



Azerbaijan



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COUNTERPART

88 Zargarpalan Street, Baku, Azerbaijan Tel: (+994 12) 499 19 23, 499 26 59, Fax: 499 27 19, E-mail: office@counterpart.az

## CASE STUDY

# Stakeholders Hold Constructive Policy Dialogue

## USAID Civil Society Project is Creating a “Space” for NGOs, Business, the Media, and Government to Meet and Learn From One Another



*Stakeholders prioritized and consolidated issues through a facilitated consensus building process which now serves as a framework for local, regional and national initiatives to be supported by USAID, the Government of Azerbaijan, and other development organizations.*

### Challenge

As Azerbaijan enters the second decade of transition, the government, private sector, and non-governmental organizations continue to explore approaches to fostering robust participation in setting and implementing policies that promote the socio-economic and democratic development of the country. The government is faced with the challenge of decentralization whilst maintaining stability. Also, the non-governmental organizations and entrepreneurs continue to seek avenues for constructive input with the Government of Azerbaijan.

### Initiative

USAID’s Civil Society Project is helping the citizens and the Government develop a dialogue while working towards the creation of a more representative and better functioning democracy by building the capacity of stakeholders to initiate an ongoing dialogue on the formulation and implementation of public policy. During the first stage of this initiative, 250 leaders from government, business, civil society, and the media came together to identify issues of mutual concern and priority in the areas of policies affecting poverty reduction and sustainable development. This robust, nation-wide dialogue took place in four regional capitals, culminating in Baku, and is thought to be the first of its kind in Azerbaijan.

### Results

The process opens up a dialogue between multiple stakeholders and frames opportunities for constructive policy dialogue with the Government of Azerbaijan. As a result, civic, government and private sector leaders were able to assess the interests and buy-in of the key stakeholders, develop ideas for possible partnerships, and begin drawing lines for potential coalitions. A wide-spectrum of opportunities were identified in the areas of economic growth and diversification, infrastructure, environment, and social security. Cross-cutting themes identified included: participation of women and gender balance in decision making, awareness of legal rights among citizens, increased involvement of mass media in civil society issues.

Stakeholders prioritized and consolidated issues through a facilitated consensus building process which now serves as a framework for local, regional and national initiatives to be supported by USAID, the Government of Azerbaijan, and other development organizations. These stakeholders are vigorously promoting interaction and collaboration with NGOs – seeking to be more effective advocates and service providers for their constituents and clients. Most importantly, the meetings have set a standard for creating a “space” for NGOs, business, the media, and government to meet and learn from one another.



Civil Society Project is the United States Agency for International Development’s 5-year initiative, implemented by Counterpart International in partnership with Urban Institute and International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNLP).

