

Project Application for Funding by the Canada Fund for Local Initiatives (CFLI)

PROJECT IDENTIFICATION:

1. Descriptive Project Name:

“Delivery of assistance in the eradication of societal abuses and discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice in Kakheti, Samtskhe-Javakheti, Kvemo Kartli, Guria and Adjara regions of Georgia”.

2. Location of Proposed Project:

Targeted regions: Kakheti, Samtskhe-Javakheti, Kvemo Kartli, Guria and Adjara regions

Country: Georgia

3. Name of applicant organization/group:

Public Movement Multinational Georgia

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4. Brief description of the applicant organization/group:

PMMG which was registered as a non-governmental organization on June 1, 1999 is an umbrella organization which provides resource support and cooperates with the representatives of more than 19 ethnic community based and 57 grass-root CSOs working in the field of protection and promotion of ethnic, religious and linguistic groups' rights and integration. PMMG has a status of the Partner Organization of the Council of Europe. It represents interests of the “International Coalition against Hate in the South Caucasus”. It is a member of the Federal Union of European Nationalities and Minorities of Europe. PMMG is also a member of several Georgian civil societal coalitions in a field of advocacy for human rights. For many years PMMG is conducting different types of programs directly related to the protection and promotion of religious rights, tolerance, civic integrity as well as political, civil and electoral engagement of ethnic minority groups in line with building their participative capacities. For the realization of its functional mandate PMMG carries out its activities throughout the years in collaboration with partner organizations both in the capital as well as in Samtskhe-Javakheti, Kvemo Kartli, Shida Kartli, Mtskheta-Mtianeti and Kakheti regions enabling the organization to extend the scope of outreach of targeted constituencies as well as deliver highly effective and efficient response to community needs, interests and challenges. Thus PMMG is well informed about the developments taken place in minority areas.

5. Type of organization/group:

Local non-governmental, community and not-for-profit organizations

Local academic institutions working on local projects,

International, intergovernmental, multilateral and regional institutions, organizations and agencies working on local development activities,

- Municipal, regional or national government institutions or agencies of the recipient country working on local projects, and
- Canadian non-governmental and not-for-profit organizations that are working on local development activities.

PROJECT NARRATIVE:

6. Explanation of the project:

The purpose of this 5 months action is to deliver assistance in the eradication of societal abuses and discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice in Kakheti, Samtskhe-Javakheti, Kvemo Kartli, Guria and Adjara regions of Georgia. To this end the project implies the building of respective capacities of local civil societal actors including human rights defenders as well as representatives of media to better engage in rights protection activities and offer valuable civil societal support to the vulnerable groups being the subject of religious persecution, interference with the performance of religious rites as well as physical assault, harassment, and vandalism.

Main activities:

Project launch phase:

This particular part of the action implies the conduction of all the logistics related works to implement the project in a timely and highly efficient manner. The project implementing team in conjunction with the representatives of partner organizations from Kakheti, Samtskhe-Javakheti, Kvemo Kartli, Guria and Adjara regions will hold orientation discussion to develop the detailed activities plan as well as deliberate over the logistics related works. For project monitoring and evaluation purposes the “Performance Monitoring Group” (PMG) will be formed and the respective success measurement indicators as well as monitoring plan will be developed. PMG will be composed by the representatives of the project team as well as project partner organizations from the underlined regions.

For the purpose of attraction of the project main target groups informational/outreach meetings will be held in the respective municipalities of Kakheti, Samtskhe-Javakheti, Kvemo Kartli, Guria and Adjara regions to present the project goal, objectives as well as prescribed activities to the local audience of civil societal actors as well as media. Special attention will be made to underline the importance of donor contribution as well as its impact for the mitigation of local problems and challenges. The project team will distribute specially developed informational materials describing the cause of the action as well as application forms for the attraction of the project participants to attend the capacity building program.

Followed by the conclusion of informational/outreach meetings as well as review of the application forms the project team in conjunction with the partner organizations will select the main target groups (beneficiaries): a) 36 civil societal representatives including human rights defenders and b) 20 media representatives from Kakheti, Samtskhe-Javakheti, Kvemo Kartli, Guria and Adjara regions. In total the project will invite 36 representatives including human rights defenders and 20 media representatives.

In addition, the preparatory state also include the attraction of 2 highly qualified experts to conduct the capacity building program who apart from the delivery of the program will be responsible for the development of the program agenda, study module as well as the materials. The respective communication will be carried out with the representatives of state authorities including the Office of the State Minister of Georgia for Reconciliation and Civic Equity, State Agency for Religious Issues as well as the Ombudsman' Office in order to secure the attendance and participation of their authorized people in project organized capacity building program.

1. Delivery of specially designed capacity building program for the representatives of civil society including human rights defenders and media representatives from Kakheti, Samtskhe-Javakheti, Kvemo Kartli, Guria and Adjara regions

As underlined above, the program will generally outreach two main target groups: a) civil societal representatives including human rights defenders and b) media representatives.

