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Sida Decentralised Evaluation

FCG Sweden

# Evaluation of Core Support to the Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI)

Final Report

# Evaluation of Core Support to the Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI)

**Final Report  
October 2021**

**Henrik Alffram  
Tamuna Koberidze**

**Authors:** Henrik Alffram and Tamuna Koberidze

The views and interpretations expressed in this report are the authors' and do not necessarily reflect those of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Sida.

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SWEDISH INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION AGENCY

Address: SE-105 25 Stockholm, Sweden. Office: Valhallavägen 199, Stockholm

Telephone: +46 (0)8-698 50 00. Telefax: +46 (0)8-20 88 64

E-mail: [info@sida.se](mailto:info@sida.se). Homepage: <http://www.sida.se>

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# Abbreviations and Acronyms

CSO	Civil Society Organization
EU	European Union
GEL	Georgian Lari
GYLA	Georgian Young Lawyers' Association
HRBA	Human Rights Based Approach
IDFI	Institute for Development of Freedom of Information
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OECD/DAC	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development/Development Assistance Committee
OGP	Open Government Partnership
SEK	Swedish Krona
Sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SIGMA	Support for Improvement in Governance and Management
SO	Strategic Objective
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
USAID	United States Agency for Development Cooperation
USD	United States Dollar

# Preface

This evaluation was contracted by the Embassy of Sweden in Georgia through the Sida Framework Agreement for Evaluation Services. The evaluation team consisted of Henrik Alffram and Tamuna Koberidze. The Final Report was quality assured by Francesca Jessup, whose work was independent of the evaluation team. Annefried Mueller provided project management support.

# Executive Summary

The Swedish Embassy in Georgia engaged FCG Sweden to conduct a mid-term evaluation of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency's (Sida) core support to the Georgian Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI). The purpose of the evaluation was to help both the Embassy and IDFI better understand what works well and what may work less well in IDFI's operations. Evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations should inform decisions on how project implementation may be adjusted and improved. Sweden supports the organization through a three-year agreement covering the period 1 January 2020 to 31 December 2022.

IDFI's vision is an "informed and empowered society for democratic governance" and its goal is to support "Democratic and Good Governance in Georgia through evidence-based research, monitoring and advocacy."<sup>1</sup> To attain this goal, IDFI combines think-tank capacities and watchdog activities. A central part of IDFI's Theory of Change is "generation of reliable information, processing and transformation of this information into various products that are then used in a targeted manner to achieve specific positive change."<sup>2</sup>

The Evaluation Team assesses that IDFI's strategic approach as well as the focus of its practical program implementation are highly relevant in relation to Sweden's results strategy for reform cooperation. Its operations are also highly relevant to Georgia's reform priorities and challenges. However, the political context in which IDFI is implementing its program has not been conducive to change. Its operations have also been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. Despite this, IDFI has produced a substantial number of high-quality outputs and contributed to several important outcome relating to open governance, anti-corruption, strengthening of judicial transparency and independence, improved citizen engagement amongst local governments, memory studies and countering of disinformation, access to information and digital literacy.

Key factors behind these achievements are IDFI's capacity to produce high quality evidence-based outputs on which it bases its awareness raising and capacity development efforts. IDFI's combination of a watchdog and advocacy related approach, on the one hand, and a technical assistance and capacity development role, on the other, also appears to be effective. IDFI's increased focus on working with local governments has been successful. At this level, as well as at national level, its ability

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<sup>1</sup> IDFI. n.d. Supporting Democratic and Good Governance in Georgia through Evidence-based Research, Monitoring and Advocacy

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

to convene civil society actors and public officials has been important. The advocacy messages in its monitoring and research reports could often, however, be more effectively communicated.

There are legitimate concerns that IDFI is taking on too many diverse issues and that it does not maintain a sufficient focus on its core activities. This may affect its capacity to put in the long-term concerted efforts required to bring about change and impact on its reputation as a credible organization with a high degree of subject matter expertise. Many of the 143 Outcomes in IDFI Strategic Plan will not be attained during the program period. In many cases the external context in which the program is implemented makes it impossible to attain the planned outcomes. Many other outcomes are simply so ambitious that it was never realistic to expect their attainment, not even in the most conducive of environments. Even though IDFI's actions and outputs in many cases may not be sufficient to bring about dramatic changes, in the long run they may, however, provide the necessary information for changes to take place. In a situation in which public institutions are not able to ensure transparency and justice, the data and information collected and released by IDFI may be the only form of accountability available.

Despite the pandemic, IDFI used nearly three-quarters of the amount budgeted for its operations in 2020 and has managed to implement a significant part of its program. The extensive number of significant outputs produced have been created at moderate cost. Individual costs, including salaries, appear to be reasonable. Overall, the Evaluation Team assesses that IDFI operates with a high degree of efficiency and that its costs are well justified by its progress towards attaining results.

In many ways, IDFI applies a flexible and adaptive management approach. The core support from Sida contributes importantly to its ability of doing so. At the same time, the less adaptive practices of many other donors providing targeted short-term project support sets limits for IDFI's adaptability. There is a need for improved donor coordination and harmonization of donor requirements to further strengthen IDFI's effectiveness and adaptability.

IDFI's strong reputation, proven fundraising ability, financial reserves, and functioning governance structure, indicates that IDFI possesses a reasonable level of institutional sustainability. It is in any cases much better developed than it is for many other donor-funded CSOs. IDFI is largely dependent on the work and contribution of its two founders and experience shows that the robustness of an organization's implementation model may not be proven until a leadership transition has taken place. At the same time, IDFI's Charter gives the Board a central role in the organization's governance that it fulfils in practice.

IDFI has paid attention to and successfully ensured a sound level of gender balance amongst participants in and contributors to its activities, and amongst staff. It has successfully implemented some activities of importance from a women's rights and gender perspective. Overall, however, gender mainstreaming does not yet feature prominently in its intervention logic and overall approach. The same is true for its stated



focus on disadvantaged groups in general, and ethnic minorities in particular, which is not well reflected in its intervention logic and not yet firmly manifested in program implementation.

The evaluation recommends IDFI to:

- Strengthen its focus on disadvantaged groups
- Strengthen its approach on gender equality and women's rights
- Enhance its local government focused work
- Increase its focus on creating demand for reform
- Maintain its focus on core activities
- Develop a more detailed Theory of Change
- Strengthen the separation between the Supervisory Board and the Executive
- Make the Supervisory Board responsible for selection of auditor
- Improve donor coordination and harmonization in cooperation with Sida
- Enhance its advocacy messages in thematic reports

# 1 Introduction

The Swedish Embassy in Georgia has engaged FCG Sweden, represented by Henrik Alffram and Tamuna Koberidze, to conduct a mid-term evaluation of the Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI). This report presents the findings, conclusions, and recommendations of the evaluation.

## 1.1 EVALUATION OBJECT AND SCOPE

The object of the evaluation is IDFI, a Georgia-based non-governmental organization established in 2009, and the core support Sweden provides to the organization through a three-year agreement covering the period 1 January 2020 to 31 December 2022. IDFI's vision is an “informed and empowered society for democratic governance” and its goal is to support “Democratic and Good Governance in Georgia through evidence-based research, monitoring and advocacy.”<sup>3</sup>

## 1.2 PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the mid-term evaluation is to help both the Embassy and IDFI better understand what works well and what may work less well in IDFI's operations. Evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations should inform decisions on how project implementation may be adjusted and improved.

To meet its purpose, the evaluation should assess the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability, as well as IDFI's contribution to poverty reduction and gender equality. The ToR listed eight evaluation questions (EQ) and called on the Evaluation Team to further refine these. Table 1 lists the evaluation criteria and final evaluation questions that have determined the focus of the evaluation.

**Table 1: Evaluation criteria and evaluation questions**

Criteria	Evaluation questions
Relevance	Is the project relevant to the <i>Results Strategy for Sweden's reform cooperation with Eastern Europe, the Western Balkans and Turkey 2014-2020</i> ?
	Is the project relevant to Georgia's governance reform challenges and national priorities?

<sup>3</sup> IDFI. 2019. Supporting Democratic and Good Governance in Georgia through Evidence-based Research, Monitoring and Advocacy

	How can IDFI better contribute to sustainability of the Government of Georgia's governance reform management ownership and capacity?
Effectiveness	To what extent has the project made progress towards attainment of outcomes?
	What are the key factors behind the attainment/non-attainment of results?
Efficiency	Can the costs for the project be justified by its progress towards attaining results?
	To what extent has IDFI been adaptive in its approach towards reaching results?
Sustainability	Is the current IDFI implementation model ensuring long term institutional sustainability?
Cross-cutting issues	Has the project contributed to poverty reduction? If yes, how?
	How effectively has gender equality and gender mainstreaming been integrated into the design, planning, implementation and follow-up of the intervention? Has the project had any positive or negative effects on gender equality?

## 1.3 STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

Following this introduction, the report presents the methodological aspects of the mid-term evaluation in section 2. Section 3 contains a description of IDFI, and section 4 presents the evaluation's findings relating to the evaluation criteria and evaluation questions. Section 5 contains the Evaluation Team's conclusions and section 6 its recommendations. Annex 1-3 includes the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the assignment, a list of documentation reviewed, and a list of people interviewed.

## 2 Methodology

### 2.1 OVERALL APPROACH

The Evaluation Team applied a utilization-focused and participatory approach, whereby there was close interaction with key evaluation stakeholders to capture their perspectives and experiences. We engaged the intended evaluation users during the different stages of the evaluation process, from evaluation design to discussion of findings and conclusions and review of the draft evaluation report. Specific opportunities for consultations and for the evaluation users to provide input included the start-up meeting, inception meeting, period for comments on the draft inception report, interviews with representatives of the IDFI and the Swedish Embassy, individual and joint Embassy and IDFI debriefings, and a period for providing comments on the draft evaluation report.

The evaluation was characterized by a politically informed approach through which the relevance, effectiveness, and sustainability of IDFI's work was assessed given prevailing political economy constraints. We further strived to embed a gender responsive and human rights-based approach throughout the evaluation process. The data collection strategy was qualitative, relying on a review of available documentation, key informant interviews and group discussions/workshops with IDFI staff.

### 2.2 APPROACH PER CRITERIA

The evaluation covers four different OECD/DAC evaluation criteria and two crosscutting issues. The specific evaluation criteria required somewhat different methodological approaches.

The evaluation assessed **relevance** in two distinct steps. First, it assessed through a review of documentation, the extent to which the objectives of IDFI align with Sweden's Results Strategy and with Georgia's official reform priorities. Second, through a broader desk review of thematically significant literature and interviews with key informants not related to IDFI, the evaluation reflected on the degree to which IDFI implements its program in a manner that is relevant in relation to Swedish and Georgian strategies and priorities, and in relation to Georgia's actual reform challenges.

IDFI's own theory of change guided the **effectiveness** aspects of the mid-term evaluation, which focused on the extent to which IDFI has progressed towards the attainment of outcomes. As a first step in this process, the Evaluation Team reviewed IDFI's results reporting and went through IDFI's general objectives with the relevant IDFI directions. The purpose was to get an understanding of the result

achieved/progress made and how the result came about. The Evaluation Team subsequently gathered further evidence from key informant interviews and a continued review of program related documentation and IDFI outputs.

