision making in relation to measurement in relation to these complex subjects.

MEASUREMENT OF TOLERANCE AND INTEGRATION AT SOCIETAL LEVEL

Generally, informants remarked upon the **paucity of regularly collected in-depth data on the Georgian population, especially noting the continued lack of government statistics** at municipal level as a constraint on analysis of trends within minority ethnic groups concentrated in certain areas. As well, it was very costly to ensure a representative sample for smaller minority populations. Another frequently noted issue was the difficulty of obtaining accurate data on sensitive issues, such as tolerance and integration, via surveying. Concerns were expressed even about the reliability of data generated by such reputable studies as the Caucasus Barometer, as well as a recent survey linked to a Council of Europe project, which is detailed below.

CIVIC INTEGRATION AND TOLERANCE INDEX

The Civic Integration and Tolerance Index (usually referred to simply as the **Tolerance Index) was developed by UNAG in 2006 to measure national progress in tolerance toward and integration of minority communities** in Georgia. It uses seven dimensions: rule of law; political integration and civic participation; governance; education and the state language; culture; social and regional integration; and media and access to information. The methodology was modeled upon USAID's CSO Sustainability Index, employing a thorough desk review of relevant literature as well as gathering opinions of about 15 experts. The index is only available in Georgian language and has been used primarily by UNAG as an internal document, although a limited circle of others use it as a reference tool. The index measures change at the macro and national levels. As noted in the PITA Mid Term Evaluation, while PITA is broad in geographic reach as well as in its activities at the national as well as regional levels, it is not quite large enough to drive significant change at the national level.

Informants of this evaluation familiar with the index generally echoed the conclusion of the Mid Term Evaluation, that **the index was only useful to (and accessible by) a limited audience of stakeholders, mostly within Georgia**. Users included international donors, NGOs, and subject matter experts. Opinions varied with respect to accuracy of the index in terms of measuring change in society over time: some commented that it "reflects reality" and was helpful to understand the national context and considered the participating experts well placed to assess the tolerance and integration situation. However, others were concerned that those experts were <u>too</u> close to the issues, in effect operating in a "bubble" of their own expertise without maintaining an open mind toward a full range of data and perspectives. One civil society informant remarked about the small circle of index experts: "*The country is too small; everyone who is informed is also involved in these processes. So we cannot avoid this.*"

According to PITA M&E Plans, the index was used as a monitoring tool by the project, although the annual process and results were not mentioned in annual reports nor in the final report. PITA did report the numerical scores on each index dimension annually to USAID as one of two indicators that fed into the Performance Plan and Report (PPR) reporting system. Slight improvement was noted over the life of the project (4.1 baseline to 3.8 in 2020, on a seven-point scale). The greatest change on an individual parameter was 0.4 from baseline to 2020 (recorded for *participation*).

USAID DRG SURVEYS

In 2016, USAID/Georgia launched a series of population surveys to gather data on various aspects of democracy, governance, and rights in the country, with the aim of informing program planning and indicator tracking in the DRG sector. Mendez, England & Associates and Gorbi conducted three surveys under contract with USAID, including baseline in 2016 and endline in late 2018. Those surveys covered a wide range of subjects, including indicators related to tolerance and integration. For example, one line of questioning aimed to measure citizens' perceptions of themselves as being equal before the law, by asking respondents about their rights on arrest; responses of minorities were then compared with those of majority citizens. Another question allowed for calculation of the percentage of Georgian citizens who believed that the participation of ethnic minorities was important for Georgian democracy. This percentage climbed from 47 percent in 2016 to 60 percent in 2018, an increase of 13 percentage points, according to the DRG Program Impact Indicators Report of February 2019.

As well, respondents were asked several questions to explore their views about ethnic and religious minorities playing a bigger role in politics and government. Scores were then averaged across questions and compared between years. Between baseline and final surveys, the score increased by 10 percent of its original value—but the Program Impact Indicators Report does not clarify the meaning of this change.

The ET learned about these surveys from a USAID informant at a late stage of data collection, so little primary data could be gathered about that experience. However, there were indications that **the mission staff was generally not satisfied with the utility of the surveys, especially in relation to the cost of carrying them out on an annual basis**. One staffer reflected that expectations had been very high for these surveys to address results measurement challenges in the DRG sector and that poor design of survey questions might have been responsible for the data not meeting expectations. Other staff members considered that multiple competing priorities meant that the surveys could not gather sufficient data on certain issues of interest and that different sample sizes hindered comparisons between surveys.

OTHER SURVEYS

The annual Caucasus Barometer surveys led by CRRC have constituted another source of relevant data for USAID and other stakeholders interested in opinions held by the Georgian populace. The surveys are representative of the entire adult population of the country, and therefore the proportion of respondents from minority groups is limited. Based on review of the 2020 and 2021 survey presentations, they did not specifically investigate attitudes or behaviors related to tolerance or integration. Recent surveys did include specific questions related to misinformation and misleading information, especially in relation to the Internet and social media. As with other research based on national-level sampling, informants commented that the data were useful for following general trends but not helpful in terms of measuring programming results due to the limited size of targeted groups.

In general, the same observations applied to the periodic national public opinion polls organized by the National Democratic Institute, with various sources of funding. Their 2019 report presented data for three years of surveys that posed specific questions about the importance of protecting rights of minorities, although those questions did not appear in the 2021 report.

CNM MONITORING

PITA financially and logistically supported CNM-led qualitative monitoring of the situation of ethnic minorities on a regular basis, which fed into detailed reports reviewing the government's execution of the State Strategy for Civic Equality and Integration. The reports assessed all major strategic directions of the strategy, including political, social, civil participation of ethnic minorities, education and the state language, access to media and combating disinformation, and cultural preservation.[13] The qualitative research was performed by experts contracted by PITA along with CNM members, and reports were periodically made public and provided to USAID and key government stakeholders. Although the evaluation scope did not include analysis of the policy work of PITA, of which that research formed a part, it is worth noting this effort and considering how it could be leveraged to feed into broader measurement of results related to ethnic minorities.

RESULTS MEASUREMENT BY IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS

This section aims to outline the methods and systems used by each project to monitor and evaluate results, with a view to identifying strengths and weaknesses as well as lessons learned to inform the development of future measurement systems and indicators.

PITA RESULTS MEASUREMENT

Document review and interviews related to PITA generated a number of relevant findings:

> ➢ **Progress reports were very detailed and informative but primarily focused on activities and outputs**, despite multiple surveys among youth with potential to generate more meaningful data. Reporting placed heavy reliance on individual success stories that provided interesting snapshots of impact. However, there was little or no identification and analysis of broader trends among participants or lessons learned in those reports. The mid-term evaluation noted: "*It is impossible to see the forest for the dense trees in PITA's project reports, much less any directions that the forest might be growing or shrinking.*" Repeated evaluation recommendations of

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[13] For example, the 2017–18 report is available at http://www.ombudsman.ge/res/docs/2020092518514939225.pdf, although reports for subsequent years were not found on that site.

ways to enhance reporting and monitoring practices (including the predecessor project, ANI) appear to have made little difference in subsequent reporting and monitoring.

➢ **M&E Plans produced annually and approved by USAID contained a confusing mix of terminology**: the term "benchmark" was used to describe numerical activity or output targets for the year, and "outcome indicators" were more akin to broadly stated expected results, e.g. "*Improved academic and student life of minority students enrolled through quota system*" or "*Incidents of hate speech in the media are reduced.*" These indicators had no definitions, baselines, or targets (either annual or life of project); tracking of numerical changes in those indicators was therefore absent from PITA reporting, which provided only narrative description of related results.

➢ Annual Indicator Tracking Tables listed **over 30 activity/output targets** (referred to in M&E Plans as benchmarks), such as "*Up to 200 trainings/meetings are conducted on EU [European Union] and Georgia facilitated by PITA YCs members across the country,*" each with a comment showing to what extent that activity was completed or achieved, e.g. "*Mobile Task Force members delivered 203 meetings/trainings focused on the EU/Georgia relationship in 146 villages.*" No further analysis was provided—for example, to color-code outputs according to level of achievement.

➢ The cooperative agreement for PITA mentioned that "*In line with OECD/DAC [Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development] principles, PITA will dedicate 1 percent of its budget to monitoring and evaluation.*" **With a total original budget of only about $5 million, this translated into approximately $50,000.** That budget was supposed to serve to produce three evaluation reports: baseline study, midterm evaluation, and endline evaluation. No mention was made of financing for monitoring activities. Informants suggested that this low budget allocation for M&E was well below typical levels for USAID programming, saying that this was probably due in part to UNAG's desire to be competitive in pricing of its bid. One YC coordinator in an FGD remarked: "*For sure, we didn't have (enough resource for monitoring and research). Research is a luxury item. We were constantly searching for other resources. We only can afford internal research.*" A second participant added: "*I agree. We didn't have any monitoring. The only thing was our reports to the stakeholders.*"

➢ Besides the Tolerance Index, the only indicator with a record of PITA reporting to USAID in quantitative terms was the: "*percentage of youth participants that report positive change in attitudes towards diversity and civic activism.*" This fell under the 2015–20 Performance Monitoring Plan of the mission as an indicator for sub-Intermediate Result 3.2.1: Increased integration of Georgia's ethnic minorities. The annual survey methodology used to measure this composite indicator was not clearly documented (no current PIRS was found), although UNAG provided some details to the ET, as described in EQ1. **Very little fluctuation was recorded for this indicator over the years of PITA implementation.**

Interviews and FGDs allowed the ET to further investigate and corroborate some issues that emerged from document review. It was observed that informants (including YC coordinators and project management staff) were consistently using anecdotal evidence of change and stories about star performers among YC members, but rigorous data to show broader impacts was scarce. As well, the effects of training on participants were loosely monitored by PITA partners and training providers, who generally gathered only immediate feedback without any written documentation.

PCL RESULTS MEASUREMENT

The following are the principal observations on strengths and weaknesses of the PCL systems:

- Progress reports contained key activity details and some outputs but, similarly to PITA, paid little attention to achievement of outcomes or description of challenges. The final report showed significant improvement in this respect, including some analysis of indicator data.
- The MEL Plan contained a list of **14 indicators, all elaborated by PIRS, and most were relatively clearly defined and regularly reported on by PCL**. As with PITA, reports contained no analysis of the level of achievement of indicators, whether over or under the targets. Because PCL was not part of the USAID/Georgia mission's CDCS, it did not report on any Performance Plan and Report indicators.
- One of PCL's 14 original indicators was directly related to tolerance and integration (6. *Percentage change in perception of "other," based on pre- and post-activity perception surveys*), with two more relevant indicators added in the second year; 7. *Percentage change in perception of different age, religious, nationality, residence and gender groups being better connected to each other*; and 8. *Percentage change in perception of inclusiveness in decision-making processes.* Review of PIRS and survey reports showed that **indicators 6 and 7 were never clearly defined and presented difficulties in measurement as a result**; this was corroborated via interviews with key informants. PCL's research contractor DEPA attempted to use an index method to allow for scoring of responses on several questions in recognition of the complexity of these topics and the related indicators. While a sound idea in theory, the ET found that the survey questions contributing to those indices were poorly designed to measure the relevant indicators, which was corroborated by informants.
- Substantial efforts were led by DEPA to carry out baseline and endline household surveys in four Pankisi villages, a midterm qualitative study of progress, as well as a beneficiary survey shortly after PCL ended. In spite of that in-depth research (and the unanticipated beneficiary survey), PCL staff alluded via email to having inadequate funding for increased M&E efforts but did not provide any budget details.
- No performance evaluation was conducted of PCL, although DEPA's final research report attempted to draw out overarching conclusions and recommendations. Although rich with data, that report and the previous **survey reports were beset by lack of clarity in language, which at times obscured the meaning of the analysis**. The ET also noted a tendency in that report to attribute positive changes since the baseline survey to PCL activities, often without clear evidence to support the conclusions and without considering the activities of other actors in the Valley in the same time period.

GENERAL MEASUREMENT CHALLENGES

Besides the project-specific issues described above, the ET also investigated via documents and interviews to identify the key cross-cutting factors that can hamper data collection related to TIR, in general and in the context of Georgia, and to elicit potential strategies for optimizing future efforts.

