

## **IWPR Caucasus Builds Women's Rights Reporting Network**

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Georgian, Abkhaz and Ossetian activists and reporters to work on joint stories.

Journalists, bloggers and civil activists from Abkhazia and South Ossetia had a rare opportunity to meet their Georgian counterparts at an IWPR event designed to build regional advocacy and reporting networks.

Held in the Armenian capital Yerevan on June 22-25, the workshop was part of an ongoing project called **Women Connecting For Peace - The Voice of Change**, which IWPR is running in partnership with UN Women.

Since conflict in the early 1990s, journalists in Abkhazia and South Ossetia have had little contact with those in Georgia, so that even basic information is in short supply.

"Unfortunately, we rarely have an opportunity to meet our colleagues from Abkhazia and Ossetia," Eka Kutubidze, a blogger who works for the Women's Centre for Democracy in Tbilisi said. "It was helpful to me to make new contacts, expand my knowledge to more regional dimensions, and draft some plans for cooperative work in future."

Irina Dambegova, an editor with the South Ossetian TV company IR, said she found the experience productive, adding, "I hope that this won't be the only event of its kind, and that we'll have opportunities to tackle challenges together."

Led by local and international experts, the workshop set out to build a network of women's rights experts, social media users and citizen reporters able to advocate on women's rights and gender equality issues.

The two days included both a theoretical component on women's rights with special reference to the South Caucasus, discussions on how to handle sensitive conflict-related stories, and hands-on training in filming, video and audio editing, and blog presentation.

"For me as a journalist, the skills I gained in filming video are particularly important, as I plan to enhance my reporting," Elena Lolua, a reporter for the Abkhazian newspaper Ekho Abkhazii, said. "When it comes to women's issues, there are many areas still untapped in the Caucasus which require more attention and discussion."

After the session, Keith Kenney, a professor of visual communications at South Carolina University who conducted some of the practical sessions, said, "I liked the group - they were so enthusiastic and enjoyed doing exercises, despite having a very loaded programme."

One immediate outcome was that participants agreed six topics on which video stories will be developed jointly as the project continues, plus a number of articles for publication. The output will appear in local online and print outlets, on IWPR's website, and on a Facebook page designed for the project.

Network members will also forge links with women's organisations and relevant government departments.

"The organisation I represent treats women's issues as a priority," David Shubladze of LGBT Georgia said. "It's also important that the project is engaging representatives from Abkhazia and South Ossetia. I acquired very useful information and great video filming skills, and I met some fascinating people."

**Location:** [Caucasus](#)  
[South Ossetia](#)  
[Georgia](#)  
[Armenia](#)

**Topic:** [Media Development](#)

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