# At the Crossroads of Identity, Belonging and the Myth of Return:

**A Case Study of Georgian Internally Displaced Persons
of 1992-93**

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**Ketevan Sulava**

(Georgia)

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Members of the examining committee:

Prof. Dr Mohamed Salih (Supervisor)
Prof. Dr Jan Pronk (Second Reader)

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## *Inquiries:*

| | |
|---|---|
| Postal address: | Institute of Social Studies |
| | P.O. Box 29776 |
| | 2502 LT The Hague |
| | The Netherlands |
| Location: | Kortenaerkade 12 |
| | 2518 AX The Hague |
| | The Netherlands |
| Telephone: | +31 70 426 0460 |
| Fax: | +31 70 426 0799 |

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# Dedication

This research paper is dedicated to the young boy who with excessive eagerness painted his imaginary 'home' and unknowingly gave birth to the central concept for this research.

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| | |
|---|---|
| GoG | Government of Georgia |
| IDMC | International Displacement Monitoring Centre |
| IDP | Internally Displaced Person |
| MRA | Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from Occupied Territories, Accommodation and Refugees of Georgia |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organization |
| NRC | Norwegian Refugee Council |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNHCR | United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees |

# Abstract

This study is about Georgian Internally Displaced People (IDPs) from the breakaway territory of Georgia known as Abkhazia, who are now living in other parts of Georgia. The research considers the different perceptions of the Georgian IDPs of 'return', 'identity' and 'belonging' through an analysis of the narratives of pioneer and second-generation IDPs. Among those interviewed for the research were IDPs, including teachers, NGO workers, parents, youth, in addition to government officials and school principals from mainstream schools, some of whom were 'local's' (non-IDPs). The key finding is that IDPs' narratives of return are tied to demands for full reintegration of Abkhazia into Georgia. Another finding is that the whole question of return, home and belonging of IDPs has become a strong theme in public politics in Georgia as a whole. This narrative is now used by the government to promote its own territorial and political goals. Media campaigns reinforce narratives around what has become the 'myth of return'. The study concludes that the consequences for IDPs are that they are unable to resolve questions of belonging, home and return, because of the complex ambiguity in Georgian public life surrounding the myth of return.

# Keywords

# Chapter 1
# Introduction

## 1.1 Focus of the Research

As one of the many conflicts following by the breakup of the Soviet Union the conflict in Abkhazia, Georgia distinguishes itself as one of the bloodiest, most consequential and most unresolved. It caused tens of thousands of casualties, ethnic cleansing and displaced more than a quarter of a million mostly ethnic Georgians within Georgia. The armed conflict challenged Georgia's territorial integrity and resulted in the de facto loss of control over Abkhazia. The negotiation process between Georgian and Abkhaz sides has come to a deadlock. Hence there are no real prospects for repatriation of internally displaced persons' (IDPs) in the near future. Since the end of the war restoration of territorial entirety along with the return of IDPs has been the dominant public and political discourse in Georgia.

The main argument of this research is that IDPs in Georgia seek to preserve the social and cultural attributes of the past while they go through the process of social and economic adjustment in exile and have aspirations of return. This controversial relationship is accompanied by the hardships of their present conditions in exile, the state's political rhetoric on restoration of Georgia's territorial integrity and the IDPs return. This study tries to understand the motivations of IDPs to go back to their initial place of residence as well as identify their strategies for retaining collective memories of the past. More specifically, it unveils the sources of IDPs belonging to their home and relevant identities. It also talks about key factors that influence IDPs attitudes about their past present and future. To better capture the internal displacement phenomena the paper also presents the international and Georgian approach towards IDPs and a synthesis of the two. The key research findings are based on the data drawn from ethnographies collected from the central stakeholders: state, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), schools' staff, displaced youth and their parents who in most of the cases were IDPs.

The study demonstrates how differentiation of socioeconomic conditions of IDPs between pre and post-war period, dominant state and public discourse and processes of adaptation through protracted exile significantly influences their identity, attitude and understanding towards return.

## 1.2 Problem Statement

Recurrent increases in the world's IDP population conceals the fact that considerable numbers return either spontaneously or with the support of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) under voluntary repatriation programs (Zetter 1994). Despite research on repatriation, economic and social adjustment, loss and adaptation by forced migrants under conditions of resettlement, important gaps still remain in the conceptual and empirical

knowledge about the reasons why refugees or IDPs choose to return home and the salient characteristics of their decision processes (Zetter 1994). There are some variables which may determine the likelihood and extent of possible repatriation. Simply put, these relate to the experiences in the place of exile and the extent to which conditions in the place of origin have changed to allow repatriation to be considered a viable option (ibid). This study focuses more on the former set of variables – the impact of host country experiences. Zetter (1994) points out that the important determinants of repatriation decisions (all things being equal) are the duration of exile and the nature of the assistance program.