Experienced researchers repeatedly **underlined social desirability bias as a major constraint on surveying on these subjects** (and other sensitive topics) and posited that this bias may actually intensify as awareness of the population of these issues increases. Simply stated, respondents become more conscious of the "right responses" and attitudes (e.g., expressing tolerance of others, not discriminating, being open to relationships with others), and this affects their survey responses. In the words of one researcher: "*Now people know the terms and know it is seen as bad, so they respond accordingly rather than their true attitudes.*" This phenomenon can occur at societal level but is likely to have **greater effect among project participants** who have been directly exposed to these ideas and may even have a personal interest in providing positive feedback on the intervention.

In the context of these two projects, the ET observed that PCL's household surveys recorded very high levels of responses indicating there were no conflicts in the Valley (baseline and endline) and improbably huge improvements in perspectives of gender equality from baseline to endline, for example. PCL data also showed high levels of project beneficiaries not able or willing to express an opinion on many issues. Excerpts from the DEPA final report illustrate the challenge well:

> "… share of respondents who stated that inequality between representatives of different gender groups is in favor of men has decreased from 47% to 16.7%, while the share of those who claim that inequality between the gender groups does not exist has increased from 52% to 83.3% …"

> "… very few respondents admitted that any family member had a conflict related to ethnic or religious issues. It should be taken into account that this is quite a sensitive topic on which respondents do not talk openly, however during the qualitative surveys (data collection) conducted in frame of baseline and mid-term evaluations respondents were more open to discuss these issues and brought several cases and examples to illustrate the atmosphere of tension and level of ethnical disconnection (for example, marriage between Georgians and Kists was common for the older generation, but nowadays it has become a significant hindrance)."

PITA's surveying of YC members may also have been affected by this bias, although the data do not obviously demonstrate this. Those surveys would have been subject to additional bias, given that the IP was conducting the survey themselves, which could have further influenced the responses of YC members. However, the challenge of social desirability also applies to externally contracted data collection efforts, such as the mid-term evaluation of PITA and this thematic evaluation. Our survey data also showed positive response trends (in terms of participation levels as well as attitudes and effects on nonparticipants) that were somewhat higher than expected, and in some cases were in sharp contrast with data gathered via qualitative methods, such as FGDs.

For comparison purposes, the ET also considered thematically relevant research commissioned by the Council of Europe in 2021 and executed by CRRC, a well-known Georgian research firm.[14] Primarily survey based, the study was designed to gauge effects on the overall population of a three-year Council of Europe national project focused on promoting awareness of diversity, rights of minorities, hate speech, legislation, and methods of redress for these issues. The research report showed significant changes in attitudes, including tolerance and awareness of hate speech, although awareness of relevant laws and redress methods remained stable. **The report indicates that several hundred thousand people's attitudes moved toward greater tolerance between 2018 and 2021.** Informants familiar with the study and its findings expressed doubts that the survey data were reliable in terms of change in people's actual levels of tolerance. They felt that such **dramatic changes over a three-year period at the general population level, given the relatively modest scope of the council's project, were not realistic**.[15] The report itself makes no mention of methodological limitations or reservations about the data.

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[14] The survey report in Georgian and English can be found via this link: https://www.coe.int/en/web/tbilisi/-/new-study-of-attitudes-to-diversity-in-georgia-people-increasingly-positive-about-minorities-but-awareness-of-laws-and-redress-mechanisms-remains-unch

[15] For example, the data showed that positive attitudes toward diversity in general increased from 56 percent to 70 percent, for ethnic diversity from 56 percent to 68 percent, and for religious diversity from 46 percent in 2018 to 60 percent in 2021. The

Finally, in the course of data collection the ET had indications that **progress reports (including final project reports) and significant M&E information, such as evaluation reports, were not being shared systematically within the USAID/Georgia mission**. Notably, it was remarked that the Program Office had little access to such documentation, other than the original cooperative agreements and the MEL Plans and therefore was not able to gauge to what extent IPs were actually fulfilling their M&E commitments. More than one informant observed that feedback loops within the Mission in relation to performance evaluations had been weak, although the number of evaluations had increased in recent years. They lamented the lack of a systematic approach to ensure that learning from evaluations was taken into account as programming continued in the same thematic area, as well as the difficulty of developing rigorous MEL Plans after project budgets have already been finalized.[16]

CONCLUSIONS

It is abundantly clear from the foregoing findings that results measurement in the thematic areas of tolerance, integration, and resilience is not an easy task, and the challenges are not easily resolved. This will come as no surprise to the USAID team that commissioned this evaluation. **Surveying of samples drawn from the overall population does not adequately capture results** that may have occurred among those affected by the project of interest to the donor (in most cases, a much smaller subset of the population), and even if it did—**the issue of social desirability bias works to undermine the reliability of the survey data.** While qualitative methods can be useful to some extent in probing further where survey data do not tell the whole story, they are also subject to biases, and conflicts between qualitative and quantitative data are difficult to resolve satisfactorily without further research.

The Civic Integration and **Tolerance Index does not appear to be adding value**, at least in terms of measuring change that can be attributed to specific USAID investments. The DRG surveys were a promising initiative that appeared to generate some useful data, but they were costly and beset by the same challenges of attribution.

With respect to results measurement by PITA and PCL, the ET concludes that **insufficient attention was paid to design and definition of thoughtful and realistic outcome indicators** (accompanied by suitable methods of verification) that could have provided genuinely informative data about the effects of these two initiatives. While PCL made reasonable efforts to identify and track a sensible number of indicators over the duration of the project and sought out expertise to conduct comprehensive research to measure results, in the end it still proved problematic to produce solid data in relation to the key outcomes related to tolerance and integration.

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survey also measured attitudes toward specific minority groups, asking whether respondents would approve of someone like them doing business with a specific group. The data suggest that there was an increase in tolerance on this indicator of 16 points for Arab people, 15 points for African people, and 13 points for Jehovah's Witnesses and Iranians.

[16] This was observed to be an agency-wide issue, inherent in the way that cooperative agreements are awarded and negotiated, with MEL Plans delivered only after the agreement terms and budget are already final.

Overall, the M&E Plans, monitoring and reporting practices of both projects were less than optimal, due in part to a **lack of specialized M&E expertise within the implementer core teams**. PITA never had a clearly defined set of indicators and targets, which could have guided priorities. They unfortunately focused most of their scanty monitoring resources and attention (especially surveys) on the primary direct beneficiaries of the YCs, making **little attempt to determine ripple effects on secondary beneficiaries and targeted communities more generally**. A strategic sampling system to periodically collect perspectives at community level could have both informed project planning and enabled better understanding of how the supported youth and their activities were affecting others. In fact, PITA's cooperative agreement described community surveying as a monitoring method but that was never implemented—perhaps due to budgetary constraints and the absence of any clear contractual commitment to track indicators at that level.

PCL adopted a very different approach, rather ambitiously setting out to measure a whole range of perceptions and other data at household level in four key villages in the Valley, primarily by surveying a random sample drawn from that population. In the end, they found it difficult to discern effects of project inputs on that level, so they had DEPA conduct another survey targeting only beneficiaries of two types in an effort to capture measurable results. The results of both surveys must be questioned given that **social desirability bias and the specific cultural context of the Valley made it difficult to obtain reliable responses**. So, while demonstrating a higher level of capacity in terms of M&E design and implementation and investing major efforts in surveying, ultimately PCL struggled to produce evidence of change at the outcome level in relation to tolerance and integration.

> Overall, the ET concludes that the challenges inherent in measurement of project-related results in these thematic areas are significant, but they are surmountable if certain conditions are met: 1) project expected results chains are clearly defined, 2) reasonable numbers of explicitly defined indicators are set at outcome level, 3) adequate budgets are available to track those indicators, including sampling of indirect beneficiaries, 4) adequate expertise is engaged early and often, especially for survey design, 5) qualitative methods are used to complement surveys, notably where questionable data has emerged, 6) social desirability bias is recognized as a risk/limitation and measures taken to minimize its effect.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

EQ1: MODALITIES

1. **Youth Centers** should continue as a platform for organizing a flexible package of activities aimed at building capacity and understanding of youth, including training, mentoring, and follow-up actions. A YC should be set up in the Pankisi Valley with tailored design for that community, potentially building on the Akhmeta Youth Council as a foundation. YCs should include a strong role in providing or connecting youth with vocational training and other skills to help them perform in work environments, which could link with internship opportunities. To boost potential for integration, YCs should offer free or subsidized Georgian language lessons for minority members.

2. **Exchange visits** by YC members from majority and minority areas should continue under the condition of careful study of their effects on both visitors and host communities, within two to three months of each visit; the scope could then be expanded if there is evidence of significant effects beyond youth participants, and further study could be conducted at longer intervals. Sending small groups of three or four youth could help alleviate community and family objections to them traveling alone and minimize language barriers. Other approaches, such as camps that build bonds across ethnic, religious, and regional lines, should also continue, including the Pankisi area.

3. **Youth Task Forces** should be re-piloted before any continuation or adaptation of this modality, to seek the views of teachers and pupils in particular and ascertain the inkblot effects on communities, if any. Visits by the team to particular schools or communities should be part of a series of interventions rather than an isolated event, where possible in synergy with the USAID Civic Education Activity (e.g., targeting the same schools, working via trained teachers, using materials, etc.)

4. **Diversity grants** should be restructured as several larger grants (US$10,000-$30,000) per year to allow for activities with greater reach and impact on integration, which should include funding and expertise for broad public outreach and a monitoring process to measure results.

5. **Business grants** (or other financial support) should be solidly based on expert analysis of markets and value chains that identifies opportunities to truly connect minority and majority businesses and citizens, with a clear link to enhanced integration. At the same time, funded investments must be economically viable to minimize the risk of joint enterprises failing and potentially undermining ethnic relations and deterring others from similar investments or strategies.

6. **Internships with the private sector** should be supported with an emphasis on placing minority youth in majority-dominant areas, and vice versa. In the short term, funding should be provided to cover travel and accommodation for youth (or homestays with YC member families) to emphasize the integration aspect. The experience of hosts and interns should be closely monitored for lessons learned and to identify inkblot effects. In parallel with a view to the longer term, more research and dialogue should be launched on conditions that would encourage businesses to engage interns from other parts of the country, followed by advocacy with government for policy changes and investments to incentivize these internships.

7. **Internships with government** for 1+4 minority students should continue to receive support as needed, especially to support SMR with a tracking system to gather data on subsequent employment from a sample of interns, to clarify the situation and identify ways that interns could be linked to suitable jobs. The program should be encouraged to send more interns to majority areas to promote integration in addition to career development, and government should be urged to guarantee that a certain number of jobs per year are offered to minority interns.

8. USAID should directly **dialogue with the national government** to enlist them as a firm ally in the escalating battle against external and internal misinformation and hate speech. The flow of propaganda in particular needs high level attention and support at policy level, as civil society does not have sufficient resources and influence on their own. In parallel, programming to build

the media literacy of the population should continue to enhance grassroots awareness of and resilience to misinformation.

EQ2: KEY ACTORS

9. Regarding the **private sector and its role in promoting integration**, there is little foundation to build on in Georgia. However, existing positive examples of integration should be leveraged via publicity and organization of opportunities for experience-sharing among private sector actors, and synergy with other donor-funded initiatives working to promote corporate social responsibility (such as the Civil Society STAR Initiative) should be explored. As well, experience in other countries related to sensitizing and incentivizing businesses should be analyzed and used to inform potential strategies, which should be discussed via facilitated dialogue with government and private sector. As noted earlier and attempted by PCL, financial support could be used to stimulate cross-regional investments and employment, as well as exchange visits to break down barriers, and feasibility studies on promising investments and linkages. Quick wins at the outset of the new program and emphasis on the economic (as well as social and political) benefits of greater integration will be key to gaining the confidence of the private sector.

10. With respect to using **trained youth as messengers and change agents,** the above recommendation on task forces is relevant. Future programming should incorporate approaches that recognize and leverage this rich repository of human resources, as volunteers, part-time mobilizers, and/or paid consultants. New programs should continue to offer competitive grants to YC members (individuals or informal groups), with a higher ceiling to allow for cross-regional activities, ensuring that award criteria are clearly focused on furthering program goals.

