



THE HOLIDAY ISSUE

First for Georgia: Advancing pedestrian rights

Lack of pedestrian rights, frequent public space violations and a prioritization of machines over humans is an acute issue in Georgia, as in many other post-Soviet societies. It ties in with social inequality and low public representation in the decision-making processes and urban planning. To cross a busy street, be prepared to trek half a kilometre or more out of your way to the nearest underpass, take the steps down and then up, then walk back the same distance. Even this is usually not for the disabled and those with a baby carriage, since few underpasses have escalators. Many underpasses are badly lit, insecure and unsanitary, like this one under Tbilisi's most imposing street, Rustaveli Avenue. Against this background, UNDEF funds the first project in Georgia to improve the rights of pedestrians. It works to ensure pedestrian access, especially to counter developments prioritizing motor vehicles. An Association for Pedestrians will act as an advanced platform bringing together non-governmental organizations working in related fields, social movements, government institutions, the private sector and individuals. The association will address the issue of pedestrian rights on several different levels: from grass roots initiatives and small community groups to municipal and national strategies for more pedestrian friendly cities. The project strategy is based on stakeholder collaboration, raising awareness, and lobbying. It

implemented
by [Iare Pekhit](#),
a local civil
society
organization
based in Tbilisi.

First for Myanmar: Debate education for democracy ahead of elections

Myanmar faces landmark elections in 2015. This is why UNDEF funds the first initiative in the country to use debate education to empower civil society organizations and strengthen constructive criticism in the democratic transition process. The project, focused on youth and social activists, builds skills in debate, analysis and public speaking to enable civil society to examine sensitive social issues; provides trainings in six different regions to develop ethical debaters who can deliver logical convincing arguments to a wider public; creates space for people to share and exchange ideas through public forums; and establishes debate education networks with local organizations to deliver debate trainings and to serve as a resource for local communities. The project is implemented by Mandalay-based [Phaung Daw Oo Monastic Education School](#), founded in 1993 as a primary school with the purpose of providing free education to poor children and encourage development at a grass root level. It now teaches over 6000 students including high school level, with debate as a method to develop critical thinking, analytical, public speaking and communication skills.

Consolidating democratic practices among youth and women in Eastern Sierra Leone

Amid the onslaught of the Ebola epidemic in Eastern Region Sierra Leone, a new UNDEF-funded project works in the region to promote the core principles of democracy and human rights among women and youth. It uses a multi-stakeholder approach to respond to issues of impunity for human rights abuses and violence, while working to measurably increase women and youth participation and representation in the 2017 elections. Ultimately, the project will transform the mindset of key target groups and provide a basis for a collective response to issues of discrimination and abuse. The project is implemented by [Dignity Now](#), a Kenema-based civil society organization established in 2002 with experience in programmes to support youth, women, rule of law and access to justice.

The gender gap in Ghana's district assemblies means there is no common advocacy platform for women and socially excluded groups to meet, engage, dialogue, gather their concerns or develop actions plans. Women groups are poorly organized and unable to attract the attention of policymakers at the district level. To address these gaps, UNDEF funds a project to educate and inform local citizens, traditional authorities, local government officials in gender inclusive decision-making, social accountability, and quality service delivery; mobilize, strengthen, and unite women's groups under one platform to be mutually recognized by the district assemblies and other non-actors as champions of women concerns at the district level of policy engagement. The project is implemented by the [Gender Centre for Empowering Development](#), a local organization established in 2011 to close the gender deficit in governance through political education and sustainable human resources development services to the marginalized, especially women.

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Strengthening indigenous and peasant communities in Bolivia

The Constitution of Bolivia recognizes the rights of indigenous, native and peasant nations and peoples. Yet many communities do not benefit from these rights as their members lack identity papers and their organizations are not registered. Leaders also tend to lack the knowledge and skills needed for democratic participation. That is why UNDEF funds an initiative to legally and politically empower indigenous and peasant communities in the departments of La Paz and Oruro, by assisting them to acquire basic legal documents such as ID --a prerequisite for democratic participation; gathering evidence-based input for institutional change; strengthening their knowledge to participate in democratic processes and to exercise their rights via capacity-building workshops and public-awareness broadcasting. The project is implemented by [Fundación Microjusticia Bolivia](#), established in 2007 to legally empower poor, vulnerable and excluded people, and to contribute to a more just society with protection and opportunities for all.