The **efficiency** assessments focused on whether IDFI's program is on budget, activities carried out as planned, and management and activity costs are reasonable. Through interviews and a review of documents, the Evaluation Team also looked at what progress IDFI has made on its plans to expand operation areas and better reach rural and remote areas of the country. It also reviewed its intention of finding a good balance between sub-granting and direct implementation and, where relevant, moving away from sub-granting.

The Evaluation Team based its assessment of **sustainability** on a mapping of key features of IDFI's implementation model, including governance structure and funding arrangements. Their strengths and weaknesses from a sustainability perspective have subsequently been assessed.

We assessed the cross-cutting issue of **poverty**, taking IDFI's own description of how it will contribute to poverty reduction as a starting point. As its approach is closely linked to a Human Rights Based Approach to Development (HRBA) we have explored how it promotes transparency and accountability and ensures a focus on vulnerable groups.

The Evaluation Team assessed the **gender equality** questions through a review of what steps IDFI has taken to fulfil the commitments laid down in its Strategic Plan. We reviewed, through documents and key informant interviews, to what extent IDFI has empowered women to have more leadership roles and ensured gender balance in IDFI activities.

## 2.3 DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

A document review formed the start of the data collection process. It was structured around the evaluation criteria and contributed to answer the evaluation questions and focus and frame key informant interviews. The desk review was primarily based on documents obtained from IDFI and the Embassy of Sweden. At an early stage of the data collection process, the Evaluation Team held separate result assessment sessions for each of IDFI's General Objectives.

The Evaluation Team carried out in-real-life and online interviews in Tbilisi, the Autonomous Republic of Ajara and Ozurgeti Municipality. These areas were selected considering the presence of a broad, diverse, and purposeful sample of key informants representing a variety of stakeholder groups familiar with IDFI's operations, as well as issues of logistics. We interviewed IDFI staff, IDFI Supervisory Board Members, and representatives of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), Parliament of Georgia, public authorities, Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Ajara, Ozurgeti and

Tbilisi municipalities, academic institutions, media, and donors. Annex 3 contains the names of people consulted.

The Evaluation Team treated data analysis as an activity distinct from data collection. Rather, analysis of collected data was an ongoing activity conducted in parallel with both the desk review and the key informant interviews. The ongoing analysis informed the data collection and helped ensure that it remained relevant for addressing the evaluation questions.

Triangulation was key to ensuring the reliability and validity of the findings and to mitigate any biases or problems that may arise from one single method or a single observer. We triangulated among the methods of gathering data, sources, and stakeholder perspectives, and across the two Evaluation Team members.

The Evaluation Team had three debriefing/validation sessions. At the end of the data collection period in Georgia, it had separate debriefing sessions for the Embassy of Sweden and IDFI. Later, it organized a joint online debriefing for IDFI and the Embassy of Sweden, during which preliminary findings, conclusions and recommendations were presented and discussed.

A draft version of the present evaluation report was quality assured by an independent expert before FCG Sweden shared it with IDFI and the Embassy of Sweden for comments. The Evaluation Team took the comments received into account when finalizing the report.

## 2.4 LIMITATIONS AND CHALLENGES

The Covid-19 pandemic meant that roughly half of the key informant interviews conducted had to be carried out online. While a different level of trust can be established during in-real-life interviews, we do not believe that the overall evaluation conclusions and recommendations are significantly affected.

### 3 Evaluation object

The object of the evaluation is the Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI), a Georgia-based non-governmental organization established in 2009, and the core support Sweden provides to the organization. IDFI's vision is an "informed and empowered society for democratic governance" and its goal is to support "Democratic and Good Governance in Georgia through evidence-based research, monitoring and advocacy."<sup>4</sup>

To attain this goal, IDFI combines think-tank capacities and watchdog activities. A central part of IDFI's Theory of Change is "generation of reliable information, processing and transformation of this information into various products that are then used in a targeted manner to achieve specific positive change."<sup>5</sup>

IDFI has developed the following general objectives/areas of work: 1. Promoting Open Governance; 2. Strengthening the Anti-Corruption System, 3. Social and Economic Policy; 4. Rule of Law; 5. Facilitating the Decentralization Process; 6. Supporting the Process of Democratic Transition; 7. Media and Freedom of Expression; 8. Internet and Innovations. While the present mid-term evaluation is only concerned with the work IDFI conducts in Georgia, some of its operations focus on the region and beyond.

Sweden started supporting IDFI in January 2020. The support, which is channeled through the Embassy of Sweden in Tbilisi, covers the period 1 January 2020 - 31 December 2022 and amounts to SEK 9.1 million (approximately USD 1 million). Other donors to IDFI include UNDP, USAID, EU, and the Open Society Foundations.

A Supervisory Board is IDFI's highest governing body. It sets its general direction and development strategy. The Supervisory Board also elects the Executive Director and oversees her/his work. The current Executive Director and Program Director jointly founded IDFI. IDFI currently has 29 staff members.

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<sup>4</sup> IDFI. 2019. Supporting Democratic and Good Governance in Georgia through Evidence-based Research, Monitoring and Advocacy

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

# 4 Findings

## 4.1 RELEVANCE

Under the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria, the relevance criterion concerns “The extent to which the intervention objectives and design respond to beneficiaries’, global, country, and partner/institution needs, policies, and priorities, and continue to do so if circumstances change.”<sup>6</sup>

### 4.1.1 Is the project relevant to the Results Strategy for Sweden’s reform cooperation with Eastern Europe, the Western Balkans and Turkey 2014-2020?

The *Results Strategy for Sweden’s reform cooperation with Eastern Europe, the Western Balkans and Turkey 2014-2020* (the Swedish Strategy) contains three expected results for Eastern Europe. The second of these is, “Strengthened democracy, greater respect for human rights and a more fully developed state under the rule of law.” Under this result are sub-goals focusing on strengthened public administration and judicial systems, including “more efficient public administration...”, “delivery of higher quality public services, based on principles of non-discrimination and equal rights with less corruption,” and “more efficient judicial systems that guarantee the right to a fair trial...”.<sup>7</sup>

There are also sub-goals “focusing on increased enjoyment of human rights and greater opportunities to exercise democratic influence.” These include “improved conditions for democratic accountability to the people”, “freer and more independent media”, and “women and men have to a greater extent the same power to shape society and their own lives.”

IDFI’s Strategic Plan states that “IDFI will work towards key objectives of combating corruption, improving transparency of public institutions, increasing citizen engagement in decision-making processes, achieving higher standards of rule of law, promoting more inclusive economic policies, facilitating the democratic decentralization and the democratic transition processes, upholding media and human rights, and promoting innovations to solve outstanding problems.” IDFI’s organizational structure is guided by these objectives and specific projects and activities are implemented in relation to all of them.

Overall, IDFI’s objectives thus relate very well to Sweden’s objectives. However, certain aspects of IDFI’s work arguably have no immediate or obvious link to Sweden’s

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<sup>6</sup> OECD/DAC Network on Evaluation Criteria. 2019. Better Criteria for Better Evaluation: Revised Evaluation Criteria Definitions and Principles for Use.

<sup>7</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs. 2014. Results Strategy for Sweden’s reform cooperation with Eastern Europe, the Western Balkans and Turkey 2014-2020.



results strategy. This includes some of IDFI's economic and social policy work, such as the work on the energy sector<sup>8</sup> and on cancer treatment, and the work carried out on collecting and publishing documents on the Soviet totalitarian past. However, ensuring access to archival materials has been a core activity of IDFI since its establishment. It has a history of using these documents for studies in cooperation with local and international partners. Several interviewees have highlighted this as an important aspect of IDFI's work in promoting democratic developments.

The Swedish strategy objective that “women and men have to a greater extent the same power to shape society and their own lives” is not a key feature of IDFI's strategy. The Strategy lists, however, a few actions that IDFI will take to further strengthen its focus on gender equality, which are discussed in section 4.5.2. In any case, the Evaluation Teams overall finding is that IDFI's strategic approach as well as the focus of its practical program implementation, is highly relevant in relation to several of the goals of the Swedish Strategy.

#### **4.1.2 Is the project relevant to Georgia's governance reform challenges and national priorities?**

Three interlinked processes stand out as particularly important in relation to governance reform in Georgia: the EU integration process, the Public Administration Reform (PAR) Process, and the Open Governance Partnership (OGP).

Through the EU-Georgia Association Agreement of 2014, Georgia commits to carry out comprehensive reforms for building an accountable, efficient, effective, transparent, and professional civil service. The agreement aims to ensure sustainability of progress made during the past decade in improving public administration, reducing graft, and achieving economic growth. Further reforms to advance Georgia towards EU membership focus on institutionalization of a professional, value-based, and citizen-oriented civil service.

In 2015, the Government of Georgia confirmed its commitment to comprehensive reforms and outlined them in the new Government Program “For Strong, Democratic and Unified Georgia (2015)”. In the same year, the Government of Georgia initiated PAR with the support of EU and OECD, and their joint initiative Support for Improvement in Governance and Management (SIGMA). It also adopted the Public Administration Reform Roadmap 2020. The Road Map focuses on six policy areas: Policy Planning, Civil Service and Human Resource Management, Accountability, Service Delivery, Public Finance Management, Local Municipalities. To implement the Road Map, the Government has adopted three different action plans, the most recent covering 2019-2020.

Georgia was one of the first countries to join the OGP following its creation in 2011. The OGP, which comprises 78 countries, 76 local governments and thousands of civil

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<sup>8</sup> The energy sector review looked at “terms of generation and consumption dynamics, electricity trading trends, electricity retail and wholesale prices, and planned and ongoing changes in the sector, as well as forecasts: generation, consumption, and deficit in the coming years.”

society organizations striving to transform how government serves its citizens. The members countries commit to “making governance more open, efficient, and transparent, to ensure civic engagement in the decision-making process and to deliver public services in a simple and comfortable manner.” They also commit to develop Action Plans focusing on the five grand challenges of OGP: (i) improving public services, (ii) increasing public integrity, (iii) more effectively managing public resources, (iv) creating safer communities, and (v) increasing corporate accountability.

In Georgia, the most recent Open Government Action Plan covers the period 2018-2019. It says, “The Government of Georgia considers the openness of governance, its transparency, accountability and engagement of citizens in the decision-making process as vital values for a democratic society and therefore, faithfully continues introducing fundamental principles of the Open Government Partnership (OGP) into the public governance.” The Action Plan comprises 23 commitments relating to the five grand challenges of OGP, as well as to the specific challenges and responsibilities of different municipalities in Georgia. A new action plan with activities after 2020 has not yet been adopted.

IDFI has engaged closely with the three interlinked reform processes. As stated in its Strategy, IDFI has “actively engaged in the process of Georgia’s European integration since 2009...” and many of the reforms covered by the Association Agreement are issues on which IDFI is involved, including issues of transparency and accountability. One of IDFI’s outcomes refers to the Association Agreement. It states that, “The process of aligning the Georgian public procurement legislation with that of the EU in the framework of the EU-Georgia Association Agreement is successfully completed...”.

As for Georgia’s PAR initiatives, IDFI’s work and activities cover several of the policy areas set out in the government’s Roadmap 2020. These include policy planning, public service delivery, and public finance management. Under an EU-funded project, Contributing to PAR through Civic Monitoring and Engagement, IDFI and the Georgian Young Lawyers’ Association (GYLA) work together to monitor progress in these areas. To facilitate monitoring of the PAR Action Plan, IDFI has set up an online platform which provides practical information on PAR and facilitates external user engagement.