11. The **analysis of inkblots** left by the evaluated activities led to several recommendations:

    a. **Social media** has huge potential to disseminate positive message and stories at relative low cost, given popularity of Facebook in Georgia, which could be exploited to much greater advantage. To be effective, this outreach will require high-quality content and eye-catching presentation, produced by communications professionals in collaboration with project teams. Budgets should be set accordingly.

    b. **Linkages with local government** authorities should be an explicit part of program strategies to support broader and longer-term impact and take advantage of funding opportunities that exist at municipality level (especially for youth). In the case of YCs, this may entail increased staff allocations to ensure capacity and time are sufficient to forge and sustain these links between youth activists and local authorities. As well, capacity building/sensitization of local government officials should be included in program planning.

    c. Future tolerance and integration programming should leverage past and ongoing **USAID investments in civic education**, e.g., by distributing materials produced by that program, by collaborating with trained teachers, by strategically selecting locations and age groups to maximize complementarity, and possibly even "converting" teachers within civic education targeted schools into TIR multipliers.

EQ3: MEASUREMENT OF RESULTS

12. Insist on more systematic **tracking of participants**, potentially using social media platforms to more effectively follow their continued engagement and information dissemination to others. However, it is important that social media monitoring be inclusive and not limited to those participants who appear to achieve success and influence. As well, implementers should make greater use of Facebook or other social media for periodic polling/feedback collection from direct beneficiaries on a cost-effective basis, potentially immediately after activities and another later check-in.

13. Regularly monitor and evaluate the **effects of programming on indirect beneficiaries** reached by YC and other future outreach activities, for example using contact tracing methods (similar to those used for tracking how and with whom trained farmers share extension ideas, or via Facebook networks). This will allow for appropriate sample populations to be surveyed or otherwise interviewed to help measure results of modalities such as task forces, peer education, exchange visits, etc. Initial monitoring should occur within two to three months of the activity being completed in a selected site or with a particular target group, to assess short-term recall and any related changes in knowledge, attitudes, or behaviors. Depending on findings, implementers should adjust activities and conduct follow-up monitoring at later intervals to look for evidence of sustained change.

14. Ensure that **survey instruments and methods** are supported by appropriate expertise to minimize social desirability and other biases that hamper research on these subjects. To that end, international best practices and expertise (including psychological and sociological research techniques) should be tapped while also ensuring that methods are adapted to the local context in consultation with Georgian experts. Surveys should be complemented by qualitative methods to boost data reliability and enable more in-depth understanding of key issues, potentially including Most Significant Change and Outcome Harvesting approaches.

15. Support relevant **quantitative research** to regularly generate more complete and reliable disaggregated statistical data on the majority and various minority populations, in close conjunction with the Georgian government, to enable better understanding of the current and evolving situation at grassroots level. This is a fundamental step in developing effective policies and programming to address needs and priorities of minorities and support tolerance and integration efforts.

16. Ensure that a reasonable number of priority **outcome-level indicators** are defined in a way that can realistically be measured at key junctures and that IPs have adequate **budgets to meet those M&E commitments**. Budgeting should include experienced M&E staff on each project, supported by USAID quality control, including M&E experts.

17. Seek opportunities to **pool resources and share knowledge with other research initiatives** on the same thematic areas, including omnibus surveys, studies by other international agencies, and the annual CNM monitoring of State Strategy on Civic Integration, which was funded by PITA. The same teams of experts deployed for the CNM process could gather qualitative data relevant to integration project results as well as the general situation of minorities, which may help to elaborate on quantitative data gathered by other means.

CROSS-CUTTING RECOMMENDATIONS

18. **Coordination across sectors** should be given extra emphasis for the new social and economic integration activity, with a special focus on the civic education activity, projects related to economic growth, and the pending local government activity. There are potential synergies to be developed across all those sectors to ensure optimal complementarity and impact. This will require significant USAID/Georgia leadership to facilitate coordinated planning processes and regular exchanges during implementation.

19. A **steering committee** or similar consultative body should be established for the new social and economic integration activity to harness diverse perspectives and broad expertise while expanding the circle of those contributing to program strategy and monitoring the context as it continually evolves and requires adaptations of programming.

20. **Training of key staff and partners** should be incorporated in program plans and budgets, to ensure genuine understanding of minority and discrimination issues and ensure that they are highly sensitized to the local history, culture, and environment, including implicit bias training.

21. Future programming should include **attention to minority-minority linkages** (e.g., Azerbaijani-Armenian ethnic groups) in addition to majority-minority connections, given that serious tensions and tolerance issues can affect relations and integration between those communities. Ideally, USAID should work to shift the language used to describe integration efforts in Georgia from the current "integration of minorities INTO the majority" to a more inclusive and equitable phrasing that speaks of "**integration OF a multi-ethnic society,**" which emphasizes the benefits to (and responsibilities of) the entire population related to integration.

22. In general, future programming should plan and budget for the **use of professional media** expertise (including social media) to amplify the effects of awareness raising and behavior change efforts via creation and dissemination of high-impact information products and wider coverage for mass visibility.

ANNEX A: EVALUATION STATEMENT OF WORK

STATEMENT OF WORK

Thematic Evaluation of Integration in two USAID activities: Promoting Integration, Tolerance and Awareness (PITA) and Pankisi Community Links

I. PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION

The purpose of this thematic evaluation is to evaluate the effectiveness of a variety of integration modalities in enhancing a community's tolerance towards ethnic, linguistic, and religious minorities, and resilience to malign influence, defined as the ability to resist and/or counter attempts to deepen the gap between ethnic and religious minorities and the dominant majority of Georgia's population. The timeframe to be covered by the evaluation is from the start of each activity to date: June 2015 (PITA), and September 2018 (Pankisi Community Links).

Evaluation Timeline: November 2021-February 2022

The results of the evaluation will be used by USAID to:

- Identify integration approaches that have been effective with youth and the private sector, and why;
- Define future measurement of community tolerance, integration, and resilience; and
- Inform future programming related to the civic and economic integration of minority communities.

The audience of the evaluation will be USAID/Georgia and in particular, its Democracy, Rights and Governance (DRG) Office, relevant sections of the U.S. Embassy in Tbilisi, and the Center for Violence Prevention, Bureau for Conflict Prevention and Stabilization, USAID Washington. The results of the study may be shared with other stakeholders, such as the State Ministry of Reconciliation, Public Defender's Office, civil society organizations, and donors.

II. SUMMARY ACTIVITY INFORMATION

Activity Name: PITA
USAID Office: USAID/Georgia
Implementer: UN Association of Georgia
Contract #: AID-A-15-0004
TEC:$5,879,691
Life of Activity: 06/04/2015 - 06.03/2021
Active Geographic Regions: Countrywide

USAID's PITA Program activities: 1) supported the Government of Georgia to engage ethnic and religious minorities in civic life, with a special focus on young people; 2) fostered person-to-person contact and encouraged the social inclusion of marginalized groups, including ethnic and religious minority communities; and 3) raised public awareness and education about diversity. Through the program, USAID sponsored 14 Youth Centers in communities around the country, providing young people with a platform to promote social inclusion in their own communities. The PITA Program also supported research and monitoring of hate speech in media and political discourse, combating the corrosive effects of hate speech on Georgia's democratic development and social stability.

Activity Name: Pankisi Community Links
USAID Office: USAID/Georgia
Implementer: Chemonics International
Contract #: 72011418CA00001
TEC: $1,500,000
Life of Activity: 9/28/2018 - 9/27/2021
Active Geographic Regions: Pankisi Gorge and surrounding villages of Akhmeta district

Georgia's Pankisi Gorge is home to the Kists, a Sunni Muslim ethnic minority group with a long history of peaceful interaction with neighboring communities. This interaction was disrupted by the lawlessness of the 1990s and early 2000s, causing Pankisi to be largely isolated from the rest of the country. This isolation has hampered economic development and rendered local communities vulnerable to malign influences.

USAID's Pankisi Community Links activity aimed to build community resilience and foster Pankisi's reintegration into national economic and political life. The three-year activity supported civic activities and entrepreneurship, facilitating business interactions between Pankisi and the surrounding areas. Activities supported people of all ages and backgrounds while placing a special emphasis on supporting women's economic empowerment and facilitating social interaction between ethnic Georgian and Kist youth. Key activities included: facilitating dialogue and consensus-building workshops with the Pankisi Council of Elders, Pankisi Women's Council, People's Assembly, and Pankisi Youth; supporting civic initiatives by local civil society organizations and professional training and internships for Pankisi youth and women; and facilitating market linkages and providing small business grants to help Pankisi-based entrepreneurs grow their businesses and integrate with regional and national value chains.

III. BACKGROUND

Over the past three years, Georgia has strengthened its legislative framework to promote the rights of national minorities and to advance diversity, but the country still faces challenges in integrating minority communities into its social, economic, and political structures. The 2019 Report on Human Rights and Freedoms by Georgia's Public Defender refers to advancements related to protections for its minority communities, but it also identifies several continuing challenges in the protection and civil integration of national minorities. These include access to education, protection of cultural heritage and self-identity, and participation in decision-making. While the report notes the progress made by the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia to address the alleged crimes motivated by religious hatred, it laments a stagnation in the protection of freedom of religion, referencing an ongoing debate about the structural discrimination in access to funding and places of worship. Unemployment continues to disproportionately affect ethnic minority youth, as 75 percent of people in minority-majority regions self-report being unemployed. Finally, ethnic minorities continue to be susceptible to anti-Western propaganda, and they are wary of the Georgian government's Euro-Atlantic aspirations.

In this context, USAID/Georgia is undertaking a thematic evaluation of the diverse community engagement modalities it has used to promote the integration of ethnic and religious minority communities into Georgia's social, political and economic life. Integration is crucial as Georgia seeks to strengthen its democracy and build resilience against external malign influence. This includes greater efforts to ensure that disadvantaged groups, including ethnic and religious minorities, have opportunities to participate in Georgia's democratic, social, and economic development. The evaluation will examine

the two activities identified above that primarily worked with ethnic and/or religious minorities: PITA and Pankisi Community Links.

USAID/Georgia seeks to investigate the following important concepts, which have been preliminarily defined based on the two activities being evaluated:

1. **Modalities of community engagement:** Specifically (1) in-person or online workshops/trainings/discussion activities (camps, summer schools); (2) grants to businesses, communities and councils; (3) thematic task forces; (4) public awareness campaigns; and (5) internships with government and private sector entities.
2. **Community:** Consisting of majority and minority members of 12 geographically defined communities: 11 catchment areas of 14 youth centers; 1 Pankisi Gorge.
3. **Tolerance:** Positive changes in perceptions, attitudes, and/or behaviors toward the belief that all citizens of Georgia, irrespective of ethnic and religious background, have the same rights and responsibilities. This applies to both minority and majority beneficiaries.
4. **Integration:** Increased political, social, and economic inclusion of ethnic and religious minorities.
5. **Resilience to malign influence:** The ability to resist and/or counter attempts to deepen the gap between minorities and the dominant majority of Georgia's population, this may include but is not limited to disinformation about Georgia, targeted access to financial and educational resources from Russia to ethnic minorities, and the rise of radical Islam in Pankisi.

It is required that these definitions (or any modification of these as agreed by the evaluation team and USAID) must be used for these concepts when responding to evaluation questions.

Both activities to be evaluated fall under the USAID/Georgia CDCS Development Objective (DO)1: **Resilience to External Malign Influence Strengthened,** which focuses on strengthening the resilience of local institutions and communities (irrespective of ethnicity, language, or religion) to external factors through greater inclusion, social group equality, and citizen capacity.

IV. EVALUATION QUESTIONS

Evaluators will review and finalize questions in collaboration with USAID prior to finalizing the evaluation design. USAID/Georgia's draft evaluation questions (EQs) are as follows:

1. **Effectiveness of Modalities:** To what extent have the five engagement modalities enhanced community tolerance, integration and resilience to malign influence above and beyond the specific individuals who directly participated in or benefitted from USAID-funded interventions? How has USAID programming enhanced integration in target communities above and beyond the specific individuals directly participating in or benefitting from USAID-funded interventions, i.e., in the communities/societies more broadly? To what extent have the public awareness campaigns supported or supplemented the direct engagement modalities?
2. **Impact on Key Actors:** To what extent has USAID programming increased awareness of the concept of tolerance within the private sector in each target community, and to what extent has USAID programming increased awareness of the role of the private sector in promoting it? How well has USAID programming supported youth in target communities to promote tolerance? To what extent have discrete USAID-funded activities generated "inkblots" - positive outcomes that resonate beyond the immediate participants of a particular event/activity.