For target group a, the action implies the realization of 2, 3 days long training program outreaching 36 participants assigned into 2 study groups (18 people in each group). For target group b, the action will deliver one, 3 days long training program outreaching 20 participants.

The program will be delivered by the prominent experts with the extensive knowledge as well as experience in the conduction of capacity building programs in the respective field of the competence.

The agenda of the program will be designed in a way to allow the participants obtain the knowledge as well as respective skills in the areas of: a) the essence of religious freedom and tolerance; b) stereotypes, stigmas, mutual misperceptions as the negative social phenomenon undermining civic equity and provoking the eruption of the conflict; c) intercultural/inter religious dialogue as the valuable instrument to mitigate the valance, societal abuses and discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice; d) reconciliation, conflict transformation and management; e) contemporary international best practice of tolerance and peaceful coexistence; c) comprehensive review of international, regional and domestic mechanisms available for the protection of religious freedom; d) the role of state in the

protection of religious freedom and the respective public remedies for the promotion of civic equity, integrity and freedom; e) report writing.

The agenda of the program for media representatives will contain additional topics specially incorporated to enhance the role of media as well as its capacities in the promotion of tolerance, mutual respect and inter religious dialogue.

The program will rest on several methodological pillars: a) lectures delivered by the expert-trainers; b) group presentations; c) role plays; d) presentations delivered by the authorized representatives of Office of the State Minister of Georgia for Reconciliation and Civic Equity, State Agency for Religious Issues as well as the Ombudsman' Office; d) elaboration of recommendations by the program participants for civil society as well as media how to better tackle the problem directly related to societal abuses and discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice.

Recommendations developed within the framework of the program by the participants will be widely shared with the respective stakeholders interested in the protection and promotion of religious rights including state authorities, civil societal organizations and think tanks, media as well as international organizations having an interest in the promotion of peace and tolerance in the country.

2. Development and dissemination of the “Religious Freedom and Tolerance Guide Book”

Based on the results of capacity building program as well as needs and interested communicated by the participants with the project team, the project with the direct engagement of capacity building expert-trainers will develop the “Religious Freedom and Tolerance Guide Book” which will include but will not be limited to the following topical issues: religious freedom and tolerance as the cornerstone of free, democratic and open society; case studies of best international practice of tolerance and peaceful coexistence; brief overview of international, regional and domestic mechanisms available for the protection of religious freedom. In addition, the Book will also maintain those themes, topics as well as other information being considered as interested and important by the participants in a course of conduction of capacity building program.

The Guide Book will be developed in Georgian language and distributed in 300 copies among the capacity building program participants as well as other regional based CSOs and media sources.

Expected results:

Quantitative:

- Delivered 2, 3 days long training program for civil societal representatives including human rights defenders outreaching 36 participants assigned into 2 study groups (18 people in each group);
- Delivered one, 3 days long training program for media representatives outreaching 20 participants;
- Build capacities of the main target groups (beneficiaries) in the areas of: religious freedom and tolerance; counteracting stereotypes, stigmas, mutual misperceptions; planning and realization of intercultural/inter religious dialogue; reconciliation, conflict transformation and management; contemporary international best practice of tolerance and peaceful coexistence; international, regional and domestic mechanisms available for the protection of religious freedom; available public instruments in the protection of religious freedom and the respective public remedies for the promotion of civic equity, integrity and freedom; report writing skills.
- Developed and disseminated “Religious Freedom and Tolerance Guide Book”

Qualitative:

In the medium and long run perspective the action by strengthening local civil societal voices as well as utilization of their unique social capital will assist in the eradication of societal abuses and discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice in Kakheti, Samtskhe-Javakheti, Kvemo Kartli, Guria and Adjara regions of Georgia. Therefore, it can be concluded that by building the respective capacities of the main actors the action will allow their better engagement in rights protection activities and thus offer valuable civil societal support to the vulnerable groups being the subject of religious persecution, interference with the performance of religious rites as well as physical assault, harassment, and vandalism.

7. CFLI Priority:

- Preventing child, early and forced marriage (CEFM);
- Protecting religious freedom**
- Preventing sexual and gender based violence;
- Protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms, including vulnerable groups such as sexual minorities;
- Supporting democratic transition and expanded democratic participation, particularly by women and minority groups;
- Entrenching the rule of law and combatting the destabilizing impact of crime and corruption, including through security sector capacity building;
- Strengthening economic governance, including building free markets and an effective enabling environment for business;

- Delivering urgent, targeted responses to disasters or emerging crises, with a focus on small-scale humanitarian support.