In response to the significant open government challenges that still exist, IDFI states in its Strategy that it intends to “further increase transparency and accountability of public institutions; support availability and use of open government data; promote public participation practices; and advocate meaningful/aspiring reforms.” These intentions are reflected IDFI’s General Objective 1: Promoting Open Governance. Since the beginning of 2020, IDFI has implemented a range of activities to monitor and advocate open government reforms and promote access to public information. Furthermore, IDFI has organized activities aiming at building capacity to manage open government data and it has supported Parliament in implementing Legislative Openness Reforms. The Executive Director of IDFI has been engaged in OGP at the global level, serving as a Steering Committee Member from 2017 until October 2020.

In summary, IDFI's priorities and activities are highly relevant to Georgia's reform priorities and challenges. The three interlinked processes of EU Association, Public Administration Reform and Open Governance are all processes on which IDFI has a strong focus and substantial engagement.

#### **4.1.3 How can IDFI better contribute to sustainability of the Government of Georgia's governance reform management ownership and capacity?**

Many observers believe that Georgia's reform efforts have stalled and that developments in many respects are moving in the wrong direction. IDFI writes, "The backsliding trend on key aspects of democratic development are worrying and directly necessitate doubling of efforts by all responsible stakeholders, civil society organizations being chief among them, to try to uphold democratic principles in governance and, ideally, reverse the trend altogether." Amongst those interviewed, there is, however, a high level of consensus that civil society actors concerned with governance reform have limited possibilities of influencing the reform processes. Many also argue that the political will to move decisively forward with reforms is lacking. In this context, there are three primary strategies that an NGO, like IDFI can apply.

First, it can strive to identify areas and issues on which it is possible to cooperate with public institutions and reform processes despite the external context. In most situations, it is possible to identify matters that may not be politically sensitive but that are still relevant from a democratic governance perspective. Second, it can work to make facts and data of importance for future reforms available, including on the current statute of government affairs. Also, in a situation in which public institutions are not able to ensure transparency and justice, the data and information collected and released by IDFI may be the only form of accountability available. Third, IDFI can focus on creating stronger public demand for reform.

IDFI has applied all three strategies. As noted in section 4.2, despite the challenging context, IDFI has been successful in identifying public institutions or other duty bearers with which it can engage on various reform related activities. IDFI has a strong focus on making information relating to the performance of state institutions publicly available and to analyze such information. One of its overarching strategic goals is to "Encourage an Informed Public by expanding the public's access to information & quality reporting while sharpening its discernment of competing narratives, past and present."

IDFI also strives to ensure that journalists and civil society actors can access and make use of publicly held information. To some extent, it makes concerted efforts to raise knowledge and capacity amongst groups which may be of central importance for future reform efforts, including university students. IDFI does not work significantly on creating public demand for reform through mobilization and initiatives aiming at citizen monitoring of public institutions. IDFI has focused extensively on enabling for citizens to engage with the government but has worked less intensely on creating public pressure for reform.

Arguably, IDFI can best facilitate the Government of Georgia's governance reform management ownership and capacity by continuing to contribute to the existence of a vibrant civil society. Such a civil society should be able to monitor the actions of the government, demand reforms and engage in a discourse on which priorities and steps that are needed for genuine progress on reforms.

## 4.2 EFFECTIVENESS

Effectiveness concerns the extent to which an intervention has achieved, or is expected to achieve, its objectives and results.

### 4.2.1 To what extent has the project made progress towards attainment of outcomes?

In its Strategic Plan, IDFI sets out eight general objectives. For each of these, it has developed three to six so-called strategic objectives. It has also elaborated two to eleven outcomes for each of these objectives. There are no less than 143 outcomes set out in the Strategic plan.

IDFI's progress reports show that the organization has made progress in relation to roughly two-thirds of these outcomes. The progress report for 2020 also notes progress relating to one crosscutting objective—Supporting the Public Administration—that is not listed in the Strategic plan.

IDFI's progress reports and the Evaluation Team's interviews show that there are differences in the degree to which IDFI has made progress in relation to the different General Objectives. The progress made is discussed below. The report discusses poverty reduction and gender separately, in section 4.5.

### General Objective 1: Promoting open governance

IDFI has worked on 14 of the 24 outcomes relating to General Objective 1. To Increase access to public information and use of open data (SO 1.1), IDFI has monitored access to public information, followed the degree to which public information is proactively disclosed by public institutions, and provided good practice suggestions on public disclosure. It has also contributed to directly making more data publicly available by publishing data sets relating to various policy issues. It organized workshops on the use of public data and prepared an Open Data Toolkit tailored for journalists. The toolkit received during 2020 198,738 reaches<sup>9</sup>, 3,730 clicks, and 279 reactions<sup>10</sup> on Facebook.

A general review of IDFI's achievements indicates their importance from an open governance perspective. Interviewees also express firm support for the work carried out by IDFI in this area. IDFI's own indicators show that public institutions continued to improve in terms of proactive disclosure of public information. According to

<sup>9</sup> Reach is the number of people who saw any content from a specific Page or about that Page.

<sup>10</sup> "A reaction is a response to a Facebook post or ad in which a person chooses one of several emoticons (Like, Love, Haha, Wow, Sad, Angry) to indicate their feelings about the content of a post or ad."

interviews, IDFI's own publication of information is also seen as a relevant contribution, as are its efforts to promote the use of data. IDFI's progress report for 2020 showed, however, a decrease in the extent to which institutions responded satisfactorily to IDFI's requests for public information. Amongst the freedom of information requests made, responses were received in 83%. This was the lowest ratio of responses to Freedom of Information requests seen in the past five years. It exceeded, however, the 80% baseline value from 2014.

IDFI has divided the promotion of citizen engagement in policy development (SO 1.2) into two parts: (i) Citizen engagement in policy development at the executive branch, and (ii) Support the operation of the Permanent Parliamentary Council on Open Governance. IDFI has made limited progress in relation to the first part, citizen engagement in policy development at the executive branch, and activities in relation to this part only started in 2021. However, IDFI has made considerable progress in its support to the Parliamentary Standing Council of Open Government. It supported the Council's operations and facilitated its interaction with civil society. It also supported the Council's monitoring of the Open Parliament Action Plan. Interviews and IDFI's own reporting thus show that IDFI has contributed to strengthen the operations of the Council.

IDFI has contributed crucially to implementing OGP principles in the Supreme Council of Adjara (SCA)<sup>11</sup> and to strengthen cooperation between SCA and civil society. It played a central role in the development and monitoring of a SCA action plan, which among other things focuses on improving citizen engagement in the law-making process; establishing a citizen engagement center; developing a system of electronic and written petitions from citizens; and adapting the website and the SCA building to the needs of persons with disabilities. The SCA has so far made good progress in implementing the action plan.

The third strategic objective concerns Promotion of substantial and innovative open government reforms (SO 1.3). The related work focused in 2020 on increasing transparency and accountability of extractive industries. IDFI has advocated for Georgia to join the EITI and establishing a beneficial ownership registry, but there is so far no clear sign that transparency and accountability have increased

## **General Objective 2: Strengthening the Anti-Corruption System**

IDFI has four strategic objectives for strengthening the anti-corruption system. They focus on combatting corruption in public procurement (SO 2.1), fighting Public Sector Corruption (including High-Level Corruption) (SO 2.2), and addressing political (party) and corporate corruption (SO 2.3) and strengthening the mechanisms for

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<sup>11</sup> The elected representative body of the Autonomous Republic of Ajara.

fighting against Corruption in Sport (SO 2.4). Under these IDFI has developed 26 outcomes. Of these IDFI has reported activities in eleven.

IDFI has, during the reviewed period, had a strong focus on monitoring and revealing systemic problems regarding government spending and public procurements. Based on its monitoring findings, IDFI provided recommendations for change. After IDFI raised concerns, the Government introduced unified standards and prices for hotels used as Covid-19 quarantine centers. The number of simplified procurements were also reduced.

In relation to political party corruption, IDFI studied and exposed information about suspicious political donations benefiting the ruling party. It also put forward several recommendations regarding the election and political union legislation. IDFI continued advocating for the establishment of an Independent Anti-Corruption Agency and made recommendations for the government's new anti-corruption strategy and action plan. The policy recommendations aiming at strengthening the anti-corruption system have so far not gained traction amongst decision makers.

To contribute to addressing public sector corruption, IDFI worked to increase awareness of corruption and anti-corruption measures amongst the general public and amongst public officials. While increased awareness can be an important step for addressing the issue, there are few indications that the capacity, transparency, and the accountability of public institutions is increasing. In cooperation with Ilia State University, IDFI established an Educational Certification Program in Fighting Corruption. Key informants involved in this cooperation referred to it as valuable, stating that IDFI added value by providing expertise, applied experience, external perspectives, and link to wider society.

### **General Objective 3. Promoting Social and Economic Policy**

IDFI has worked on roughly half of the 17 outcomes under General Objective 3 on Social and Economic Policy. IDFI worked on increasing availability of and access to financial information and carried out energy sector studies (SO 3.2). To Build an economy focused on qualitative development and ensure fairness and efficiency in income and wealth distribution (SO 3.3), it analyzed the 2021 state budget, monitored and provided suggestions regarding the government's anti-crisis program.

To contribute to increased efficiency and effectiveness of government social protection programs at national and local levels (SO 3.3.), IDFI conducted research on health care issues, including cancer treatment programs. During 2020, IDFI did not work on strategic objective 3.1: Support and increase the extent and quantity of dialogue and partnership between business and government. ‘



Six economic research reports were prepared and publicly discussed under this General Objective. Overall, IDFI's outputs received considerable media and public attention, but there are not yet any indications that they have contributed to changes in public policy or practice.

#### **General Objective 4: Promoting the Rule of Law and Human Rights**

Under General Objective 4 on rule of law and human rights, IDFI has six strategic objectives: Promote independence and impartiality of the judiciary (SO 4.1); Promote transparency of the judiciary (SO 4.2); Promote efficiency and quality of justice (SO 4.3); Promote independence, impartiality, and fairness of the prosecution service (SO 4.4); Promote constitutional standards of human rights (SO 4.5); Promote transparency and accountability of the law enforcement system (SO 4.6).

Under these strategic objectives, there are 20 outcomes. IDFI has so far implemented activities in relation to 17 of these. It has produced several studies on the functioning of the legal system (including the Judiciary, Prosecution Services, Police and State Inspector Services), monitored implementation of the Judicial Strategy and Action Plan, and raised public awareness of the challenges facing the justice system. In September 2020, Parliament took into account two IDFI recommendations relating to the selection of Supreme Court justices.

IDFI has also advocated legislative amendments to ensure transparency of court decisions in line with a Constitutional Court ruling from 2019. It has advocated for a range of other actions to be taken to ensure independence of the judiciary and strengthen the justice system. IDFI has filed lawsuits and administrative complaints and has been successful in obtaining information about disciplinary action against judges and appears to have influenced the practice of the Office of the Independent Inspector.

IDFI has also completed research, advocacy and awareness raising initiatives concerning compliance with international human rights standards. As with IDFI's other reports and advocacy outputs, they received considerable media attention. Few changes in terms of justice system functioning and human rights compliance have been reported. IDFI has, however, reported that many issues raised by IDFI were reflected in the Government's new draft Strategy for the Protection of Human Rights.