3. **Measurement**: Based on the findings to the questions above and in the context of relevant USAID and partner methodologies, how could USAID better measure results related to tolerance, integration, and resilience?

V.   EVALUATION DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The evaluation team, in collaboration with USAID, will finalize the evaluation methods before fieldwork begins. The evaluation team must suggest the use of the most suitable data collection and analysis methods, both quantitative and qualitative, to answer the EQs, possibly to include document review, key informant interviews, focus group discussions, survey instruments, and other such methods. For a survey or mini survey (if proposed), the number of respondents and the selection process should be explained and justified. The same is true for key informants. Selected respondents must include representatives of women, youth, and vulnerable groups, where appropriate.

USAID expects that, at a minimum, the evaluation team will:
- Upon award, familiarize themselves with documentation about the activities. USAID will ensure that this documentation is available to the team prior to their arrival in Georgia[17];
- Review and assess the existing performance and effectiveness information and data;
- Conduct site visits for field testing survey instruments (when applicable and feasible);
- Meet and interview USAID project beneficiaries, broader community members, local civil society, partners, and host government counterparts, and other donors, at appropriate levels;
- Interview USAID staff and a representative number of experts working in the sector; and
- Spend approximately three weeks[18] in Georgia (including its regions) to carry out this SOW.

The desk review includes, at a minimum:
- Scopes of Work and modifications;
- Materials from the two activities: Annual and Quarterly Reports, Annual Work Plans, Activity Monitoring and Evaluation Plans, and other reports produced by the partners/activities.

Evaluation Design Matrix (illustrative)

Questions	Suggested Data Sources	Suggested Data Collection Methods	Suggested Data Analysis Methods
Effectiveness of Modalities: To what extent have the five engagement modalities enhanced community tolerance, integration and resilience to malign influence above and beyond the specific individuals who directly participated in or benefitted from USAID-funded interventions? How has USAID programming enhanced integration in target communities above and beyond the specific individuals directly participating in or benefitting	USAID, IPs, stakeholders beneficiaries, documents.	KIIs, FGDs, document review (such as third part survey data), mini survey, etc.	TBD

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[17] If this is not possible due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the offeror needs to suggest an approach that would be a good substitute for the evaluation team visiting the country.

[18] Depending on travel restrictions.

Questions	Suggested Data Sources	Suggested Data Collection Methods	Suggested Data Analysis Methods
from USAID-funded interventions, i.e., in the communities/societies more broadly? To what extent have the public awareness campaigns supported or supplemented the direct engagement modalities?			
Impact on Key Actors: To what extent has USAID programming increased awareness of the concept of tolerance within the private sector in each target community, and to what extent has USAID programming increased awareness of the role of the private sector in promoting it? How well has USAID programming supported youth in target communities to promote tolerance? To what extent have discrete USAID-funded activities generated "inkblots" - positive outcomes that resonate beyond the immediate participants of a particular event/activity.	USAID, IPs, private sector representatives, other donors.	KIIs, FGDs, document review, private sector reps survey, beneficiary survey, etc.	TBD
Measurement: Based on the findings to the questions above and in the context of relevant USAID and partner methodologies, how could USAID better measure results related to tolerance, integration, and resilience?	USAID, IP, key documents.	KIIs, document review, beneficiary survey, etc.	TBD

VI.   EVALUATION TEAM COMPOSITION

The contractor must provide information about evaluation team members, including their curricula vitae, and explain how they meet the requirements in the evaluation SOW. Submissions of writing samples or links to past evaluation reports and related deliverables composed by proposed team members are highly desirable. Per ADS 201.3.5.14, all team members must provide to USAID a **signed statement attesting to a lack of conflict of interest or describing an existing conflict of interest relative to the project or activity being evaluated (i.e., a conflict of interest form).**

The evaluation must be conducted by a team composed of international and local experts. The contractor has to demonstrate that proposed team members have sufficient expertise to carry out the task to a high standard. The contractor must justify and explain the proposed team configuration and distribution of roles between team members. The evaluation team will include:

1) The Team Leader (International) must have extensive experience in planning, management, design, methods, and implementation of evaluations and assessments using various data collection and analysis methodologies. The Team Leader should demonstrate subject matter expertise in the area of tolerance, ethnic, religious, disinformation, countering malign influence and civic integration. Experience in Georgia and/or in the Europe and Eurasia region will be an advantage, but is not required. Fluency in the English language is required. The Team Leader will be responsible for the day-to-day management of the team, leading data collection and synthesis, organizing DVCs and presentations, and preparing draft and final reports.

2) The Technical Expert (International) must have demonstrated experience working on areas of ethnic and religious minority issues, and broader experience of diversity issues and civic integration, including work with youth. Prior experience with conducting evaluation is required. Fluency in English is required. Experience in Georgia and/or in the Europe and Eurasia region will be an advantage, but is not required.

3) The Locally Hired Expert (Local) must have justifiable experience of working on civic integration processes in Georgia, particularly among ethnic and religious minorities. Experience of participating as a team member in conducting a USAID or other donor-funded project assessments/evaluations will be an advantage. English language knowledge is a requirement.

4) The Evaluation Expert (United States) must have justifiable experience in planning and conducting evaluations using various data collection and analysis methodologies. The Evaluation Expert will be based in the U.S. and help the team in evaluation design (methodologies and limitations in particular) and report writing. This function can be performed by any other expert above if the relevant experience is justified.

One of the experts should have justifiable expertise in gender-related issues.

VII. DELIVERABLES AND REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Content of the Evaluation Design and Workplan:
1. Detailed evaluation design matrix that links the Evaluation Questions from the SOW (in their finalized form) to data sources, methods, and the data analysis plan;
2. Draft questionnaires and other data collection instruments or their main features;
3. List of potential interviewees and sites to be visited and proposed selection criteria and/or sampling plan (must include sampling methodology, including a justification of sample size and any applicable calculations);
4. Limitations to the evaluation design;
5. Evaluation work plan; and
6. Results dissemination plan.

The data analysis plan should clearly describe the evaluation team's approach for analyzing quantitative and qualitative data (as applicable), including proposed sample sizes, specific data analysis tools, and any proposed software to be used, with an explanation of how/why these selections will be useful in answering the EQs for this task. Qualitative data should be coded as part of the analysis approach, and the coding used should be included in the appendix of the final report. Gender, geographic, and role (beneficiary, implementer, government official, NGO, etc.) disaggregation must be included in the data analysis, where applicable.

All dissemination plans should be developed in collaboration with USAID and include information on audiences, activities, and deliverables, including any data visualizations, multimedia products, or events to help communicate evaluation findings, conclusions, and recommendations. See the Evaluation Toolkit for guidance on Developing an Evaluation Dissemination Plan.

If applicable, based on the Disclosure of Conflict of Interest Forms submitted with the contractor's concept note and budget, the evaluation design will include a conflict of interest mitigation plan.

The work plan will include:
1. Draft schedule and logistical arrangements;

2. Members of the evaluation team, delineated by roles and responsibilities;
3. Evaluation milestones;
4. Anticipated schedule of evaluation team data collection efforts;
5. Locations and dates for piloting data collection efforts, if applicable;

The contractor will update the evaluation work plan, if needed (lists of interviewees, survey participants, schedule, and responsible team members) and submit the updated version to the COR within three (3) days after the in-brief.

In-briefing:

Within three (3) working days of arrival in Georgia (or COR approval of the concept note and budget, if travel is not possible), the evaluation team will meet with USAID/Georgia. The purpose of the in-brief is to **validate the evaluation team's understanding of: 1) the purpose of the evaluation, 2) the evaluation questions, 3) the Mission's utilization plan for the evaluation, and 4) the expected approach for developing recommendations (e.g. independently and/or co-creation).** This will be, at maximum, a 15 minute presentation on how the questions asked in the SOW will be answered, followed by a discussion.

More guidance will be provided about the in-brief by the COR. Any issues pertaining to logistical and organizational issues will be discussed in a separate meeting with the COR.

Mid-term Briefing and Interim Meetings:

If requested, the evaluation team is expected to hold a mid-term briefing with relevant USAID/Georgia staff on the status of the evaluation, including potential challenges and emerging opportunities. The team will also provide the evaluation COR with periodic briefings and feedback on the team's findings, as agreed upon during the in-briefing. If desired or necessary, weekly briefings can be arranged either by phone, email, or meetings.

DVC for Recommendations Development:

One week after submitting the draft evaluation report, the evaluation team is expected to hold a DVC to discuss the summary of findings and conclusions with USAID and to draft collaboratively any requested recommendations.

Final Exit Briefing:

Prior to departure from Georgia (or prior to finalizing the report if travel is not possible), the evaluation team is expected to hold a final exit briefing to discuss the status of data collection and preliminary findings. During the exit briefing, the contractor must present an outline (in bullets, possibly in powerpoint or as a handout) of the evaluation report with general findings, conclusions, and anticipated recommendations. This will be a maximum 15 minute presentation followed by a discussion. Prior to the exit briefing, research teams may have working meeting(s) with the COR to agree on the details of the exit briefing.

Draft Evaluation Report:

The contractor must submit a draft report within twenty (20) working days of finishing the field work. This document should explicitly respond to the requirements of the SOW, answer the evaluation questions, be logically structured, and be consistent with the guidance provided in Section IX, Final Report Format. The report will address each of the questions identified in the SOW and any other issues the team considers to have a bearing on the objectives of the evaluation. Any such issues can be included in the report only after consultation with USAID. The submission date for the draft evaluation report will

be determined in the evaluation work plan. Once the initial draft evaluation report is submitted, USAID/Georgia will have ten (10) working days to review and comment on the initial draft, after which point the COR will submit the consolidated comments to the evaluation team. The evaluation team will then be asked to submit a revised draft report within ten (10) working days, and again USAID/Georgia will review and send comments/provide approval on this updated draft report within five (5) working days of its submission.

Final Evaluation Report:
The evaluation team will be asked to take no more than five (5) working days (or as agreed upon in the work plan) to respond to and incorporate final draft evaluation report comments from USAID/Georgia. The evaluation team lead will then submit the final report to the COR.

One-pager (or Infographic)
The evaluation team must also develop a one-pager or infographic to highlight the learning from this evaluation, to be submitted with the draft and final evaluation reports.

Submission of Dataset(s) to the Development Data Library:
Per USAID's Open Data policy (see ADS 579, USAID Development Data), the contractor must also submit to the COR and the Development Data Library (DDL), at www.usaid.gov/data, in a machine-readable, non-proprietary format, a copy of any dataset created or obtained in performance of this award, if applicable. The dataset should be organized and documented for use by those not fully familiar with the intervention or evaluation.

Please review ADS 579.3.2.2 Types of Data To Be Submitted to the DDL to determine applicability.

Submission of Final Evaluation Report to the Development Experience Clearinghouse:
Per USAID policy (ADS 201.3.5.18), the contractor must submit the final evaluation report and its summary or summaries to the Development Experience Clearinghouse (DEC) within three months of final approval by USAID.

Estimated LOE in days by activity for the evaluation team, totalling 173 days

Task	LOE for Team Leader	LOE for Technical Expert	LOE for Local Expert	LOE for Evaluation Expert	Total LOE in days
Document review/desk review/work planning and evaluation design drafting	5	5	5	5	20
Preparations for travel and organizing data collection (contracting translators, vehicles, etc.).	3	2	4	3	12
In-brief, evaluation design finalization (including meetings with USAID)	1	1	1	1	4
Preparations for data collection (scheduling)	3	2	5	5	15
Data collection days	15	15	20	15	65
Data analysis	5	5	5	5	20

Task	LOE for Team Leader	LOE for Technical Expert	LOE for Local Expert	LOE for Evaluation Expert	Total LOE in days
Exit briefing	1	1	1	1	4
Recommendations workshop/DVC	1	1	1	1	4
Draft report	5	5	5	5	20
Final report	3	2	2	2	9
Totals	42	39	49	43	173

VIII. FINAL REPORT FORMAT

1. Abstract
2. Executive Summary
3. Evaluation Purpose
4. Background on the Context and the Strategies/Projects/Activities being Evaluated
5. Evaluation Questions
6. Methodology
7. Limitations to the Evaluation
8. Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations
9. Annexes

See the Evaluation Toolkit for the How-To Note on Preparing Evaluation Reports and ADS 201mah, USAID Evaluation Report Requirements. An optional Evaluation Report Template is also available in the Evaluation Toolkit.