8. Origin and Context:

After the regaining state independence, residents of Georgia have become religious minded as far as the state anti-religious ideological and repressive mechanisms have been dismantled. The competition has launched among the religious unions to gain the influence as well as get stronger. Frequently, the competition was being evolved on the background and at the expense of discrimination of non-dominant and new religious unions. Moreover, it has to be noted that the new forms of internal as well as external migration have taken place in the country: Georgian Muslims from western Georgia have been resettled in the eastern and central parts of the country; Meskhetian Turks were also repatriated to Georgia who mainly resettled in Samtskhe-Javakheti region. Hereby it has to be noted that both types of migrants have been resettled in the areas with the compact settlement of the followers of Georgian Orthodox Church which ended up with the establishment of tight physical contact (clash) between the orthodox Christian and Muslim communities and triggered the manifestation of societal abuses and discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice as well as religious persecution, interference with the performance of religious rites, physical assault, harassment, and vandalism.

According to the 2002 census, Orthodox Christians constitute 84 percent of the population, followed by Muslims at 10 percent and members of the Armenian Apostolic Church (AAC) at 4 percent. There is a strong correlation among ethnicity, religious affiliation, and region of residence. Most ethnic Georgians are affiliated with the Georgian Orthodox Church (GOC). A small number of mostly ethnic Russians are members of several Orthodox groups not affiliated with the GOC, including the Molokani, Staroveriy (Old Believers), and Dukhoboriy (Spirit Wrestlers). Ethnic Azeris, who are predominantly Muslim, form the majority of the population in the southeastern region of Kvemo-Kartli. Other Muslim groups include ethnic Georgian Muslims in Adjara and Chechen Kists in the northeast. Many migrants living in the southern Samtskhe-Javakheti as well as in Kvemo Kartli region are ethnic Georgian Muslims, originally from Adjara. Ethnic Armenians belong primarily to the AAC and constitute the majority of the population in Samtskhe-Javakheti. Roman Catholics, Kurdish Yezidis, Greek Orthodox, and Jews together make up less than 5 percent of the population. New religious groups such as Baptists, Jehovah's Witnesses, Pentecostals, and Hare Krishnas are growing in number, but together constitute less than 1 percent of the population.

Hereby it has to be noted that the constitution and other laws and policies generally protect religious freedom and, in practice, the government generally respected religious freedom. However, in some occasions authorities did not respond to societal efforts to limit the rights of members of minority groups. The government continued to favor the Georgian Orthodox Church (GOC) in the restitution of disputed properties. It also maintained a privileged legal and tax

status for the GOC and incomplete separation of church and state in public schools. Some politicians as well as publicly recognized individuals (including civic activists) use religiously intolerant rhetoric in their activities; some media sources can also be blamed with this regard. Given the facts and available evidence identified and reported by local and international CSOs to be shared and widely acknowledged by the US State Department annual report on HR for Georgia in 2014 there were reports of societal abuses and discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice. Cases reported included religious persecution, interference with the performance of religious rites, and reports of physical assault, harassment, and vandalism.

Unfortunately, local civil societal actors including human rights defender groups as well as media outside the capital are not capable enough to counteract the societal abuses as well as discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief or practice. This tendency is particularly alarming in those areas in where the different religious believers are compactly residing such as Kakheti, Samtskhe-Javakheti, Kvemo Kartli, Guria and Adjara regions. Given the analysis of locally emerging problems it appears that civil societal actors need more specific knowledge as well as respective skills to obtain in order to adequately engage in the protection and promotion of religious rights and freedoms for vulnerable groups as well as provide all the necessary civic guarantees to avoid the interference with the performance of religious rites. Moreover, civil societal actors are lacking the respective skills to report the facts of abuses in a highly professional manner and ensure their adequate presentations. In addition, it has to be underlined that the well developed and capable CSOs dealing with tolerance and religious freedom promotion are mainly working in the capital while the remote areas of the country are significantly lacking well functional as well as educated civic actors able to raise the voices for the protection and promotion of religious rights and freedoms.

9. Beneficiaries and Participants:

The project immediate target groups (beneficiaries) are: a) 36 civil societal representatives including human rights defenders and b) 20 media representatives from Kakheti, Samtskhe-Javakheti, Kvemo Kartli, Guria and Adjara regions who will take part in the project organized capacity building program and thus obtain needed knowledge as well as respective skills to better protect and promote religious rights and freedom.

In addition the project target groups are also other regional based CSOs and media sources who will obtain respective knowledge as well as information through reading the project developed and disseminated “Religious Freedom and Tolerance Guide Book”.

PMMG has an initial communication with the local stakeholders including partner organizations in the underlined regions as well as other local civil societal actors and the representatives of media who welcomed the idea of realization of the action as well as briefed the project team about those needs and constraints to be addressed in a timely and highly efficient manner in

order to empower local civil society for the purpose of adequate protection and promotion of religious freedom and rights.

Beneficiaries of the action will directly participate in the action by taking part in the project organized capacity building program. The project trained beneficiaries will continue work with the PMMG in planning and realizing the similar type of activities in a joint or unilateral manner.