#### **General Objective 5: Facilitating the Decentralization Process**

IDFI has so far reported acting on about half of the 14 objectives relating to General Objective 5 on Facilitating the Decentralization Process and its three strategic objectives relating to decision-making powers/competences (SO 5.1), transparency and accountability (SO 5.2), and financial and institutional capacity (SO 5.3).

IDFI organized discussions on local government issues and various trainings and other capacity development initiatives on integrity, transparency, and open data management. The institute assisted four municipalities in developing Transparency and Integrity Strategies and action plans following comprehensive situation analyses. Six municipalities received recommendations on how to strengthen open data management.

IDFI assisted Tbilisi municipality in the development of an open data portal, a key component of the Tbilisi City Hall Open Government Partnership action plan. An assessment of the transparency and accountability of all municipalities in Georgia is ongoing. IDFI bases the assessment on a Local Self-Government Index it has developed in cooperation with two other NGOs.

There is consensus amongst interviewees that actions taken by IDFI are important for strengthening the local government system, and that achieved results had not been attained without the support of IDFI.

### **General Objective 6: Supporting the Process of Democratic Transition in Georgia**

Under General Objective 6 on Supporting the Process of Democratic Transition in Georgia, IDFI has worked on most of the 18 outcomes relating to Archival Research and Archive Openness (SO 6.1), Memory Studies (SO 6.2), Support Academic Studies and Cooperation (SO 6.3), and Counter Disinformation (SO 6.4). In a progress update for 2021, IDFI has adjusted the name of the General Objective, which clarifies that it focuses on the work of IDFI's Memory and Disinformation Direction rather than support to the process of democratic transition more generally.

Overall, the outputs under this General Objective are extensive. Comparative reports on openness of state archives, several articles, videos, and books based on findings of archival research, and published archival materials all contributed to a discourse on openness of state archives and memory politics.

IDFI organized online discussions relating to the first identified mass grave of the victims of the Soviet regime in Adjara and is running the Facebook Page “Biographies: Mass Repressions in Georgia in 1937-1938.” IDFI strived to increase School and university student involvement in memory studies. It organized an essay competition, lectures, exhibitions, and study tours. IDFI also launched the Disinformation and Memory Studies Program together with the University of Georgia and monitored and informed about Russian and anti-Western propaganda. The institute issued a range of recommendations to the government, including on improving how the Soviet past is commemorated.

There are no indications that significant steps have yet been taken to implement IDFI's recommendations on commemoration of the past or improved access to state archives.



However, several interviewees have expressed firm support for the work carried out. In its 2020 report to Sida, IDFI noted the Facebook page “Biographies: Mass Repressions in Georgia in 1937-1938” has over 5,000 followers, and each post has a reach of approximately 10-12,000.

### **General Objective 7: Media and freedom of expression**

During 2020, IDFI worked on only a few of the eleven outcomes relating to General Objective 7 on Media and Freedom of Expression, but it has worked on most of the remaining outcomes during 2021.

As a member of the Media Advocacy Coalition, IDFI spoke out on various freedom of expression violations and threats (SO 7.1). It monitored and informed about the work of the Georgian National Communications Commission, organized trainings for journalists and CSOs on holding the government to account and accessing public data (SO 7.2) and commented on draft legislation.

In 2021, IDFI increased its focus on assisting journalists in obtaining publicly held information and initiated the establishment of a “full free legal aid program for journalists and issues concerning freedom of expression.” In relation to its strategic objective on media ownership and polarization (SO7.3), IDFI worked on a study titled *Funding and the Ratings of Georgian Public Broadcaster after Three Years of Announced Reform* and issues related recommendations.

The establishment of a legal aid program seems like a major undertaking. It could be expected that such a program is preceded by a detailed needs assessment, including an assessment of why IDFI, rather than an established legal aid organization or a journalist organization, is the best placed actor to provide legal assistance to journalists. The Evaluation Team is not aware of any such assessment. At the time of writing, IDFI has handled roughly 20 legal aid cases. Most of these have concerned access to public information.

### **General Objective 8: Reinforce democratic processes in Georgia through increased access to the Internet, digital literacy, and innovations**

IDFI has carried out work in relation to roughly half of the 15 outcomes presented in the application to Sida. To Promote an efficient and effective e-governance ecosystem in Georgia (SO 8.1) IDFI produced an analysis of Georgia’s performance in the UN E-Government Survey, which assesses the digital government development of UN Member States, and made several recommendations to the Georgian government, including on developing an e-government strategy.

IDFI also prepared an analysis of Georgia’s results in the Global Innovation Index and carried out a study on the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in the public sector and raised awareness of international standards for its use (relating to SO 8.2). On the issues

of digital literacy (SO 8.3) and existing digital threats, it prepared and disseminated four video tutorials and held an online webinar in cooperation with the organization Parents for Education. According to IDFI's annual report for 2020, the tutorials have received over 45,000 views in total and the online webinar over 11,000 views. IDFI also studied, published, and provided recommendations on internet freedom, internet use and cyber security.

The Evaluation Team is not aware of any evidence of changed attitudes or behaviours because of IDFI's work in this area, but it is not unreasonable to assume that it has contributed to the goal of reinforcing the democratic process, not least through the digital literacy efforts. The state of Internet freedom improved in Georgia in 2020 according to the Freedom on the Net Program of Freedom House. One reason for this was a Constitutional Court decision declaring internet access a fundamental right, which IDFI advocated for in 2017 and 2018.

#### **4.2.2 What are the key factors behind the attainment/non-attainment of results?**

Interviewees have expressed appreciation of IDFI's professionalism of knowledge. It has a track record of producing high-quality evidence-based outputs of relevance from a freedom of information and democratic development perspective. Several of these outputs are based on innovative research methodologies that IDFI has implemented for several years. They thus assess change over time, which can increase their value as advocacy tools.

While IDFI's advocacy work is grounded in its evidence-based reports and other written outputs, the effectiveness of this work also depends on IDFI's outreach capacity and the credibility the organization enjoys as an actor striving to promote human rights and democratic development rather than a political agenda. IDFI uses a broad range of tools to reach out with its advocacy messages, including reports, articles, public statements, video recordings, one-pagers, infographics, and press conferences, and its staff regularly appear in panel discussions and in the media. IDFI generally uses these tools in an effective and creative manner. To assess to what extent written outputs, such as reports and statements, are read and to what degree they influence different actors is difficult to determine. A few difference factors indicate, however, that many IDFI produced documents are used and considered.

First, Google searches and IDFI's own monitoring show that other actors refer to the work of IDFI. During 2020 or 2021, several international organizations, including Freedom House and OECD, were amongst those that mentioned IDFI research findings or otherwise referred to the organization as a source for their own reports. There were also several references to IDFI in the 2021 UN Universal Periodic Review Summary of Stakeholder Submissions.

Print and online media often refer to the findings of IDFI's research, and IDFI representatives occasionally appear in the press, TV, and radio. Similar to the advocacy

work of other civil society organizations, there are few concrete examples of IDFI produced reports having influenced public policy and practice in recent years.

IDFI's social media presence is largely limited to Facebook, and to a lesser extent Twitter. In 2018, the organization had 26,814 likes on Facebook and 1,036 followers on Twitter. At the time of writing in September 2021, these numbers had grown to 31,552 and 1,494. While the organization maintains YouTube and LinkedIn accounts, its posts and followers on these media are few. In comparison, Transparency International Georgia has significantly fewer likes on Facebook (9,091) and many more followers on Twitter (6,707). GYLA has many more Facebook likes (58,514) and slightly more followers on twitter (1,660) than IDFI.

Several informants have noted that IDFI's reports would benefit from executive summaries setting out key findings in a manner that makes them more accessible to people without subject matter expertise. It has also been said that the research reports could be more analytical in terms of linking findings to conclusions and recommendations. The Evaluation Team's own review of IDFI documentation supports these observations. The readability of the reports and their key findings, conclusions and recommendations could be easily enhanced through a revision of their structure, language and lay out by a communication expert.

Some interviewees have questions whether it is possible for an organization to maintain the roles of both a watchdog organization and an organization that provides capacity development support to public authorities. While it is challenging to maintain both roles, IDFI has shown that it is possible and interviewees representing different stakeholders have expressed appreciation of the dual role. It can even be argued that the watchdog role is a pre-condition for the organization being able to provide sound technical advice and capacity development support.

In its Strategic Plan, IDFI has expressed the intention to increase its focus on the local government level. IDFI has made significant progress in its work at this level and a broad range of interviewees expressed a very strong appreciation of the work carried out. Many also said that they would like to see IDFI further strengthen its local government focus. IDFI has shown that it has a well-developed convening power and many interviewees have noted the important role it plays in bringing civil society and government actors together, including at the local level. Interviewees have also mentioned the central role it plays in several civil society coalitions, including the 17 member Media Coalition and the Judicial Reform Coalition.

IDFI has grown significantly both in financial terms and in terms of issues it takes on. Since 2016, IDFI's revenue has increased from GEL 972,000 to 2,631,000, i.e., with 171%. Several interviewees have expressed a concern that it is stretching its capacity too thin and takes on too many diverse issues that are not necessarily firmly interlinked. This concern is reflected in an increasing number of projects, new activity areas requiring extensive capacity and resources (see for instance legal aid program),

activities that appear to lack clear connection and synergy with other IDFI activities and goals, and sometimes overly broad outcome formulations.

With a broad mandate and diverse set of activities in different fields, it will be challenging for IDFI to ensure that its outputs reach the consistently high quality on which its reputation and impact depend. Some interviewees also believe that IDFI should be more proactive in initiating projects that support ongoing efforts to reach change and pay less attention to projects that in effects are initiated by donors. The core support provided by Sida facilitates a shift in this direction.

To sum up, IDFI's capacity to produce high quality evidence-based outputs on which it bases its awareness raising and capacity development work is essential for its ability to attain results. Many of IDFI's advocacy tools are well developed, but the advocacy messages in its monitoring and research reports can be more effectively communicated. The combination of a watchdog and advocacy related role, on the one hand, and technical assistance and capacity development role, on the other, appears to be effective. IDFI's increased focus on working with local governments has been successful and its convening powers have been important both at this level and at the national level. A concern for the future is the risk that IDFI takes on too many disparate projects and spreads its capacity and expertise too thin.

### **Reflections on the intervention logic and monitoring and evaluation framework**

Sida does not prescribe that its partners should use specific Results Based Management approach. It expects, however, that partners explain “what is to be achieved; and how, including the logic of causality that leads to the desired change.” While Sida does not hold an organization accountable for attaining outcomes, it expects the partner organization to “monitor the extent to which these are achieved and how the partner contributed.”

IDFI has an extensive intervention logic, but it does not have a Theory of Change (ToC) that in relation to its various objectives and outcomes discusses who IDFI is striving to influence and how a particular actor will be influenced, and what this turn should lead to. The Strategic Plan does not link specific activities and outputs to the attainment of a particular outcome.

Instead, IDFI has a general ToC that simply lays down the organization's belief in the generation and dissemination of reliable information. The Strategic Plan states that this information is “used in a targeted manner to achieve specific positive change.” However, the ToC does not specify the “targeted manner” in which IDFI will use the information. Thus, from a reading of the Strategic Plan, it is not possible to assess if the activities and resources set aside for a particular outcome are likely to contribute significantly to the outcome. Annual work plans provide information on planned activities per General Objective and outcome. However, the work plans only cover a part of the entire program period. Therefore, it is still not possible to get a reasonable

overview of how a particular change will come about. Nevertheless, the Evaluation Team's impression is that the resources put aside are often insufficient to contribute noticeably to a result. More focused and concerted efforts seem necessary.