The evaluation **abstract of no more than 250 words** should describe what was evaluated, the evaluation questions and methods, and key findings or conclusions. The **executive summary should be 2–5 pages** and summarize the purpose, background of the project being evaluated, main evaluation questions, methods, findings, conclusions, and recommendations and lessons learned. The evaluation methodology shall be explained in detail in the report. Limitations to the evaluation shall be disclosed in the report, with particular attention to the limitations associated with the evaluation methods (e.g., in sampling; data availability; measurement; analysis; any potential bias such as sampling/selection, measurement, interviewer, response, etc.) and their implications for conclusions drawn from the evaluation findings.

Annexes to the report must include:
- Evaluation SOW (updated, not the original, if there were any modifications);
- Evaluation methods;
- All data collection and analysis tools used in conducting the evaluation, such as questionnaires, checklists, and discussion guides;
- All sources of information or data, identified and listed;
- Statements of difference regarding significant unresolved differences of opinion by funders, implementers, and/or members of the evaluation team, if applicable;
- Signed disclosure of conflict of interest forms for all evaluation team members, either attesting to a lack of or describing existing conflicts of interest; and
- Summary information about evaluation team members, including qualifications, experience, and role on the team.

IX.   CRITERIA TO ENSURE THE QUALITY OF THE EVALUATION REPORT

Per [ADS 201maa, Criteria to Ensure the Quality of the Evaluation Report](#), draft and final evaluation reports will be evaluated against the following criteria to ensure quality.

- Evaluation reports should represent a thoughtful, well-researched, and well-organized effort to objectively evaluate the strategy, project, or activity;
- Evaluation reports should be readily understood and should identify key points clearly, distinctly, and succinctly;
- The Executive Summary should present a concise and accurate statement of the most critical elements of the report;
- Evaluation reports should adequately address all evaluation questions included in the SOW, or the evaluation questions subsequently revised and documented in consultation and agreement with USAID;
- Evaluation methodology should be explained in detail and sources of information or data properly identified;
- Limitations to the evaluation should be disclosed in the report, with particular attention to the limitations associated with the evaluation methodology (selection bias, recall bias, unobservable differences between comparator groups, etc.);
- Evaluation findings should be presented as analyzed facts, evidence, and data and not based on anecdotes, hearsay, or simply the compilation of people's opinions;
- Conclusions should be specific, concise, and supported by strong quantitative and/or qualitative evidence;
- If evaluation findings assess person-level outcomes or impact, they should also be separately assessed for both males and females; and
- Recommendations should be supported by a specific set of findings and should be action-oriented, practical, and specific.

ANNEX B: EVALUATION MATRIX

EVALUATION CATEGORIES AND QUESTIONS (FROM CONCEPT NOTE)	PROPOSED INTERPRETATION AND SCOPE	COMMENTS AND QUERIES TO DISCUSS AND AGREE	PROPOSED SOURCES AND METHODS
Effectiveness of Modalities			
a. To what extent have the four selected engagement modalities as used by PITA and PCL enhanced tolerance and integration of ethnic, linguistic, and religious minorities and resilience to malign influence among the specific individuals who directly participated in or benefitted from those USAID-funded interventions?	For each modality, ET will seek evidence of 1) changes in participant attitudes, opportunities or behaviors (positive or negative) that appear to be linked to that type of intervention (based on perceptions of participants and implementers AND observed or recorded tangible signs of change) 2) key factors that supported or limited effectiveness, especially noting the effect of any involvement of local or national government authorities (including informal governance bodies) 3) total reach and which social groups/segments of population were most engaged and affected 4) to the extent possible, whether the primary effect was in relation to tolerance, integration OR resilience to malign influence	Primary and secondary data may not allow ET to differentiate effects of selected modalities and other interventions. PA campaigns removed as they do not target specific individuals and there is specific focus in next question. Survey will attempt to differentiate engagement of and effects on YC members by sex, sexual identity, disability, geographic location, age group, rural/urban, etc.	Key Informants: USAID, implementers (IPs), Youth Center (YC) operators, trainers, youth participants and their parents, Pankisi grantee businesses and community groups, CSO partners in Pankisi, community leaders, Council of Religions (CR) and Council of National Minorities (CNM), grantee CSO members of CR and CNM, State Ministers' Office for Reconciliation and Civil Equality (SMR), interns and their host institutions Methods: IDIs, FGDs, survey, desk review Key Documents: Activity progress reports, evaluations, monitoring data and IP-led surveys among participants and others, internship reports, grant agreements and reports

EVALUATION CATEGORIES AND QUESTIONS (FROM CONCEPT NOTE)	PROPOSED INTERPRETATION AND SCOPE	COMMENTS AND QUERIES TO DISCUSS AND AGREE	PROPOSED SOURCES AND METHODS
b. To what extent were <u>selected</u> public awareness campaigns or major interventions perceived as effective in enhancing tolerance and integration of ethnic, linguistic, and religious minorities and/or resilience to malign influence among those directly involved via other modalities and among other members of society?	The ET will seek evidence of 1) perceptions among key stakeholders and participants that indicate an increased effect on direct participants linked to selected PA interventions, 2) perceptions that selected PA interventions extended the reach or impact of key TIR messages to other persons or communities, 3) key factors that supported or limited effectiveness of selected PA activities, especially noting the involvement or exclusion of local or national government authorities (including informal governance bodies) (CVP)	PCL activities related to PA are largely covered by training, workshops, exchanges and grants included in EQ1a, so focus will be on PITA. Only selected PA interventions not covered by Q1a will be considered, potentially including: - No to Phobia platform - European integration campaign with SMR (primarily via Task Forces) - hate speech and anti-Western propaganda research and reports - Tolerance Is… video messages - Tolerance Day / Tolerance Champions	Key Informants: USAID, IPs, campaign implementers or partners, Youth Center (YC) operators, youth participants, MDF, relevant civil society actors, media experts Methods: IDIs, FGDs, survey, desk review Key Documents: Hate speech and anti-Western propaganda reports, public information materials (written and video), No to Phobia website, etc.

Key Actors

EVALUATION CATEGORIES AND QUESTIONS (FROM CONCEPT NOTE)	PROPOSED INTERPRETATION AND SCOPE	COMMENTS AND QUERIES TO DISCUSS AND AGREE	PROPOSED SOURCES AND METHODS
c. To what extent has USAID programming increased recognition within the private sector in target communities of i. the importance of integration of ethnic, linguistic, and religious minorities, and ii. the role of the private sector in promoting such integration?	ET will seek evidence of 1) greater recognition by private sector actors of the relevance of integration of "others" (both minority and majority) to private sector growth and overall economic development of Georgia, 2) greater awareness of ways in which PS can promote integration, 3) program support to private sector development contributing to enhanced tolerance and/or integration, 4) factors limiting the effect of programming on private sector actors.	Agreed to focus on integration as more directly relevant to private sector attitudes and behaviors and easier to assess (to ask about awareness of tolerance and role of PS is more ambiguous and sensitive). Also consistent with new USAID activity.	Key Informants: USAID including EG team, IPs, EG implementers, private sector representatives (participating and other) at local and national levels, grantee businesses, private sector associations, external experts, other donors Methods: IDIs, desk review Key Documents: Activity progress reports, evaluations, monitoring data, reports of relevant EG Activities, opinion polls and other research by third parties

EVALUATION CATEGORIES AND QUESTIONS (FROM CONCEPT NOTE)	PROPOSED INTERPRETATION AND SCOPE	COMMENTS AND QUERIES TO DISCUSS AND AGREE	PROPOSED SOURCES AND METHODS
d. To what extent has USAID programming effectively supported youth in target communities to promote tolerance of ethnic, linguistic, and religious minorities among community members?	ET will seek evidence of 1) how youth were supported to become agents of change and promote tolerance, 2) changes in tolerance observed or reported among population targeted by promotional activities, 3) what promotional methods appeared to be most effective in moving attitudes or behaviors towards greater tolerance 4) factors limiting the effect of youth promotion of tolerance on their communities. Changes in non-participant attitudes and behaviors fall under sub-question c.	Agreed in kickoff call to limit to tolerance only. Exclude Task Forces, focus on individual efforts supported by PITA and PCL as relevant: advocacy projects, micro-grants, peer training, informal outreach, etc.	Key Informants: USAID, Activity IPs, YC operators, youth participants and parents, community leaders, relevant civil society actors, media experts, local councils and government representatives Methods: IDIs, FGDs, survey, desk review Key Documents: Activity progress reports, evaluations, monitoring data and surveys among participants and others, micro-grant documentation
e. To what extent have discrete USAID-funded activities generated "inkblots" - positive outcomes related to tolerance and integration of ethnic, linguistic, and religious minorities and/or resilience to malign influence that have the potential to resonate beyond the immediate participants of a particular event/activity?	ET will seek evidence of: 1) positive "ripple effects" on attitudes or behaviors of non-participants that appear linked to USAID-funded interventions, 2) interventions most likely contributing to those effects, 3) factors limiting effects on non-participants, 4) trends or perceptions that indicate future positive effects that appear linked to interventions	The approach will be to enquire about ripple effects of these two USAID activities generally, then seek links to specific interventions or modalities. The four selected modalities will be included, but a wider scope will be maintained for informants to point to other interventions	Key Informants: USAID, IPs, YC operators, Pankisi CSOs, local councils and government representatives, direct participants, parents of youth participants, community leaders, CR and CNM, SMR, private sector representatives, MDF, relevant civil society actors, media experts, other donors Methods: IDIs, FGDs, survey, desk review

EVALUATION CATEGORIES AND QUESTIONS (FROM CONCEPT NOTE)	PROPOSED INTERPRETATION AND SCOPE	COMMENTS AND QUERIES TO DISCUSS AND AGREE	PROPOSED SOURCES AND METHODS
		that had or may in future have a broader impact on society.	Key Documents: Activity progress reports, evaluations, monitoring data and surveys among participants and others, hate speech reports, research by third parties
Measurement of Results			
Based on the findings to the questions above and in the context of relevant USAID and partner methodologies, how could USAID better measure results related to tolerance and integration of ethnic, linguistic, and religious minorities and resilience to malign influence?	ET will review recent methods of measuring results in these thematic areas used by USAID, IPS and their partners (particularly in the context of these two activities), to assess strengths and weaknesses of those approaches and resulting data. Methods used by other stakeholders and in other contexts will also be considered. Recommendations will identify indicators and tools that could enable improved monitoring and results management.		Key Informants: USAID, IPs, other donors, research agencies, CR and CNM, SMR, external subject matter and measurement experts Methods: IDIs, desk review Key Documents: Activity progress reports, M&E budgets, evaluations, monitoring data and survey reports, external studies on measurement of change in these subjects

ANNEX C: LIST OF REVIEWED DOCUMENTS

Activity Documents

PITA

1. Annual Reports 2015-2021

2. Final Program Report 2015-2021

3. Mid–Term Evaluation Report 2018

4. Cooperative Agreement and Modifications

5. Annual Implementation Work Plans

6. Monitoring and Evaluation Plans

7. Annual Activity Indicators Tracking Tables

8. Inputs for USAID Performance Plan and Report

9. Detailed List of Grants 2015-2021

10. Internal Evaluation Report, 2021

11. Database of Youth Center Members

12. Concept of State Internship Program 2017

13. Tolerance Index Report 2019

14. Tolerance Index Report 2020

15. Hate Speech Reports by Media Development Foundation, 2016-20

16. Anti-Western Propaganda Reports by Media Development Foundation, 2016-20

17. Youth Baseline Survey report 2016

18. Study of Youth Attitudes and Values in Georgia 2021

PCL

19. Annual Reports 2019 and 2020

20. Final Report 2021

21. Cooperative Agreement and Modifications

22. Performance Management Plans, 2018-21

23. Lists of Community, Business and CSO Grants

24. Technical Report for USAID Pankisi Community Links in Georgia on Baseline Perception Survey, 2019

25. Pankisi Community Links Beneficiary Survey Report by DEPA, 2021

26. Mid-term Review of USAID Pankisi Community Links Activity in Georgia by DEPA 2020

27. Final Evaluation of the Project USAID Pankisi Community Links in Georgia, research report by DEPA, 2021

USAID Reports and Information

28. USAID/Georgia 2020-2025 Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS)

29. USAID/Georgia Mission Performance Management Plans 2013 and 2021

30. Georgia Democracy, Human Rights and Governance Assessment, Final Assessment Report 2020

31. Notice of Funding Opportunity Number: 72011422RFA00001, issued in November 2021 for new Civic and Economic Integration Activity

