



Georgia Employment and Infrastructure Initiative
საქართველოს დასაქმებისა და ინფრასტრუქტურის ინიციატივა

COMMUNITY ACHIEVEMENTS

Ivliita Community ~ Complementary Water Initiatives Flow Fast to Improve Livelihood



Guram Gikoshvili is a highly respected member of the Ivliita Community. Elected as CDC Coordinator, his background in engineering and youthful spirit has led him to become an active community leader. A champion of change, Guram led previous community initiatives to repair and expand Ivliita's irrigation system. Last year the 25 year-old transformer powering Ivliita's irrigation system broke-down, making it impossible for farmers to get water to their fields. Mr. Gikoshvili, himself a farmer, lost 60% of his harvest due breakdown of the irrigation system. Since repairing that transformer with the assistance of GEII, Guram anticipates a brighter future for himself and other farmers in the community. Commenting on this, he noted, ***"I am confident that the rehabilitated irrigation system will greatly enhance economic opportunities in Ivliita. It's a symbol of cooperation and pride for our community."***

Ivliita is a small village of 248 people, located 3 km west of Akhaltsikhe in Samtskhe-Javakheti Region. The majority of the population is Georgian with a unique Catholic identity, and it neighbors a predominantly Armenian village. The primary source of Ivliita's income is agriculture, and due to poor productivity, the young working-age population has been leaving at an alarmingly high rate.

The citizens of Ivliita understand **water** to be a fundamental building-block of socio-economic livelihood more than most. Due to a breakdown of the transformer powering Ivliita's irrigation system, last year's harvest was disastrous for the livelihood of this community. 90 hectares of land went dry, yielding a harvest of 50% less than average and drastically impacting the incomes of nearly all residents. In parallel, a lack of household delivery of water was adversely affecting the health of community and consuming a substantial amount of time and energy to manually transport from its nearest source. In fact, citizens of Ivliita spent so much time transporting water that greetings of "Good Morning Ladies" became daily ritual at the water tap.

In a Community Meeting facilitated by GEII staff in October 2004, the citizens of Ivliita identified both of potable water and irrigation issues as critical, and inter-dependant, constraints to their socio-economic development. As the community calculated the overall economic benefits of repairing their irrigation and water delivery systems, they were surprised to see economic benefits of more than \$20,000 / year That's more than \$80 / person!

As a result of the prioritization process, the recently-established Community Development Council (CDC) set about the business of planning for their future. Recognizing the mutually reinforcing synergies between irrigation and potable water supply improvements, strong buy-in, and potential economic impact, GEII elected to support both projects for implementation previous to the New Year. For both projects, the community contributed more than 20% of the total value of the project, including cash contributions from nearly 100 households. Both projects were completed by December 2004.

As a result of this participatory community effort supported by GEII, short and long-term prospects for the community are bright. Enhanced incomes and savings will enable the community to undertake future initiatives on their own, including other community-prioritized needs such as rehabilitation of their community center.

As well, GEII intends to continue its relationship with Ivliita and the neighboring multi-ethnic community of Skhvilisi, which successfully implemented a GEII-supported road rehabilitation project. By supporting Ivliita and Skhvilisi with more advanced training and technical assistance in local economic development, it is anticipated that both communities will demonstrate the initiative needed to form partnerships with business, local government and other communities to self-initiate future, high-impact activities. Such initiatives will go far to promote larger-scale, multi-community economic impact and promote understanding between diverse ethnic and religious groups.



Tsiala Chilingarashvili- "Before getting married I was living in Aspindza rayon, where there were no problems with water. With the previous situation in Ivliita, each morning we were transporting water from the river for household needs. This was wasting a lot of time, sometimes taking up to a half-day for transporting water. Once a week we had to transport potable water from the neighboring village, 6km away. This situation worsened in wintertime--if we could not manage bringing water from the neighboring village, untreated river water was consumed. Completion of the water supply project with the support of GEII reminded me of the good times back in Aspindza. Thanks to this great effort, our situation has much-improved."

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