That IDFI has made progress towards an outcome does not mean that it is likely to be attained. Some of the outcomes are on such a high level that it is highly unlikely that they will be achieved during the duration of the Strategic Plan. It would, for instance, be remarkable if a "Social environment, where attitude and culture prevents economic discrimination and where women are equal to men" (Outcome 3.4.2) is achieved during the Strategy Period.

In other cases, the outcomes are so broad that it is difficult to see that IDFI's contribution to their attainment could be more than marginal. This is, for instance, the case in relation to several of the outcomes concerning IDFI's efforts to promote the decentralization process (General Objective 5), including "Capacity of local government representatives to effectively design, develop and provide municipal services is increased" (Outcome 5.3.3).

Besides some outcomes being difficult to follow-up because of their broad or overreaching nature, IDFI has not elaborated baseline values against which it can assess change for the 143 outcomes. Furthermore, it has designed the indicators used at outcome level to reflect project implementation, rather than outcome level results, and often look at issues such as the number of articles and reports produced by IDFI, and the number of events held and number of participants in activities. Sida's Helpdesk on Results noted in relation to IDFI's Annual Report 2020 that IDFI's reporting on indicators is "often primarily an account of the activities IDFI has conducted." The helpdesk recommended the development of a follow-up system that to a greater extent reflects on how activities and outputs contribute to outcome level changes.

## 4.3 EFFICIENCY

### 4.3.1 Can the costs for the project be justified by its progress towards attaining results?

Many aspects of IDFI's work and outputs highly depend on interaction with other organizations and actors. The Covid-19 pandemic has thus affected its work and its capacity to carry out projects.

For 2020, IDFI's budgeted expenditures amounted to USD 1,094,000. The actual amount spent reached USD 774,000, or 71% of what it had budgeted. Some activities were, however, postponed. These included, for instance, all planned activities relating to Strategic Objective 1.2 to Promote citizen engagement in policy development at the executive branch, and Strategic Objective 3.4 to Improve economic opportunities for talented individuals and prevent economic discrimination.

In many cases, the organization adjusted its activities to ensure project implementation also in a Covid-19 context, and a significant share of its planned activities were carried

out. In terms of concrete outputs, it can be noted that IDFI during 2020, according to the Evaluation Team's calculations, published over 60 reports and position papers; wrote over 50 articles; and organized around 30 trainings, workshops, and conferences. IDFI has also produced guidebooks and tools, prepared infographics and fact sheets and videos, issued public statements and open letters, developed strategies and action plans for local governments, supported university courses, organized exhibitions, held public lectures, organized press conferences and given interviews, held essay competitions, engaged in strategic litigation, filed administrative complaints, and published data sets and maintained several webpages. Looking at the size of IDFI's total expenditures in 2020 and the considerable outputs produced, the Evaluation Team holds the view that IDFI's operations are characterized by a high degree of cost effectiveness.

An assessment of some significant expenditures also indicates that the specific costs of IDFI's operations are not excessive. Of IDFI's actual expenditures in 2020, USD 457,000, or 59%, pertained to staff salaries and insurance, which is not unreasonable for an organization whose main outputs are various types of assessments and capacity development efforts implemented by its staff members. Other significant expenses included outreach and awareness raising campaigns (USD 56,000), university programs (USD 43,000), workshops/conferences/presentations (USD 39,000) and national and international consultants (USD 39,000). Office rent amounted to USD 27,000, which is equivalent to a monthly cost of roughly USD 80 per staff member.

Salaries at IDFI range from GEL 2,500 to 10,000 (USD 800 to 3,200) net per month. A direction head makes between GEL 4,000 and 6,000 (USD 1,300 and 1,900) per month. The organization does not conduct or use salary surveys that provide salary information from other comparative actors. Salaries are thus based on more informal or unstructured assessments of what a reasonable salary is. IDFI strives to pay salaries that are in the higher range of what is paid in the NGO sector. Drawing on the Evaluation Team's knowledge of what other equivalent national level NGOs are paying, the salaries do not appear to be excessive.

IDFI states in its Strategic Plan that it intends to find a good balance between sub-granting and direct implementation; and, where relevant, move away from sub-granting. It is the Evaluation Team's understanding that the sub-grants handed out in the past have been of limited value. They have typically concerned support to civil society organizations assisting IDFI in areas where the organization does not have a presence. In 2020 and 2021, IDFI has not handed out any sub-grants. Significant sub-granting requires well-established structures for selecting projects to support and for monitoring project implementation under the requirements of back-donors. This is not IDFI's speciality, and its intention of moving away from sub-granting seems logical.

To conclude, the Covid-19 pandemic has affected IDFI's capacity to implement its program as planned. The organization spent slightly less than three-quarters of the resources budgeted for 2020 and the rate of activity implementation was lower than expected, with some major projects being postponed. The organization has, nevertheless produced a range of significant outputs at moderate costs and IDFI's



efficiency must thus be deemed sound. Overall, IDFI's individual costs, such as salaries, appear to be reasonable.

#### **4.3.2 To what extent has IDFI been adaptive in its approach towards reaching results?**

A key aspect of an adaptive management approach towards reaching results includes an acknowledgement that “a right way” to a goal cannot be precisely determined at the planning stage. Interviews with IDFI staff show that they have no illusions that there is a ‘right way’ or a clear and simple path on how to reach the goals strived for. On the contrary, the institute’s brief theory of change appears to assume that it is not meaningful to try to predict exactly how change will come about. It is more important to be able to use any window of opportunity that may arise. IDFI writes in its Strategic Plan, “Considering the rapidly shifting realities in Georgian politics, IDFI has found that, in addition to the standard approach of trying to push one's own agenda, it is of particular importance to stay in tune with ongoing developments and be able to rapidly respond to events in areas of interest to the organization. IDFI believes that paying greater attention to greater responsiveness will benefit its objectives.”

An adaptive approach implies that agreements on objectives and expected results between donors and their partners are “primarily a vehicle for partners’ follow-up, learning and adaptation during implementation, and not a performance contract” between the donor and the partner.<sup>12</sup> This appears to be acknowledged in the relationship between Sida and IDFI, but as IDFI’s strategy strives to encompass all aspects of the organization’s work in Georgia it also includes projects funded by other donors. In some of these projects, the agreements on objectives and expected results are to a higher degree formulated and treated as a performance contract, as indicated by narrative reports and evaluations.

As discussed above, IDFI’s results framework includes General Objectives, Strategic Objectives and Outcomes. It does not include intermediate outcomes or outputs. In relation to several of the General Objectives, the outcomes can be described as tangible, focusing on what can realistically be achieved considering the overall context and available time and resources. In relation to other General Objectives, the outcomes are on a very high level, serving more as a vision than as something that can possibly be achieved within the program.

The possibility of effectively implementing an Adaptive Management approach is related to the degree to which the requirements of different donors are harmonized. Currently, neither IDFI nor its donors are making any serious attempts at ensuring coordination and harmonization, which negatively impacts on both adaptability and efficiency. Better harmonization could potentially help ensuring both stronger follow up and a more effective use of resources.

Sida requires IDFI to report narratively and financially on an annual basis. This is considerably less often than most of IDFI’s other donors, some of which require quarterly reports. As Sida is the only donor providing core support and IDFI thus

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<sup>12</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark. 2020. Guidance Note: Adaptive Management

provides separate narrative and financial reports to Sida, the core support as such has not helped ensuring harmonized reporting requirements. In 2020, IDFI produced a 103 pages annual report for Sida.

IDFI's Strategic Plan indicates a focus on learning. The Plan includes a section on lessons learned, which includes seven such lessons. IDFI has recently adopted a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) manual, which provides a good overview of the general aspects of an M&E system. However, it is not effectively tailored to the specific needs of IDFI and focuses more on the design of monitoring systems for individual projects than on developing a cross-project or organization wide system for regular reflection and learning, something which appears particularly important considering that many of IDFI's activities and objectives are inter-related.

Also, the document refers to several practices that IDFI does not appear to have made frequent use of in the past, including comprehensive intervention chains with indicators designed to assess progress at each level and for which baseline values have been collected. Nevertheless, the Evaluation Team as well as Sida's Helpdesk on Results are of the view that IDFI's M&E system, as applied in relation to Sida's core support, has generated valuable information about progress.

Arguably, more important than the existence of an effective M&E system is the existence of a learning culture which encourages staff to reflect on organizational performance and use the results of these reflections to adjust activity and program implementation. The Evaluation Team's conversations with staff members indicate that IDFI values a learning culture. Staff members generally showed a well-developed capacity to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of their programs, and to a more limited extent on the institute as a whole.

To sum up, in many ways IDFI applies a flexible and adaptive management approach. Its approach, however, is affected by the less adaptive practices of some of its donors. The core support from Sida contributes importantly to the possibility of better upholding an adaptive management approach, but better donor coordination and harmonization is needed.

## 4.4 SUSTAINABILITY

### 4.4.1 Is the current IDFI implementation model ensuring long term institutional sustainability?

Civil society organizations working on democracy and human rights should ideally walk the talk. Globally, it is, however, rare that donor funded organizations have a genuine democratic structure under which the governance and control of the organization ultimately rests with a broad membership. In this respect, IDFI is no exception. The organization is not a membership-based organization and the two founders of the organization hold key leadership positions. IDFI is, however, a highly transparent organization and key organizational data, including financial statements dating back many years, are published online. IDFI is not primarily an organization



striving to mobilize people to create increased demand for reform or an organization that claims to represent a significant constituency. IDFI can rather be described as an expert organization or a think-tank and as such the importance of a membership based organizational structure which can claim to represent the views of a substantial constituency is, arguably, less important.

IDFI's Constitution states that the Supervisory Board is the institute's highest governing body. It should set the general and strategic direction, approve plans and performance reports, and appoint and oversee the work of the Executive Director, who leads the daily activities of the institute. Interviews with two Board members, including the Chairperson, and IDFI staff indicate that the organization has a Board that fulfils the roles and duties set out in the Charter and provides some strategic direction, exercises a level of oversight, and generally plays the "devil's advocate."

The Supervisory Board typically meets a few times per year and has managed to meet online during the pandemic. In July 2021, the Board had a 2.5-day retreat to discuss the organization's strategic direction. While the Board currently appears to operate with a sound level of independence, Article 4 of the Charter opens for a situation in which the Executive and the Board roles are not clearly separated. The Article states that the Executive Director automatically can become a member of the Supervisory Board if he so requests.

The independent auditors have over the years raised several concerns regarding IDFI's financial management practices. These concerns were also highlighted during the process leading up to the core support agreement between IDFI and Sida. As a result, IDFI has developed a new Finance Manual, Accounting Manual, and Procurement Manual and sorted out long-standing problems with incorrect starting balances and an unbalanced Trial Balance as raised in the Auditor's Management Letter of 2019. The new Accounting Manual now states that the balance sheet should be compared with the bank accounts on a daily basis.