32. DRG Program Impact Indicators: A Comparison of Baseline and Current Scores 2019

33. Impact evaluation of USAID/Georgia's Momavlis Taoba Civic Education Initiative 2019

Other Documents and Reports

34. State Strategy for Civic Equality and Integration and Action Plan for 2015-2020, State Minister for Reconciliation and Civic Equality

35. State Strategy for Civic Equality and Integration 2021-2030 and Action Plan 2021-2022, State Minister for Reconciliation and Civic Equality

36. Council of National Minorities' Monitoring Reports on implementation of the State Strategy for Civic Equality and Integration, Tolerance Office of Public Defender's Office

37. Caucasus Barometer survey reports by the Caucasus Resource Research Center (CRRC), 2020 and 2021

38. Taking Georgia's Pulse survey, National Democratic Institute 2021

39. Public Attitudes in Georgia 2019 survey report, National Democratic Institute

40. Georgia's Minorities: Breaking Down Barriers to Integration, June 2021, Carnegie Endowment

41. Hate Crime, Hate Speech and Discrimination in Georgia: Attitudes and Awareness (Report of Public Survey Conducted for the Co-operation Project "Fight against Discrimination, Hate Crimes and Hate Speech in Georgia"), by CRRC Georgia for Council of Europe, 2021

42. Mapping Integration Indicators: A Reference Tool for Evaluating the Implementation of Ljubljana Guidelines-based Policy, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, 2020

43. "Integration of ethnic minorities in Georgia: Barriers to political participation," Policy Paper #16, Georgian Institute of Politics, Salome Kandelaki, August 2020

44. Future of Georgia Survey Report, CRRC Georgia 2021

ANNEX D: INTERVIEW AND FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPATION

IDI Participation

Type of Participants	No. of Participants
USAID staff	5
PITA staff and partners	10
PCL staff and partners	6
Grantees and Councils (both projects)	11
Government of Georgia	4
International community	2
Georgian civil society and other experts	4
Private sector actors	4
Other	3
TOTAL	49

Focus Group Participation

Type of Participants	No. of Participants
PITA Task Force Members	17
PCL business grantees	7
PCL youth training participants	6
PITA YC coordinators	9
PITA community leaders	16
PITA diversity grants recipients	7
TOTAL	62

ANNEX E: IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

INFORMANT TYPE: USAID STAFF

INTRO/CONSENT

Thank you for taking the time to meet today. I am working with a research institution called the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the University of Chicago, which has been contracted by USAID/Georgia to conduct this thematic evaluation. As we mentioned in our email/phone call, our team is studying certain elements of USAID-Georgia's programming aimed at promoting (a) tolerance towards ethnic, linguistic, and religious minorities, (b) integration of those minorities in Georgian society, and (c) ability to resist and counter attempts aimed at increasing divisions between minorities and the majority of Georgia's population.

The two USAID projects on which we are focused are the Promoting Integration, Tolerance and Awareness (PITA) working on national level from 2015 to 2021, and Pankisi Community Links, which primarily targeted the Pankisi Valley from 2018 to 2021. The purpose of this independent evaluation is to study the strong and weak points of various approaches or modalities used by those projects, to assess their effects on direct participants and non-participants, and make recommendations for future USAID programming.

Of course, taking part in this interview is completely voluntary; you are free to choose to participate or not to participate. We expect the interview to last about one hour, and it will be anonymous; your name and organization will not be identified in any report. You and your organization will not be associated with any responses shared outside the NORC team. I am taking notes so I can remember everything accurately.

If you have any questions, you may contact research coordinators, Ms. Audra Grant (grant-audra@norc.org; +1 301-634-9383) or Ms. Anna Solovyeva (solovyeva-anna@norc.org ; +1-301-634-9563).

May I begin? *(Questions from the list below will be prioritized based on the familiarity of the informant with each Activity and the broader areas of interest to the evaluation, and on time available.)*

1. What is your current role in USAID?
    a. How long have you been in this position?

2. How would you describe your interaction with the PITA project?
    a. did you have any specific oversight responsibilities? what were they?
    b. what about its predecessor project ANI?

3. With which of the following elements or modalities of PITA are you familiar?
    a. for those you are familiar with – to what extent did those modalities affect tolerance, integration and/or resilience among those underlined directly engaged?
    b. what were the changes or effects that were observed or reported (positive or negative)?
        ▪ Probe - any changes in participant attitudes towards people of another background?

- ▪ any changes in behavior that were observed or recorded?
- ▪ in oral remarks or written communications by participants? social media behavior?
- ▪ increased integration or interaction across ethnic lines?
- ▪ increased ability to recognize false or deceptive sources or information/propaganda?

Type of Activity supported by PITA	Familiar or not	a. Effect on direct participants, 0=none, 1=minimal, 2=moderate, 3=very significant	b. Specific effects (positive or negative) on participants or directly targeted population
Training of Youth Center members related to tolerance, diversity, inclusion			
Training of Youth Center members related to media literacy and hate speech			
Training of Youth Center members on activism and awareness raising skills			
Exchange visits/camps for youth			
Tolerance Day and other commemoration days (effect on targeted population)			
Youth Task Forces spreading information on various topics (effect on targeted population)			
Civic activism by youth in local communities (effect on targeted population)			
Direct education and awareness with peers and in communities (other than Task Forces) (effect on targeted population)			
Youth internships with govt			
Youth internships with private sector			

Type of Activity supported by PITA	Familiar or not	a. Effect on direct participants, 0=none, 1=minimal, 2=moderate, 3=very significant	b. Specific effects (positive or negative) on participants or directly targeted population
Direct engagement with private sector actors (2020-21)			
Research and reports (on hate speech, propaganda, disinformation, etc.)			
Public awareness interventions other than Task Forces (via social media, mass media) (e.g. No to Phobia platform, hate speech reports, Tolerance Champions, videos)			
Diversity grants to members of Council on Religions and Council on National Minorities (effect on targeted population of grantee activities)			
Other - name			

4. How would you describe your interaction with the PCL project?
    a. did you have any specific oversight responsibilities? what were they?

5. With which of the following elements or modalities of PCL are you familiar?
    a. for those you are familiar with – to what extent did those modalities affect tolerance, integration and/or resilience among those directly engaged?

    b. what were the changes or effects that were observed or reported (positive or negative)?
        ▪ Probe - any changes in participant attitudes towards people of another background?
        ▪ any changes in behavior that were observed or recorded?
        ▪ in oral remarks or written communications by participants? social media behavior?
        ▪ increased integration or interaction across ethnic lines?
        ▪ increased ability to recognize false or deceptive sources or information/propaganda?

Type of Activity supported by PCL	Familiar or not	a. Effect on direct participants, 0=none, 1=minimal, 2=moderate, 3=very significant	b. Specific effects (positive or negative) on participants or directly targeted population
Training and workshops for youth – vocational			
Training and workshops for youth – English			
Training and workshops for youth – business skills			
Exchange visits/camps			
Sports, culture and leisure events			
Grants to community groups (effect on targeted population of grantee activities)			
Grants to small businesses and entrepreneurs (effect on grantees)			
Training for business owners, linked to grants			
Other - name			

6. In relation to activities or modalities with the most noticeable or significant effects – why do you think they were effective? what were the enabling factors?
    a. Probe - did the involvement of government make a difference, positive or negative?
    b. should these activities be replicated or continued? or adjusted somehow?
    c. were there any negative effects?

7. Which participants (of which events/activities) seemed to change most?
    a. probe depending on specific activity type
    b. ask about gender differences, disability, sexual preference, minority vs majority, type of grantee organization

8. If positive effects on direct participants were not achieved – why not?
    a. did those activities or modalities face challenges in design, implementation, participation, or other ways? what were they?

    b. were there specific challenges with targeting the private sector to promote tolerance, integration, and resilience to malign influences?

        ▪ for PITA – was UNAG able to carry out the activities outlined in the modification? (Covid?) Was the PS internship program even set up to promote TIR, or other goals?

    c. what could be done to increase impact on the private sector to enhance integration of ethnic minorities, tolerance within the sector, etc?

9. How likely is it that those activities that seemed to have most impact on direct participants could have ripple effects or spread positive effects beyond the direct participants, in their communities or in other contexts?

10. What sources and types of information have been available to USAID to allow for identification and analysis of the effects on participants, of both these projects?

    a. which data has been most useful, and which has been least useful or lacking?

    b. what about data on effects on non-direct participants?

11. How would you describe the results monitoring conducted by the implementers?

    a. What have been the strong and weak points?

        ▪ how well have the IPs tracked indicators at output and outcome level?

    b. What about any evaluations and other research that were done? (probe re PITA mid-term and final surveys and evaluations, PCL final surveys of beneficiaries and households, report by DEPA)

    c. How could USAID and implementers improve on their future monitoring and evaluation systems and practices, to strengthen measurement of results in this sector of activity?

12. Do you think that USAID/Georgia and its partners should continue to support _____ type of activities to promote tolerance, integration and resilience to malign external influence?

    a. Not recommended (0), neutral about recommendation (1), strongly recommended (2)

    b. repeat question for each modality with which informant has demonstrated familiarity

    c. if not recommended – why not? what should be done differently?

    d. what else should be done to complement those activities?

13. Do you have other comments or ideas that you would like to share with our team?

14. Do you have any suggestions of other people with whom we should speak, or documents we should review, to further explore the kinds of questions we talked about today?

Closure

Thank you for taking time to speak with us today. Do you have any questions for us before we finish?

Informant Type: PCL grantee partners

<u>Intro/Consent</u>

Thank you for taking the time to meet today.

I am working with a research institution called the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the University of Chicago, which has been contracted by USAID/Georgia to conduct this thematic evaluation. Our team is studying certain elements of USAID-Georgia's programming aimed at promoting (a) tolerance towards ethnic, linguistic, and religious minorities, (b) integration of those minorities in Georgian society, and (c) ability to resist hate speech and misinformation.

The two projects on which we are focused are the Promoting Integration, Tolerance and Awareness (PITA) working on national level from 2015 to 2021, and Pankisi Community Links. The purpose of this independent evaluation is to study the strong and weak points of various approaches or modalities used by those projects, to assess their effects on direct participants and non-participants, and make recommendations for future USAID programming.

Taking part in this interview is completely voluntary; you are free to choose to participate or not to participate. We expect the interview to last about one hour, and it will be anonymous; your name and organization will not be identified in any report. You and your organization will not be associated with any responses shared outside the NORC team. We would like to make an audio recording so we can make an accurate record of your comments. Is that okay?

If you have any questions, you may contact research coordinators, Ms. Audra Grant (grant-audra@norc.org; +1 301-634-9383) or Ms. Anna Solovyeva (solovyeva-anna@norc.org ; +1-301-634-9563).

1. How would you describe your organization's interaction with the PCL project?

2. What would you say was the overarching goal of PCL?
    a. probe regarding economic development vs integration and tolerance – which was the more significant objective? did that come through in the activities?

3. We are especially interested in certain aspects of the PCL project, on which we would like to have your views. We will ask several questions for each modality or activity type:
    a. how was your organization involved in that activity?
    b. to what extent did it affect <u>tolerance, integration and/or resilience</u> among those <u>directly engaged</u>? Scale of 0 to 3. (not considering economic benefits, skills)
    c. what were the changes or effects that were observed or reported (positive or negative)?

