

KEY ISSUES AND OBJECTIVES

- Build capacity and redouble the effectiveness of local civil society organizations
- Provide tools for the development of viable community-oriented networks

OVERVIEW

- Services in over 40 cities throughout Eurasia, nearly all hosted by local partners
- Host of nearly 8,000 local-language websites
- Nearly 700,000 visits are logged at IATP centers and former centers every year
- Nearly 50,000 users are trained in IT skills every year



IATP in Georgia

IATP began operating in Georgia in 1997. At present, there are five regional IATP access sites and seven Independent Internet Centers (centers that have graduated from IATP funding) operating throughout the country. IATP professionals, trainers, and volunteers train, assist users access the Web, and organize various Internet-related events. In the last year, 36 700 residents of Georgia visited IATP access sites and 3 250 people attended training courses. IATP's server in Tbilisi hosts 538 websites.

Special Projects

IREX brings together the tools of its ICT4D programs to address specific local issues as special projects. For example, IATP launched cooperation with the beneficiaries of the project run by City Hall of Tbilisi – entrepreneurs starting business with loans received from the City Hall. IATP will help them create web-pages for their businesses and will provide hosting.

IREX and ICT4D in Eurasia

Initially launched in 1995, IATP now operates in 10 countries in Western Eurasia, the Caucasus, and Central Asia. The Internet Access and Training Program strengthens NGOs, media outlets, government institutions, political parties, universities, schools, libraries and other community stakeholders.

IATP is one of several IREX programs that use simple technologies to provide technical assistance and innovative resource to local citizen initiatives.

TOOLS FOR CIVIL SOCIETY DEVELOPMENT

IATP provides civil society organizations (CSOs) and community leaders with essential tools that are otherwise either largely inaccessible or under-utilized. The resulting assistance and collaboration improves the effectiveness of local civil society initiatives, expanding their reach and allowing them access to the latest international expertise. IATP provides:

- **Internet Access** –Free computer and Internet access available at IATP centers helps bridge the digital divide and provides new sources of information and knowledge.
- **Technical Training** – A catalogue of over a dozen training modules including basic computer literacy, Web design, Internet research, blogging, and wiki creation can be tailored to meet the institutional needs of organizations and professionals attending courses.
- **Web Content Development** – CSOs and individuals create websites and resources after completing IATP courses. New Web resources increase local-language content, making the Internet more accessible and useful to local users.
- **Online Forums** –Stakeholders, experts, and decision-makers join online in virtual exchanges of ideas that bridge the technology gap between regions and capital cities, and give often isolated professionals and leaders first-hand access to expertise located distantly.
- **Community Events** – Citizens utilize the centers as neutral meeting places to organize community initiatives and use IATP-provided technology and expertise to strengthen their projects.

IATP Administration

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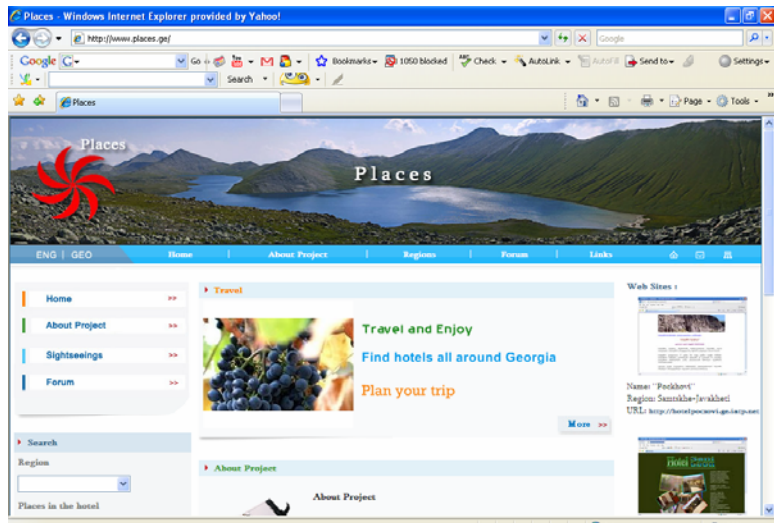
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Georgian Tourism Industry Gets Online Boost in Visibility

Since November 2006, IATP has been collaborating with local small guesthouse owners across Georgia to bring them online and help them penetrate the international tourism market. The Places project (<http://places.ge.iatp.net>) helps entrepreneurs build professional websites to attract guests, create a central portal to promote the Georgian hospitality, improve guesthouse business plans using distance learning and improve service quality in general. With IATP support, project participants have developed an online portal for hosting all the websites, offering visitors an easy search function that provides information about destinations, and raises the rankings of these hotels in online search engines.

Georgian Voters Interact with Leading Politicians about Elections and Civil Rights

IATP in Georgia organized a series of online forums both for the presidential elections of January 2008 and parliamentary elections of May 2008 which gave voters access to essential information in advance of the hotly contested poll. All candidates and political parties were invited and offered equal representation in the online forums, with two major presidential candidates, David Gamkrelidze and Levan Gachechiladze themselves participating in the presidential election forum. The parliamentary forum hosted six major political parties and blocs whose representatives spoke to the guests of the online events. About 350 people posted their questions on these forums, which became Georgia's only pre-election online events of the kind.

The presidential candidates and leaders of political parties and blocs found time for the forum despite very busy campaign schedules and regular appearances on TV, utilizing internet to connect with people and bolster their popularity. Citizens, in turn, took advantage of the opportunity to solicit and receive concrete answers to their specific questions on policy from candidates and parties. Also, voters received information on their rights in additional forums with the heads of leading election watchdogs – International Society for Free Elections and Democracy, Georgia's Young Lawyers Association, and the New Generation New Initiative. Prior to the elections IATP also held seminars, including one with the USAID-funded International Republican Institute, that raised awareness on the availability of web-resources on voters' rights and election procedures. These efforts helped prepare citizens to participate actively in the 2008 election.