IDFI has, as mentioned, been recognized for operating with a high degree of transparency. Transparify, which provides a global rating of the financial transparency of major think tanks, gave IDFI a five-star ranking (the highest level) in its most recent global ranking in 2018. In relation to the issue of financial transparency it can also be noted that IDFI in addition to its project audits has a history of carrying out an overall organizational audit and that the organization in line with good practice has changed auditor several times over the years. IDFI's Charter does not specify who in the organization that is responsible for selecting auditor for the organizational audit.

IDFI is almost entirely dependent on international donor funding for its operations, but the organization has for many years received grants from a rather broad range of donors and the number of donors that is supporting the organization has been increasing. The Strategic Plan states that, "IDFI has done a remarkable job attracting small and medium-sized funding until present, including building important repertoire with European Union, USAID sub-grants, United Nations Development Program, International Visegrad Fund, Luminate, Kingdom of the Netherlands, UKaid, Asian

Development Bank, East-West Management Institute and the Open Society Institute, among others.” It also says, “At the moment, IDFI’s excels in that its fundraising activities are highly diversified across various donors, and of those, projects have the propensity to be scaled up and developed thereafter.”

In 2020, IDFI received 23 grants from 17 different donors, many which have supported the organization for several years through a range of different projects. Several of the grants received have often been rather small and the dependence on a few large donors has sometimes been quite high. In 2018, IDFI’s three largest donors contributed 83% of the organization’s total revenue from grants. During the past two years, the largest donors’ share of the organization’s revenue from grants has decreased and amounted in 2020 to 58%.

IDFI has in interviews stated that it will focus its fundraising efforts on larger grants, not spending time and resources trying to obtain smaller grants. This intention is not yet reflected in the organization’s fundraising patterns. Amongst the 23 different grants from which IDFI benefitted in 2020, eight contributed less than GEL 10,000 to its budget during the year. It has in interviews been noted that the development of a diverse and vibrant civil society may not benefit from a situation in which larger well-funded organizations can compete with less developed organizations for smaller grants.

**Table 2: IDFI's revenue, grants, and donor landscape (GEL)**

Year	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Total revenue <sup>13</sup>	972,000	1,395,000	1,616,000	1,866,193	2,667,000
Number of grants	15	18	18	24	23
Number of donors	9	9	9	11	17
Three largest donors share of total revenue from grants	64%	77%	83%	60%	58%
Number of grant grants of less than GEL 20,000	4	4	5	6	9
Sida's share of total revenue from grants	0%	0%	0%	0%	19%

According to IDFI's budget for 2020, Sida was expected to contribute roughly 30% of IDFI's total expenditures (USD 327,000 of USD 1,094,000). The actual expenditures were, however, considerably lower and Sida's share amounted to no more than 19% (USD 147,000 of USD 774,000).

Sida's core funding is important from a sustainability perspective. A fundamental idea behind core funding is that it should give an organization substantial leeway in terms of determining what activities that are best suited to ensure attainment of its strategic objectives. IDFI has already in its application to Sida stated that it intends to use Sida's funding to fill gaps in its Strategic Plan that are not funded by others. A potential advantage of a core funding approach is also that it can help reduce the administrative burden of the supported organization. As mentioned under 4.3.2, the support to IDFI has not had this effect as there is little donor coordination and Sida is the only donor providing core support.

The effectiveness of many of IDFI's activities are directly dependent on them being ongoing over a longer period or regularly repeated. IDFI tools such as the Local Government Index and studies such as the *Access to Public Information in Georgia* are designed to assess change over time and their effectiveness is dependent on IDFI also in the future having sufficient funds to carry them out. To primarily use Sida funding to ensure continued implementation of these type of activities is thus a sound strategy. IDFI has built up financial reserves of roughly USD 190,000, which could potentially also be used to ensure continuation of regularly implemented key activities. This amount is otherwise sufficient to sustain the organization's operations for roughly six months.

<sup>13</sup> Revenue from grants, Other operating income and Other non-operating income.

A challenge from an effectiveness and sustainability perspective is that the Georgian population have limited trust in civil society organizations.<sup>14</sup> While there are no obvious reasons to believe that IDFI constitute a significant exception, it has been suggested that the organization's evidence-based approach is an important factor for building trust. Interviewees have also said that IDFI is better at communicating with professionals than with ordinary people. IDFI could work more on building demand for reforms and increase its efforts to explain for young people, including students, why the issues they raise and advocate around are important for the country and the lives of most citizens.

To sum up, considering IDFI's strong reputation, proven fundraising ability, financial reserves and functioning governance structure, the Evaluation Team assesses that IDFI has a reasonable level of institutional sustainability. As interests of donor governments and the priorities of donor agencies tend to shift, all organizations dependent on donor funding face, however, a level of vulnerability from a sustainability perspective. Furthermore, IDFI is still largely dependent on the work and contribution of its two founders and experience shows that the robustness of an organization's implementation model is not proven until a leadership transition has taken place. The fact that IDFI's Charter gives the Board a central role in the organization's governance and that the Board fulfils its constitutional role in practice are, however, important.

## 4.5 CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

### 4.5.1 Has the project contributed to poverty reduction? If yes, how?

IDFI's approach to poverty reduction is closely linked to key aspects of a human rights based approach. The organization argues that lack of transparency, accountability and openness of public institutions affects the well-being of socially vulnerable people. By contributing to increased accountability, reduced corruption, and improved quality of public institutions, IDFI will contribute to poverty reduction.

IDFI's Strategic Plan states that the organization should gradually extend its reach to "communities and locations with the least socio-economic stability, mostly rural areas, as well as areas densely populated by ethnic minorities." The plan is to "ensure their integration in social-economic processes and decision-making." Others have argued that successful nation-building in Georgia is dependent on the ethnic minority groups being integrated into the country's cultural, economic, and political life.<sup>15</sup>

Apart from what is noted regarding women in section 5.5.2, a policy paper on the implementation of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, and a commitment to an increased focus on the situation of

<sup>14</sup> According to Caucasus Research Resource Centers, "Over the last decade, people in Georgia have reported rather low levels of trust toward NGOs. At the same time, when asked during surveys to assess specific aspects of NGO activities, the answers have usually been positive." (CRRRC. 2019. Social Science in the Caucasus. <http://crrc-caucasus.blogspot.com/2019/02/ngos-in-georgia-low-trust-high.html>)

<sup>15</sup> Rusudan Amirejibi and Kakha Gabunia. 2021. Georgia's Minorities: Breaking Down Barriers to Integration, Carnegie Europe

people living in rural areas, the Evaluation Team’s literature review and interviews have revealed little in terms of a particular focus on disadvantaged groups, including ethnic minorities. IDFI’s intervention logic (General Objectives, Special Objectives and Outcomes) and related indicators, make few references to disadvantaged groups.

**4.5.2 How effectively has gender equality and gender mainstreaming been integrated into the design, planning, implementation and follow-up of the intervention?  
Has the project had any positive or negative effects on gender equality?**

In its Strategic Plan, IDFI states, “Over the next four years IDFI intends to pay greater attention to issues related to gender equality.” Amongst the eight General Objectives and 33 Strategic Objectives, none has an explicit gender focus. Amongst the 143 outcomes, two have an explicit focus on women:

Number	Outcome
3.4.2	Social environment, where attitude and culture prevent economic discrimination and where women are equal to men.
4.4.3	Prosecutors’ ability to conduct prosecution of hate crimes and violence against women is increased.

Two other outcomes note women or gender as one of several groups/factors that should be considered in the promotion of access to public information and aggregated data.

Number	Outcome
1.1.6	More open and aggregated (e.g., by gender, age, region) data from various sectors is publicly available in various open formats in Georgia.
1.2.11	Diverse groups (women, ethnic and other minorities, youth from rural and urban areas) enjoy access to public information on engaging in parliamentary process.

Considering that these are the only gender related references in IDFI’s extensive results framework, gender equality and women’s rights cannot be considered prominent features of its intervention logic. A review of IDFI’s activities during 2020 and 2021 shows, however, that some important actions have been taken.

In efforts to enhance women’s leadership roles and contribute to improved gender equality in the civil service, IDFI carried out and presented in March 2020 the findings of the survey “Career in Civil Service and Gender Equality.” The study contributed to increased knowledge of how gender norms within the Georgian public sector makes it difficult for women to take on more leadership roles.

Under the General Objective focusing on Rule of Law and Human Rights, IDFI has taken some important initiatives with a gender focus. In an article published on 7 February 2020, IDFI discussed gender issues in the process of selecting a new General Prosecutor of Georgia. In May 2020, IDFI published a paper identifying challenges

faced by prosecutors when dealing with certain types of crimes, including domestic violence and violence against women.

Based on the challenges identified, IDFI elaborated eight recommendations that it discussed with the Prosecution Service of Georgia. At the time of writing, there are no reports of these recommendations having been implemented. In another study, published in 2020, focusing on judicial transparency and access to court decisions and court statistics, it was assessed if statistics relating to gender-based violence was collected and published.

IDFI has also reported that it works on promoting and publishing gender disaggregated data on various public policy issues. It has also reported that it during 2021 is monitoring statistical data on the gender composition of Georgian businesses. In 2021, IDFI co-hosted an exhibition on Women politicians in partnership with the National Parliamentary Library of Georgia and one exhibition on Repressed Women in the Soviet Union in cooperation with the Memorial Society.

IDFI has in interviews and reporting explained its commitment to inclusion and diversity and that it strives to achieve gender balance in its activities. Gender balance has for instance been considered when inviting panelists to conferences and similar events. A high degree of gender balance has also been attained in the university courses IDFI supported.

Amongst IDFI's 29 staff members, women make up a majority. Men dominate, however, the more senior positions in the organization. In the Supervisory Board, four members are men, including the Chairperson, and three are women. The organization has a focal point for issues of gender discrimination within the organization, but this role does not extend to the issue of program and activity implementation.

Overall, IDFI has paid attention to and successfully ensured a sound level of gender balance amongst participants in and contributors to its activities, and amongst staff. It has successfully implemented some activities of importance from a women's rights and gender perspective, but promotion of gender equality does not yet feature prominently in its intervention logic and overall approach.

## 5 Conclusions

This section presents the evaluation's conclusions in relation to evaluation criteria guiding the evaluation.

### Relevance

IDFI's strategic approach as well as the focus of its practical program implementation is highly relevant in relation to the *Results Strategy for Sweden's reform cooperation with Eastern Europe, the Western Balkans and Turkey 2014-2020*. Its operations are also highly relevant to Georgia's reform priorities and challenges. The three interlinked processes of EU Association, Public Administration reform and Open Governance are all processes on which IDFI has a strong focus and substantial engagement.

In a context characterized by limited political will for reform, there are three primary strategies that an organization like IDFI can apply to effectively contribute to the government's stated reform aspirations. It can (i) identify "less sensitive" areas on which it is possible to cooperate with the government, (ii) make information about the state of government affairs publicly available to be used by future reform advocates and champions, and (iii) actively strive to create demand for reform. IDFI has worked extensively in relation to the first two of these strategies. It has done less work in relation to the third strategy.

### Effectiveness

IDFI has implemented its program in a challenging political context that has not been conducive to change. Its operations have also been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. Despite this and that the assessed program period has lasted no more than 21 months, important progress has been made. IDFI has contributed importantly from an open government perspective by for instance strengthening the operations of the Parliamentary Standing Council of Open Government and by facilitating implementation of OGP principles in the Supreme Council of Adjara.