Type of Activity supported by PCL	Involvement of the grantee	a. Effect on direct participants, 0=none, 1=minimal, 2=moderate, 3=very significant	b. Specific effects (positive or negative) on participants or directly targeted population
Training and workshops for youth – vocational			
Training and workshops for youth – English			
Training and workshops for youth – business skills			
Excursions/ youth camps			
Sports, culture and leisure events			
Grants to community groups (effect on targeted population of grantee activities)			
Grants to small businesses and entrepreneurs (effect on grantees and community)			
Training for business owners, linked to grants			
Other – name			

4. In relation to activities or modalities with the most noticeable or significant effects – why do you think they were effective? what were the enabling factors?
    a. Probe – was the local or national government involved at all? either way, did that make a difference, positive or negative?
    b. What did you think of the grants process? Probe regarding Easy vs complicated, fair vs unfair, fast vs. slow, other comments
    c. What has changed for your organization after getting that grant? What results were you able to achieve with that funding?
    d. were there any negative effects?

5. Which participants (of which events/activities) seemed to change most? (based on survey data, DEPA reports, other sources)
    a. probe depending on specific activity type

     b. did it matter how many times/how long they participated?

     c. ask about gender differences, Kist vs Georgian, young vs older, type of grantee organization

6. If positive effects on direct participants were not achieved – why not?

     a. were there specific challenges with targeting small businesses?

7. How likely is it that those activities with most impact on direct participants could have ripple effects or spread positive effects beyond the direct participants, in their communities or in other contexts?

8. How would you describe the surveys and other monitoring conducted by PCL?

     a. What have been the strong and weak points?

         ▪ were you involved at all in those surveys?

         ▪ what challenges do you see in monitoring change in attitudes and behaviors in the Pankisi Valley in particular?

         ▪ how could measurement methods be improved?

9. Do you think that USAID/Georgia and its partners should continue to support _____ type of activities to promote tolerance, integration and resilience to hate speech and misinformation?

     a. if not recommended – why not? what should be done differently?

     b. what else should be done to complement those activities?

10. Do you have other comments or ideas that you would like to share with our team?

ANNEX F: FGD PROTOCOLS

PITA YOUTH CENTER COORDINATORS

INTRO/CONSENT

Thank you so much for taking the time to join us for this discussion. I am _____. We are working with a research institution called the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the University of Chicago. Our team is studying USAID-Georgia's programming aimed at promoting (a) tolerance towards ethnic, linguistic, and religious minorities, (b) integration of those minorities, and (c) the fight against misinformation and hate speech. The two projects on which we are focused are PITA and Pankisi Community Links.

The purpose of this independent evaluation is to study the strong and weak points of various approaches used by those projects, and make recommendations for future activities. We are not evaluating the performance of those projects, nor the work of your Centers or organizations. The PITA-supported Youth Centers are one approach that we are interested in studying and learning from, so your experience as Coordinators is very relevant.

This discussion should last about 1.5 hours. Your participation is voluntary and you will not be quoted in any report. You are not obligated to answer any questions, and you may leave anytime you wish. Since this is a discussion, all of you are encouraged to express your views honestly. There are no "right" or "wrong" answers.

We are taking notes of this discussion, and if you all agree, we would also like to make an audio recording to have an accurate record of what you are saying. Our colleague is here to take notes in case not everyone in the group agrees to record. This will not be shared with anyone outside of our team.

If you have any questions, you may contact research coordinators, Ms. Audra Grant (grant-audra@norc.org; +1 301-634-9383) or Ms. Anna Solovyeva (solovyeva-anna@norc.org ; +1-301-634-9563).

Do we have your permission to record [Pause and check for permission, "YES" or "NO"]

May we begin? [Pause and check for consent, "YES" or "NO"]

WARM UP

[MODERATOR]: Ask respondents to introduce themselves by sharing their names, the Youth Center where they work, and to say one word that describes how they feel about their Youth Center.

We have a few questions to discuss, and would like you to keep in mind that our focus as researchers is on tolerance, integration and resistance to misinformation and hate speech.

1. What was the activity that you organized or supported during six years of PITA that had the most significant impact on the Youth Center members?

2. Why were those activities so important for youth members, in your view?
   a. for each activity named – how exactly did that activity affect tolerance or integration, or help to combat misinformation? how did you see those effects?

3. What methods did you use to monitor the effects of your activities on the members? (probe about challenges – of keeping track of former participants, of getting them to do exit surveys, etc.)

4. We can see from this discussion that PITA and the Youth Centers used a variety of activities to promote tolerance, integration and resistance to misinformation. We would like to get your comments on some specific methods supported in all Youth Centers. For each one, we would like to hear what effect it had on people outside the Youth Center, such as friends, families, community members, local authorities, audiences for presentations. We are looking for activities that really changed attitudes or understanding of those people.
   a) Youth Task Forces on various topics
   b) Peer education activities by trained members
   c) Youth exchange visits including homestays
   d) Special celebrations such as Tolerance Day
   e) Civic activism and advocacy by youth
   f) Social media connections and discussions (Facebook page of YC, Facebook activity of members, etc.)

5. Reflecting now on the entire list above - which of those methods or types of activity had the most impact? Which one had most lasting/durable effect?

6. If there was one thing that you could do differently at the Youth Center in future, what would it be?

7. PITA has done several surveys of YC members and other youth, and we plan to do one more for this evaluation. If you could include one question in our survey for all YC members, what would it be?

8. What should be done to increase the impact of the Youth Centers and other PITA-supported activities on the wider population of Georgia? (probe about impact on direct participants AND separately on non-participants in the communities)

9. Which of the following is most accurate to describe the current situation of the Youth Center where you worked during PITA:
   a. very active, continuing all the former activities at same level
   b. moderately active, continuing activities on a lower level
   c. minimally active, just having occasional activities or events
   d. not active at all/closed
   e. I am not sure

Do you have final comments or ideas that you would like to share with our team?

YOUTH TRAINEES OF PANKISI COMMUNITY LINKS

Thank you for taking the time to join us for this discussion. My name is [_____]. I am working with a research institution called the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the University of Chicago. Our team is studying certain elements of USAID-Georgia's programming including Pankisi Community Links. That project carried out various activities in Pankisi Valley, especially working through local organizations such as KRDF and Roddy Scott Foundation, who organized many activities for the project.

Our aim is to study the approaches and methods used by that project, and make recommendations for future projects.

This discussion should last about 1.5 hours. All of you are encouraged to express your views honestly and to respect each other's ideas. We are taking notes to summarize what you are saying. If you all agree, we would also like to make an audio recording. This will not be shared with anyone outside of our evaluation team. Your names will not be identified in any report. You are not obligated to answer any questions, and you may leave anytime you wish.

If you have any questions, you may contact research coordinators, Ms. Audra Grant (grant-audra@norc.org; +1 301-634-9383) or Ms. Anna Solovyeva (solovyeva-anna@norc.org ; +1-301-634-9563).

WARM UP

[MODERATOR]: Ask respondents to introduce themselves by sharing their names and their villages, and to say one word that describes the arrival of spring in Pankisi Valley.

1. How did you find out about the Pankisi Community Links project?
   a. what do you think was the goal of that project?

2. How many of you participated in some training or workshop supported by PCL project?
   a. what was the main topic of that training and how long did it last?
   b. did you meet some new people in the training? where were they from?
   c. are you still in contact with some of those people?
   d. do you think that experience had any effect on you or your life? (probe for any new economic activity or other opportunities, travel, etc.)

3. What other kinds of activities or events do you remember, supported by PCL project? (probe for sports competitions, summer camp, environmental activities, journalists club, etc.)
   a. did you meet some new people at that activity? where were they from?
   b. did those participants seem different from your community?
   c. are you still in contact with some of those people?
   d. do you think that experience had any effect on you or your life?

4. Do you think all those activities made a difference in the relations among people in Pankisi Valley?
   a. if yes, what kind of difference did you notice?

5. Were there any activities or events that had a negative effect on you, or on relationships in the valley? Probe regarding any disagreements, any feelings that activities were not appropriate, etc.

6. Are you interested in having more/stronger connections with people in other parts of Georgia?
   a. why are you interested? if not, why not?

7. What do you recommend for future activities to increase linkages between young people in different parts of Georgia?

ANNEX G: SURVEY INSTRUMENT

[Attached in the end of the document]

ANNEX H: DISCLOSURE OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Name	Melanie Jane Reimer
Title	
Organization	Independent contractor
Evaluation Position?	Team Leader
Evaluation Award Number (contract or other instrument)	DRG-LER II TASKING N059
USAID Project(s) Evaluated (Include project name(s), implementer name(s) and award number(s), if applicable)	DRG-LER II TASKING N059 USAID/Georgia Integration Evaluation, NORC
I have real or potential conflicts of interest to disclose.	No
If yes answered above, I disclose the following facts: *Real or potential conflicts of interest may include, but are not limited to:* 1. *Close family member who is an employee of the USAID operating unit managing the project(s) being evaluated or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated.* 2. *Financial interest that is direct, or is significant though indirect, in the implementing organization(s) whose projects are being evaluated or in the outcome of the evaluation.* 3. *Current or previous direct or significant though indirect experience with the project(s) being evaluated, including involvement in the project design or previous iterations of the project.* 4. *Current or previous work experience or seeking employment with the USAID operating unit managing the evaluation or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated.* 5. *Current or previous work experience with an organization that may be seen as an industry competitor with the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated.* 6. *Preconceived ideas toward individuals, groups, organizations, or objectives of the particular projects and organizations being evaluated that could bias the evaluation.*	

I certify (1) that I have completed this disclosure form fully and to the best of my ability and (2) that I will update this disclosure form promptly if relevant circumstances change. If I gain access to proprietary information of other companies, then I agree to protect their information from unauthorized use or disclosure for as long as it remains proprietary and refrain from using the information for any purpose other than that for which it was furnished.

Signature	
	MJReimer

Date	June 22, 2022	
Name		Shorena Kobaidze
Title		
Organization		Independent contractor
Evaluation Position?		Local Subject Matter Expert
Evaluation Award Number (contract or other instrument)		DRG-LER II TASKING N059
USAID Project(s) Evaluated (Include project name(s), implementer name(s) and award number(s), if applicable)		DRG-LER II TASKING N059 USAID/Georgia Integration Evaluation, NORC
I have real or potential conflicts of interest to disclose.		No
If yes answered above, I disclose the following facts: *Real or potential conflicts of interest may include, but are not limited to:* 1. *Close family member who is an employee of the USAID operating unit managing the project(s) being evaluated or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated.* 2. *Financial interest that is direct, or is significant though indirect, in the implementing organization(s) whose projects are being evaluated or in the outcome of the evaluation.* 3. *Current or previous direct or significant though indirect experience with the project(s) being evaluated, including involvement in the project design or previous iterations of the project.* 4. *Current or previous work experience or seeking employment with the USAID operating unit managing the evaluation or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated.* 5. *Current or previous work experience with an organization that may be seen as an industry competitor with the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated.* 6. *Preconceived ideas toward individuals, groups, organizations, or objectives of the particular projects and organizations being evaluated that could bias the evaluation.*		

I certify (1) that I have completed this disclosure form fully and to the best of my ability and (2) that I will update this disclosure form promptly if relevant circumstances change. If I gain access to proprietary information of other companies, then I agree to protect their information from unauthorized use or disclosure for as long as it remains proprietary and refrain from using the information for any purpose other than that for which it was furnished.

Signature	
Date	

USAID DRG-LER II

U.S. Agency for International Development

1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW

Washington, DC 20523

PITA YC Members Survey

Hello, my name is [_____]. I am working with a research institution called the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the University of Chicago, based in the United States. We are conducting a survey to learn about the views of youth in Georgia regarding civic engagement and tolerance of different groups in society. This survey is being done among members of Youth Centers supported by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) via Promoting Integration, Tolerance and Awareness (PITA) Activity. We would like to learn more about your experiences with Youth Centers and have some questions for you. To answer all the questions should take about 15 minutes. You do not have to participate if you do not want to. There are no right" or "wrong" answers in the survey, and if there are questions you don't want to answer, you do not have to. You can stop the interview at any time. Your name will not be used and what you say will not be shared with anyone outside of this project. If you have any questions, you may contact research coordinator, Ms. Audra Grant (grant-audra@norc.org; +1 301-634-9383).

There are 29 questions in this survey.

Demographic

1 Age

❶ Your answer must be at least 12
❶ Only an integer value may be entered in this field.

Please write your answer here:

[   ]

2
What is your sex? *

❶ Choose one of the following answers
Please choose **only one** of the following:

○ Female
○ Male

3
Do you have any disability that impedes your daily life? *

❶ Choose one of the following answers
Please choose **only one** of the following:

○ Yes
○ No
○ Refuse to answer

4 With which ethnic group do you identify yourself? *

❶ Choose one of the following answers
❶ If you choose 'Other specify' please also specify your choice in the accompanying text field.
Please choose **only one** of the following:

○ Georgian
○ Armenian
○ Azerbaijani
○ Other [   ]

5
What language do you mostly speak at home? *

❶ Choose one of the following answers
Please choose **only one** of the following:

○ Georgian
○ Armenian
○ Azerbaijani
○ Other [   ]

6

In which region do you normally reside? *

ⓘ Choose one of the following answers
Please choose **only one** of the following:

○ Adjara

○ Aphkhazeti

○ Guria

○ Imereti

○ Kakheti

○ Kvemo Kartli

○ Mtkheta-Mtianeti

○ Racha-Lechkhumi and Kvemo Svaneti

○ Samachablo

○ Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti

○ Samtskhe-Javakheti

○ Shida Kartli

○ Tbilisi

7

In what kind of area do you normally reside? *

ⓘ Choose one of the following answers
Please choose **only one** of the following:

○ urban

○ rural

○ semiurban

Youth Center Participation

Please note that you should focus on your participation since 2015, and not include activities of the Youth Center under ANI project that ran until 2014.

8

In which Youth Center have you been a member? *

Please choose **all** that apply:

☐ Kutaisi

☐ Zugdidi

☐ Gori

☐ Ozurgeti

☐ Marneuli

☐ Gardabani

☐ Dmanisi

☐ Batumi

☐ Akhaltsikhe

☐ Akhalkalaki

☐ Ninotsminda

☐ Telavi

☐ Tbilisi State University

☐ Ilia State University

☐ Don't know

may select more than one

9

Are you still an active member of any Youth Center? *

Please choose **only one** of the following:

○ Yes

○ No

10

During which years were you actively participating in activities of a Youth Center (since 2015)? *

Please choose the appropriate response for each item:

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Don't remember
start year	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
end year	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

11

Please indicate your typical level of participation in each of the following types of Youth Center activities (if level varied over time, indicate the most usual/average level of participation) *

Please choose the appropriate response for each item:

	none	minimal	moderately active	very active
Training or workshops that included discussion of tolerance, diversity, and/or inclusion	○	○	○	○
Training or workshops that discussed media literacy and hate speech	○	○	○	○
Training on activism and awareness raising skills	○	○	○	○
Other types of training or workshops (focused on other topics)	○	○	○	○
Exchange visits/camps	○	○	○	○
Tolerance Day and other international commemoration days	○	○	○	○
Youth Task Force – European integration	○	○	○	○
Youth Task Force – media literacy	○	○	○	○
Youth Task Force – higher education opportunities	○	○	○	○
Youth Task Force – voter education	○	○	○	○
Youth Task Force – gender equality	○	○	○	○
Civic activism for change in local community	○	○	○	○

12

How did your <u>attitudes and ideas</u> change during the time you participated actively in the Youth Center? *

Please choose the appropriate response for each item:

	No change	Increased slightly	Increased a lot	Decreased slightly	Decreased a lot
Your level of feeling tolerance towards people belonging to different ethnic, religious and linguistic groups	○	○	○	○	○
Your level of feeling acceptance of integration of all citizens of Georgia, regardless of ethnic, religious or linguistic group	○	○	○	○	○
Your feeling of rejection of disinformation and hate speech	○	○	○	○	○

13
To what extent did your <u>behaviors and actions</u> change during the time you participated actively in the Youth Center? *

Please choose the appropriate response for each item:

	No change	Increased slightly	Increased a lot	Decreased slightly	Decreased a lot
Your level of tolerance shown towards people belonging to different ethnic, religious and linguistic groups	○	○	○	○	○
Your level of acceptance shown towards integration of all citizens of Georgia, regardless of ethnic, religious or linguistic group	○	○	○	○	○
Your ability to react appropriately to disinformation and hate speech	○	○	○	○	○

14

Looking back at the activities above in which you participated actively, to what extent did each one influence your OWN attitudes or behaviors related to tolerance and integration of societal groups, and disinformation/hate speech? *

Answer was 'moderately active' *or* 'very active' at question ' [G02Q10]' (Please indicate your typical level of participation in each of the following types of Youth Center activities (if level varied over time, indicate the most usual/average level of participation)

Please choose the appropriate response for each item:

	No Influence	minimal Influence	moderate Influence	strong influence
Training or workshops that included discussion of tolerance, diversity, and/or inclusion	○	○	○	○
Training or workshops that discussed media literacy and hate speech	○	○	○	○
Training on activism and awareness raising skills	○	○	○	○
Other types of training or workshops (focused on other topics)	○	○	○	○
Exchange visits/camps	○	○	○	○
Tolerance Day and other international commemoration days	○	○	○	○
Youth Task Force – European integration	○	○	○	○
Youth Task Force – media literacy	○	○	○	○
Youth Task Force – higher education opportunities	○	○	○	○
Youth Task Force – voter education	○	○	○	○
Youth Task Force – gender equality	○	○	○	○
Civic activism for change in local community	○	○	○	○

15

As a Youth Center member, did you try to promote tolerance and integration among your peers, families, and communities? *

Please choose **only one** of the following:

○ Yes
○ No

16
Which of the following methods or approaches did you use to inform or influence your peers, families, and communities and how did each of those methods seem to affect their attitudes or behaviors? *

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:
Answer was 'Yes' at question ' [G02Q14]' (As a Youth Center member, did you try to promote tolerance and integration among your peers, families, and communities?)

Please choose the appropriate response for each item:

	did not use	No change	Increased slightly	Increased a lot	Decreased slightly	Decreased a lot
Youth Task Force	○	○	○	○	○	○
Community meetings or gatherings	○	○	○	○	○	○
Informal or impromptu discussions	○	○	○	○	○	○
Peer training sessions	○	○	○	○	○	○
Social media sharing	○	○	○	○	○	○
other (specify)	○	○	○	○	○	○

17
Other methods specified *

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:
Answer was 'Yes' at question ' [G02Q14]' (As a Youth Center member, did you try to promote tolerance and integration among your peers, families, and communities?) *and* Answer was 'No change' *or* 'Increased slightly' *or* 'Increased a lot' *or* 'Decreased slightly' *or* 'Decreased a lot' at question ' [G02Q15]' (Which of the following methods or approaches did you use to inform or influence your peers, families, and communities and how did each of those methods seem to affect their attitudes or behaviors? (other (specify)))

Please write your answer here:

18
Now, we want to discuss how the Youth Center or PITA encouraged and supported you to promote tolerance and integration with others outside the Youth Center, considering a list of various types of support.

- How many times did you receive each type of support? (approximately)
- How useful was each type of support (received by you personally or by a group in which you participated) in helping you to reach people and influence them?

*Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:
Answer was 'Yes' at question ' [G02Q14]' (As a Youth Center member, did you try to promote tolerance and integration among your peers, families, and communities?)

	# of times this type of support received	Degree of usefulness, 0 - didn't receive, 1=not at all, 2=somewhat useful , 3=very useful
micro grants for outreach activities		
Thematic training in specific topic		
Communication skills training		
logistical support (venue, transport, etc.)		
Information materials or tools for trainers or participants		
advertising or public promotion of event		
Getting authorization from government bodies or schools		
Other (specify)		

if haven't received put 0 in both fields for each line

19 Other type of support specified *

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:
Answer was greater than '0' at question ' [G02Q16]' (Now, we want to discuss how the Youth Center or PITA encouraged and supported you to promote tolerance and integration with others outside the Youth Center, considering a list of various types of support.How many times did you receive each type of support? (approximately)How useful was each type of support (received by you personally or by a group in which you participated) in helping you to reach people and influence them?)

Please write your answer here:

20

What changes do you recommend Youth Centers should make to have more influence on community members' knowledge and attitudes? (Rank the options on this list 1=not recommended, 2=good idea but not essential, 3= strongly recommended) *

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:
Answer was 'Yes' at question ' [G02Q14]' (As a Youth Center member, did you try to promote tolerance and integration among your peers, families, and communities?)

Please choose the appropriate response for each item:

	not recommended	good idea but not essential	strongly recommended	Don't know
More or larger small grants to YC members	○	○	○	○
More or better information materials (flyers, digital information, presentation tools, etc.)	○	○	○	○
More youth centers located in villages and rural areas	○	○	○	○
Youth Center member visits to more communities (different ones)	○	○	○	○
More followup visits in the same communities (after visits)	○	○	○	○
More government involvement in outreach	○	○	○	○
More activities delivered through schools	○	○	○	○
More training for Youth Center members	○	○	○	○
More utilization of Facebook and other social media	○	○	○	○
other (specify)	○	○	○	○

21 Other changes that would allow Youth Center to have more influence on community members' knowledge and attitudes *

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:
Answer was 'Yes' at question ' [G02Q14]' (As a Youth Center member, did you try to promote tolerance and integration among your peers, families, and communities?) *and* Answer was 'good idea but not essential' *or* 'strongly recommended' at question ' [G02Q17]' (What changes do you recommend Youth Centers should make to have more influence on community members' knowledge and attitudes? (Rank the options on this list 1=not recommended, 2=good idea but not essential, 3= strongly recommended) (other (specify)))

Please write your answer here:

22

With how many people did you promote or share your learning on tolerance and integration during your Youth Center participation? (including in person or remotely, but not including social media sharing) *

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:
Answer was 'Yes' at question ' [G02Q14]' (As a Youth Center member, did you try to promote tolerance and integration among your peers, families, and communities?)

Please choose **only one** of the following:

○ 0 to 10
○ 11-25
○ 26-50
○ more than 50

23
How much are you continuing to promote tolerance and integration with new acquaintances? *

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:
Answer was 'Yes' at question ' [G02Q14]' (As a Youth Center member, did you try to promote tolerance and integration among your peers, families, and communities?)

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- ○ never
- ○ rarely
- ○ sometimes
- ○ often

24
Did you participate in an internship for 1+4 students with a government institution organized through the State Ministry for Reconciliation? *

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

25
With which type of government institution did you do your internship? *

Only answer this question if following conditions are met:
Answer was 'Yes' at question ' [G02Q20]' (Did you participate in an internship for 1+4 students with a government institution organized through the State Ministry for Reconciliation?)

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- ○ national level ministry
- ○ national level institution (other than a ministry)
- ○ regional administration
- ○ municipal or city government
- ○ school
- ○ Other [   ]

26
Were you employed by the same institution or entity, after your internship? *

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:
Answer was 'Yes' at question ' [G02Q20]' (Did you participate in an internship for 1+4 students with a government institution organized through the State Ministry for Reconciliation?)

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

27
How would you rate your experience of that internship? *

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:
Answer was 'Yes' at question ' [G02Q20]' (Did you participate in an internship for 1+4 students with a government institution organized through the State Ministry for Reconciliation?)

Please choose the appropriate response for each item:

	poor	satisfactory	good	excellent
Learning opportunities	○	○	○	○
Relevance to my career goals	○	○	○	○
Relations with co-workers	○	○	○	○
Supervision and support	○	○	○	○
Preparation for finding another job	○	○	○	○
Obtaining a job with government	○	○	○	○
Overall rating	○	○	○	○

28

The PITA project supported a number of public awareness campaigns, platforms and activities aimed at enhancing tolerance and integration of ethnic, linguistic, and religious minorities and/or resistance to misinformation.

- how involved were you with each of the following activities?
- what effect did these activities have on you? (related to tolerance, integration and resistance to misinformation/hate speech)
- what effect do you think those activities had on people that you know?

*

	Level of involvement: 0-not aware or involved, 1- somewhat involved, 2- actively involved	Effect on you personally: 0-none, 1-minimal, 2-moderate, 3- significant	Effect perceived on people that you know: 0-none, 1-minimal, 2-moderate, 3-significant
No to Phobia platform			
Hate speech and propaganda research and reports			
Tolerance Day			
Tolerance Champions			

29

Do you have any other comments or recommendations ?

Please write your answer here:

2022-05-15 – 23:14

Submit your survey.
Thank you for completing this survey.