IDFI's efforts to strengthen Georgia's anti-corruption system contributed to the use of unified standards and prices for hotels used as Covid-19 quarantine centers. It also studied and exposed information about suspicious political donations benefiting the ruling party. It worked on a university led Educational Certification Program in Fighting Corruption and raised awareness about corruption and anti-corruption measures amongst public officials and the general public. IDFI's work on various



economic and social policy issues received considerable media attention and contributed to raise knowledge.

IDFI's work on justice sector issues has resulted in Parliament taking into account IDFI recommendations concerning the process for selecting Supreme Court justices. IDFI also influenced the Office of the Independent Inspector's practice concerning the release of information about disciplinary action against judges. The Government's new draft Strategy for the Protection of Human Rights included many issues raised by IDFI. The organization's work with municipalities resulted in the adoption of Transparency and Integrity Strategies and action plans, and recommendations on how to strengthen open data management. In the area of memory and disinformation studies, IDFI has produced extensive outputs seen as essential for the country's democratic development. Some of the information has been extensively spread and contributed to increased awareness. IDFI has also contributed to increased digital literacy and knowledge of existing digital threats. IDFI has assisted journalists in obtaining publicly held information.

However, many of the 143 Outcomes in IDFI Strategic Plan will not be attained during the program period. In many cases the external context in which the program is implemented makes it more or less impossible to attain the planned outcomes. Many other outcomes are simply so ambitious that it was never realistic to expect their attainment, not even in the most conducive of environments. The overreaching and broad nature of many outputs specifically, and the absence of a realistic and well-developed ToC more generally, make IDFI's program unnecessarily difficult to follow up. The absence of outcome-linked indicators with baseline values is further complicating program monitoring.

Nevertheless, IDFI has contributed to several important outcomes. Key factors behind these achievements are IDFI's capacity to produce high quality evidence-based outputs on which it bases its awareness raising, advocacy and capacity development efforts. While many of IDFI's advocacy tools and outputs are well developed, its monitoring and research reports could be revised to communicate their advocacy messages more effectively.

The combination of a watchdog and advocacy related approach, on the one hand, and a technical assistance and capacity development role, on the other, also appears to be effective. IDFI's increased focus on working with local governments has been successful. At this level, as well as at national level, its ability to convene civil society actors and public officials has been important. There are legitimate concerns that IDFI is taking on too many diverse issues and that it does not maintain a sufficient focus on its core activities. This may affect its capacity to put in the long-term concerted efforts required to bring about change and impact on its reputation as a credible organization with a high degree of subject matter expertise



### **Efficiency**

Despite the pandemic, IDFI used nearly three-quarters of the amount budgeted for its operations in 2020 and has managed to implement a significant part of its program. Several significant outputs have been produced at a moderate cost. Individual costs, including salaries, appear to be reasonable. Overall, the Evaluation Team assesses that IDFI operates with a high degree of efficiency and that its costs are well justified by its progress towards attaining results.

In many ways IDFI applies a flexible and adaptive management approach. The core support from Sida contributes importantly to its ability of doing so. At the same time, the less adaptive practices of many other donors providing targeted short-term project support sets limits for IDFI's adaptability. There is a need for improved donor coordination and harmonization of donor requirements to further strengthen IDFI's effectiveness and adaptability.

### **Sustainability**

IDFI's strong reputation, proven fundraising ability, financial reserves, and functioning governance structure, indicates that IDFI possesses a reasonable level of institutional sustainability, much better developed than for many other donor-funded CSOs. At the same time, IDFI is largely dependent on the work and contribution of its two founders and experience shows that the robustness of an organization's implementation model may not be proven until a leadership transition has taken place. At the same time, IDFI's Charter gives the Board a central role in the organization's governance that it fulfils in practice.

### **Poverty and gender**

IDFI has paid attention to and successfully ensured a sound level of gender balance amongst participants in and contributors to its activities, and amongst staff. It has successfully implemented some activities of importance from a women's rights and gender perspective. Overall, however, mainstreaming of gender equality does not yet feature prominently in IDFI's intervention logic and overall approach. The same is true for its stated focus on disadvantaged groups in general, and ethnic minorities in particular, which is not well reflected in its intervention logic and not yet firmly manifested in program implementation.

## 6 Recommendations

This section sets out ten recommendations on how IDFI can further strengthen its operations and attainment of results. One of the recommendations is also directed at the Embassy of Sweden.

### **1. Strengthen the focus on disadvantaged groups**

When developing its next Strategic Plan, IDFI should review its intervention logic to ensure, in line with IDFI's general commitments, a stronger outcome level focus on disadvantaged groups, including ethnic minorities.

### **2. Strengthen the approach on gender equality and women's rights**

IDFI should consider how it can better mainstream a women's rights and gender equality lens within its current program, directions, and activities. In its next Strategic Plan such a lens should influence its intervention logic.

### **3. Enhance local government focused work**

Considering the notable progress IDFI has achieved in its local government related work, the organization should consider further strengthening its work at this level.

### **4. Increase focus on creating demand for reform**

IDFI should consider strengthening its efforts at creating demand for governance reforms, especially amongst students and other young people.

### **5. Maintain focus on core activities**

IDFI should maintain a strict focus on the core activities of the organization and ensure that it does not spread its limited resources too thin, and that it has the capacity to put in the long-term concerted efforts required to bring about change. None of the recommendations made above should be understood as a recommendation for the organization to expand its work into new areas.

### **6. Develop a more detailed Theory of Change**

To help focus and strengthen its efforts to bring about change, IDFI should for the next Strategy Period developed a ToC that in more detail sets out how it expects to contribute to outcome level changes. It should consider developing a ToC that is actor focused and strives to show how the organization aims to influence different actors (e.g., prosecutors, parliament, local governments, media, and universities) and the results that are then expected. The ToC should be plausible and IDFI should during the design phase preferably assess whether there is relevant data available for follow-up

purposes. The TOC should be regularly reviewed and, if necessary, adjusted to ensure continued relevance.

### **7. Strengthen separation between Board and Executive**

The Supervisory Board should consider repealing the provision in Article 4 of the organizational Chart, which provides for the Executive Director to be a member of the Supervisory Board if he so requests.

### **8. Make Board responsible for selection of auditor**

The Supervisory Board should consider amending the Charter and specify that it is the Board itself that is responsible for selecting auditor.

### **9. Improve donor coordination and harmonization**

IDFI and Sida should jointly explore how a higher degree of donor coordination and harmonization of donor requirements can be achieved, with a vision to reduce the administrative burden of IDFI.

### **10. Enhance advocacy messages in thematic reports**

IDFI's should strengthen the advocacy messages and enhance the readability of its thematic reports by ensuring that their structure, language, and layout are revised by a communications expert before publication. The clear advocacy messages of many of IDFI's other advocacy outputs should serve as an inspiration for how the advocacy messages in the thematic reports can be strengthened.

# Annex 1 – Terms of Reference

## Terms of Reference for the Evaluation of Core Support to The Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI)

Date: 2021.04.05

### 1. General information

#### 1.1 Introduction

The project to be evaluated is Core Support to The Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI) (contribution 13382) which is funded by Sweden through the Embassy of Sweden in Tbilisi. The activity period of the project is 2020.01.01 – 2022.12.31. The volume of the Swedish support is 9 100 000 SEK.

Sweden's cooperation with Georgia is governed by the Results Strategy for Sweden's Reform Cooperation with Eastern Europe, The Western Balkans and Turkey 2014-2020. The contribution Core Support to the Institute for Development of Freedom of Information contributes to the support area 2) Strengthened democracy, greater respect for human rights and a more fully developed state under the rule of law, namely the contribution aligned with the results: O4 - Delivery of higher quality public services, based on principles of non-discrimination and equal rights and with less corruption; O8 - More pluralistic civil society, including political parties with strengthened popular support; O9 - Improved conditions for democratic accountability to the people and participation in political processes, including the promotion of free elections; O11 - Partner countries better fulfil their international and national commitments on human rights, gender equality (including the EU's strategy for equality between women and men) and non-discrimination.

The Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI) is a Georgia-based non-governmental organization that aims to support the development of an informed and empowered society for democratic governance. It was established in 2009 and rather quickly became known to the Georgia as one of the leading NGO in obtaining information from the authorities and providing it to the society, thus paying way to access of quality information, analyses of the information, promoting rule of law and reducing corruption.

IDFI combines its think-tank capacities with its watchdog activities in pursuit of its overarching strategic goals.

Currently IDFI implements variety of projects that are supported by number of donors. However the Embassy agreed to provide a core support to the IDFI that would enable it enjoy higher level of flexibility, responsiveness and ultimately increase its effectiveness.

## 1.2 Evaluation rationale

The evaluation rationale is the following: the Embassy of Sweden in Tbilisi the first time ever started providing support to the Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI). Currently the project in the mid of its lifetime. The Embassy needs to conduct mid-term evaluation of the project's performance in order to guide the dialogue on Swedish support to the IDFI and if necessary to adjust the implementation for the rest of the project lifetime.

## 1.3 Evaluation object: Project/programme to be evaluated

The evaluation object is the contribution called Core Support to the Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI).

IDFI defines its goals as: Supporting Democratic and Good Governance in Georgia through evidence-based research, monitoring and advocacy.

IDFI sees its mission as: We strive for an empowered and inclusive society; we promote human rights and good governance by raising civic awareness through sound informational reports, research and recommendations; we advocate for initiating & implementing reforms of policies, laws and practices to enhance democratic governance.

For moving towards its goal and responding to its mission IDFI works in following areas: 1) Promoting Open Governance; 2) Strengthening the Anti-Corruption System; 3) Social and Economic Policy; 4) Rule of Law; 5) Facilitating the Decentralization Process; 6) Supporting the Process of Democratic Transition in Georgia; 7) Media and Freedom of Expression; 8) Internet and Innovations.

IDFI believes that having activities and working in those eight areas will help in: "expanding the public's access to information & quality reporting while sharpening its discernment of competing narratives, past and present. Improve the Quality of Democratic Governance by building open, accountable and responsive national & local governments, which effectively promote human and civil rights. Invest in a More Equitable Society by promoting policies and practices demonstrated to build political, social & economic equity and improve overall well-being. Foster an Inclusive Digital Economy - Encourage appropriate access to internet, data, and e-tools to support growth of ICT, tech, and information economy".

The IDFI vision of the theory of change is built around the belief that ALL IDFI activities should be based on generation of reliable information, processing it and transformation of this information into various products that are then used in a targeted manner to achieve specific positive changes.

For further information, the project/programme proposal is attached as Annex D.

The intervention logic or theory of change of the project/programme shall be further elaborated by the evaluator in the inception report.

## 2. The assignment

### 2.1 Evaluation purpose: Intended use and intended users

The purpose of the evaluation is to help Sida and its partner IDFI to assess progress of on-going project Core Support to the Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI) in order to learn what works well and less well. The evaluation will be used to inform decisions on how project implementation may be adjusted and improved.

The primary intended users of the evaluation are:

- Embassy of Sweden in Tbilisi
- Partner organisation the Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI)

The evaluation is to be designed, conducted and reported to meet the needs of the intended users and tenderers shall elaborate in the tender how this will be ensured during the evaluation process.

During the inception phase, the evaluator and the users will agree on who will be responsible for keeping the various stakeholders informed about the evaluation.

### 2.2 Evaluation scope

The evaluation scope is limited to time frame that covers IDFI activities in 2020.

If needed, the scope of the evaluation may be further elaborated by the evaluator in the inception report.

### 2.3 Evaluation objective: Criteria and questions

The objectives of this evaluation are to assess the progress and results achieved by IDFI focusing on the following: 1) to frame and summarise lessons learned, 2) evaluate the outcomes and outputs of the IDFI work, 3) Evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of the IDFI and formulate recommendations as an input to discussions on how project implementation may be adjusted and improved.

The evaluation questions are:

### **Relevance**

- Is the project relevant to Sida's Strategy and Georgia's governance reform challenges and national priorities?

### **Efficiency**

- Can the costs for the project be justified by its results?

### **Effectiveness**

- To what extent has the project contribute to intended outcomes? (compare project's indicators against set targets) If so, why? If not, why not?
- To what extent has the IDFI been adaptive in its approach towards reaching results?

### **Sustainability**

- Is the current IDFI implementation model for delivering of results ensuring long term institutional sustainability?
- How can the IDFI be adapted to contribute to the sustainability of the Government of Georgia's governance reform management ownership and capacity?

### **Cross-cutting issues**

- Has the project contributed to poverty reduction? How?
- How has gender equality been integrated into the design, planning and implementation of the intervention? To what extent has the intervention contributed to the improvement of gender equality? Has the project had any positive or negative effects on gender equality? Could gender mainstreaming have been improved in planning, implementation or follow up?

Questions are expected to be developed in the tender by the tenderer and further developed during the inception phase of the evaluation.

## **2.4 Evaluation approach and methods**

It is expected that the evaluator describes and justifies an appropriate evaluation approach/methodology and methods for data collection in the tender. The evaluation design, methodology and methods for data collection and analysis are expected to be fully developed and presented in the inception report.

Limitations to the chosen approach/methodology and methods shall be made explicit by the evaluator and the consequences of these limitations discussed in the tender. The evaluator shall to the extent possible, present mitigation measures to address them. A clear distinction is to be made between evaluation approach/methodology and methods.

A *gender responsive* approach/methodology, methods, tools and data analysis techniques should be used.

Sida's approach to evaluation is *utilization-focused*, which means the evaluator should facilitate the *entire evaluation process* with careful consideration of how everything that is done will affect the use of the evaluation. It is therefore expected that the evaluators, in their tender, present i) how intended users are to participate in and contribute to the evaluation process and ii) methodology and methods for data collection that create space for reflection, discussion and learning between the intended users of the evaluation.

In cases where sensitive or confidential issues are to be addressed in the evaluation, evaluators should ensure an evaluation design that do not put informants and stakeholders at risk during the data collection phase or the dissemination phase.

## 2.5 Organisation of evaluation management

This evaluation is commissioned by the Embassy of Sweden in Tbilisi. The intended users are Embassy of Sweden in Tbilisi and the partner organisation IDFI. The intended users of the evaluation form a steering group, which has contributed to and agreed on the ToR for this evaluation. The steering group is a decision-making body. It will approve the inception report and the final report of the evaluation. The steering group will participate in the start-up meeting of the evaluation, as well as in the debriefing workshop where preliminary findings and conclusions are discussed.

## 2.6 Evaluation quality

All Sida's evaluations shall conform to OECD/DAC's Quality Standards for Development Evaluation<sup>16</sup>. The evaluators shall use the Sida OECD/DAC Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation<sup>17</sup>. The evaluators shall specify how quality assurance will be handled by them during the evaluation process.

## 2.7 Time schedule and deliverables

NB The suggested timeline for the evaluation is highly tentative and based on an assumption that by end of July vaccination of population in Europe will be completed and that will be followed by easing restrictions including travel and at the same time foreign travellers in Georgia also will not need to be in quarantine, etc. If restrictions stay in place the evaluation team may consider conducting interviews on-line using internet-based platforms and not travel to Georgia.

It is expected that a time and work plan is presented in the tender and further detailed in the inception report. The evaluation shall be carried out May – November 2021. The timing of any field visits, surveys and interviews need to be settled by the evaluator in dialogue with the main stakeholders during the inception phase.

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<sup>16</sup> DAC Quality Standards for Development Evaluation, OECD, 2010.

<sup>17</sup> Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management, Sida in cooperation with OECD/DAC, 2014.



The table below lists key deliverables for the evaluation process. Alternative deadlines for deliverables may be suggested by the consultant and negotiated during the inception phase.

Deliverables	Participants	Deadlines
1. Start-up meeting (virtual)	Embassy of Sweden, IDFI	Mid May – first week of June
2. Draft inception report		Tentative Mid of June
3. Inception meeting (virtual)	Embassy of Sweden; IDFI	Tentative end of June
4. Comments from intended users to evaluators (alternatively these may be sent to evaluators ahead of the inception meeting)		Tentative beginning/mid July
5. Data collection, analysis, report writing and quality assurance	Evaluators	September
6. Debriefing/validation workshop (meeting) - virtual	Embassy of Sweden; IDFI	September - October
7. Draft evaluation report		Tentative October – beginning of November
8. Comments from intended users to evaluators		Tentative Mid November
9. Final evaluation report		Last week of November

**The inception report** will form the basis for the continued evaluation process and shall be approved by Sida before the evaluation proceeds to implementation. The inception report should be written in English and cover evaluability issues and interpretations of evaluation questions, present the evaluation approach/methodology (including how a utilization-focused and gender responsive approach will be ensured), methods for data collection and analysis as well as the full evaluation design. A clear distinction between the evaluation approach/methodology and methods for data collection shall be made. All limitations to the methodology and methods shall be made explicit and the consequences of these limitations discussed. A specific time and work plan, including number of hours/working days for each team member, for the remainder of the evaluation should be presented. The time plan shall allow space for reflection and learning between the intended users of the evaluation.

**The final report** shall be written in English and be professionally proof read. The final report should have clear structure and follow the report format in the Sida Decentralised Evaluation Report Template for decentralised evaluations (see Annex C). The executive summary should be maximum 3 pages. The evaluation approach/methodology and methods for data collection used shall be clearly described and explained in detail and a clear distinction between the two shall be made. All limitations to the methodology and methods shall be made explicit and the consequences of these limitations discussed. Findings shall flow logically from the data, showing a clear line of evidence to support the conclusions. Conclusions should

be substantiated by findings and analysis. Evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations should reflect a gender analysis/an analysis of identified and relevant cross-cutting issues. Recommendations and lessons learned should flow logically from conclusions. Recommendations should be specific, directed to relevant stakeholders and categorised as a short-term, medium-term and long-term. The report should be no more than 35 pages excluding annexes (including Terms of Reference and Inception Report). The evaluator shall adhere to the Sida OECD/DAC Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation<sup>18</sup>.

The evaluator shall, upon approval of the final report, insert the report into the Sida Decentralised Evaluation Report for decentralised evaluations and submit it to Nordic Morning (in pdf-format) for publication and release in the Sida publication data base. The order is placed by sending the approved report to [sida@nordicmorning.com](mailto:sida@nordicmorning.com), always with a copy to the responsible Sida Programme Officer as well as Sida's Evaluation Unit ([evaluation@sida.se](mailto:evaluation@sida.se)). Write "Sida decentralised evaluations" in the email subject field. The following information must always be included in the order to Nordic Morning:

1. The name of the consulting company.
2. The full evaluation title.
3. The invoice reference "ZZ980601".
4. Type of allocation "sakanslag".
5. Type of order "digital publicering/publikationsdatabas".

## 2.8 Evaluation team qualification

In addition to the qualifications already stated in the framework agreement for evaluation services, the evaluation team shall include the following competencies:

- Professional experience in fields relevant to public administration, public policy/ and/or good governance
- Professional experience in the field freedom of information

It is desirable that the evaluation team includes the following competencies

- Experience in post-Soviet country reforms
- Knowledge of Georgian language
- Working experience in Georgia and/or knowledge of the region's context ;
- Familiarity with the region (particularly Georgia), its overall governance features, development needs, and directions

A CV for each team member shall be included in the call-off response. It should contain a full description of relevant qualifications and professional work experience.

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<sup>18</sup> Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management, Sida in cooperation with OECD/DAC, 2014

It is important that the competencies of the individual team members are complimentary. It is highly recommended that local consultants are included in the team if appropriate.

The evaluators must be independent from the evaluation object and evaluated activities, and have no stake in the outcome of the evaluation.

## 2.9 Financial and human resources

The maximum budget amount available for the evaluation is 500 000 SEK.

The contact person at Swedish Embassy is Kakha Khimshiashvili, Program Officer. The contact person should be consulted if any problems arise during the evaluation process.

Relevant Sida documentation will be provided by the Embassy, namely by the responsible Program Officer.

Contact details to intended users such as IDFI, will be provided by the responsible Program Officer at the Embassy.

The evaluator will be required to arrange the logistics, including interviews with IDFI and other relevant parties.

## 3. Annexes

### Annex A: List of key documentation

Results strategy for Sweden's reform cooperation with Eastern Europe, The Western Balkans and Turkey 2014-2020

Project Document "Core Support to the Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI)"

Progress report/annual report: Year 2020

### Annex B: Data sheet on the evaluation object

Information on the evaluation object (i.e. project or programme)	
Title of the evaluation object	Core Support to The Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI)
ID no. in PLANIt	13382
Dox no./Archive case no.	UM2019/45409/TBIL
Activity period (if applicable)	2020.01.01 – 2020-12-31
Agreed budget (if applicable)	9 100 000 SEK
Main sector	Good governance/democracy

Name and type of implementing organisation	NGO - The Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI)
Aid type	Core support to NGO
Swedish strategy	Results strategy for Sweden's reform cooperation with Eastern Europe, The Western Balkans and Turkey 2014-2020

Information on the evaluation assignment	
Commissioning unit/Swedish Embassy	Embassy of Sweden in Tbilisi
Contact person at unit/Swedish Embassy	Kakha Khimshiashvili
Timing of evaluation (mid-term, end-of-programme, ex-post or other)	Mid-term
ID no. in PLANIt (if other than above).	13382A0102

Annex C: Decentralised evaluation report template

Annex D : Project/Programme document

## Annex 2 – Documentations

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## Annex 3 – List of Interviewees

The list of interviewees can be received from the Embassy of Sweden in Georgia. It is part of the final report but not included in this publication.



## Evaluation of Core Support to the Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI)

The purpose of the evaluation was to help both the Embassy and the Georgian Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI) better understand what works well and what may work less well in IDFI's operations. The Evaluation Team assesses that IDFI's strategic approach as well as the focus of its practical program implementation are highly relevant in relation to Sweden's results strategy for reform cooperation. Its operations are also relevant to Georgia's reform priorities and challenges. However, the political context in which IDFI is implementing its programme has not been conducive to change. Its operations have also been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. Despite this, IDFI has produced a substantial number of high-quality outputs and contributed to several important outcomes relating freedom of information and good governance generally. There are however legitimate concerns that IDFI is taking on too many diverse issues and that this may affect its core activities. The evaluation includes recommendations to IDFI.

SWEDISH INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION AGENCY

Address: SE-105 25 Stockholm, Sweden. Office: Valhallavägen 199, Stockholm

Telephone: +46 [0]8-698 50 00. Telefax: +46 [0]8-20 88 64

E-mail: [info@sida.se](mailto:info@sida.se). Homepage: <http://www.sida.se>