Embraced by large scale assistance programs and after 17 years of exile of Georgian IDPs with co-ethnic, co-religious and co-language hosts, the dynamics of socioeconomic change make consideration of whether and under what conditions mass return might occur (Zetter 1994). The socioeconomic differentiation and processes of adaptation through protracted exile become crucial variables in understanding the contradictory and paradoxical attitudes to a return which the IDP population displays in Georgia (ibid).

Under the condition of protracted exile, the war-induced displaced population in Georgia remains exposed to different social, economic and political problems. The peace process is deadlocked. Georgian communities have been unable to return to the breakaway territory now under de facto Abkhazian control. Successive governments have insisted on return as the only option. As a result the integration process of IDPs into Georgian society has been hindered and they remain at the margins of national politics (Conciliation Resources 2009).

## 1.3   Questions Guiding the Research

The objective of the research is to explore different perceptions of IDPs' and their attitudes towards belonging and the possible return to home and villages within the framework of what I have conceptualized as the 'dilemmas of IDP identity'. It aims to understand what is the rationale behind the 'myth of return' so prevalent in Georgia's displaced community. It is done based on the narratives of two generations of IDPs. The study also intends to unveil and explain the functionality of some significant factors such as Abkhazian schools in exile so called 'IDP schools' and IDP collective centres that reproduce the belief of return and strengthen certain identities and the sense of belonging to Abkhazia.

**The central research question is as follows:**

Why do IDPs hold on to the 'myth of return' in spite of their protracted exile from their territory of origin?

This is answered through a series of sub-questions, dealt with in the following chapters of the study:

1. What is the context of internal displacement and how did displacement emerge for the IDPs? Chapter 2
2. How can 'belonging' and narratives of identity among IDPs be understood, conceptually? Chapter 3
3. How do so called 'IDP schools' shape the generation of potential returnees and contribute to the reproduction of the myth of return and the sense of belonging to Abkhazia? Chapter 4
4. How do first and second generation IDPs articulate their perspective on a potential return? Chapter 4

## 1.4  Methodology

In order to address the research questions and stated objectives, this study engaged with the qualitative data from several different sources. As the central focus of the research is internally displaced people and their motivations to return, in-depth interviews were selected as the main research technique. The key informant groups were identified based on their ability to provide information on the subject matter. The in-depth interviews were conducted with Georgian state officials, NGO workers, school staff, IDP youth and their parents. Most interviewees comprised of internally displaced persons. In total 44 participants were interviewed, 30 individuals and four groups. The tables below provide the data on both individual and group interviews:

| Data on Individual Interviews | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Participants | No. of participants | IDP | Non-IDP | Male | Female | Age |
| *State* | 5 | 4 | 1 | 4 | 1 | *Above 30* |
| *NGO* | 7 | 7 | 0 | 1 | 6 | *Above 30* |
| *Youth* | 7 | 7 | 0 | 4 | 3 | *17-25* |
| *Parents* | 4 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 4 | *Above 30* |
| *Mainstream School Staff* | 2 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2 | *Above 30* |
| *'IDP School' staff* | 5 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 5 | *Above 30* |

| Data on Group Interviews | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Partici-pants | No. of partici-pants | IDP | Non-IDP | Male | Female | Age |
| *Youth* | *6* | *5* | *1* | *0* | *6* | *20-23* |
| *Youth* | *3* | *3* | *0* | *3* | *0* | *18-19* |
| *'IDP School' staff* | *3* | *3* | *0* | *0* | *3* | *Above 30* |
| *'IDP School' staff* | *2* | *1* | *1* | *0* | *2* | *Above 40* |

The sample included IDPs from urban locations, mainly in capital city, Tskneti and in second biggest city of Georgia Kutaisi located in west Georgia. As the research mostly relied on 'snowball sampling' to identify potential interviewees, locations with a high density of IDPs were preferable. Therefore the above listed sites were selected because of their high concentration of IDPs[1]. The language of communication was Georgian only. All interviews except one were recorded on a voice recorder and transcribed afterwards.

Although the in-depth interview was chosen as the central research method, data was also drawn from community observation at IDP collective centres, NGO reports on internal displacement in Georgia, State Strategy for IDPs-Persecuted (2007), essays of internally displaced school children, school posters and street posters visualizing IDPs. The collected secondary material, such as different studies on IDPs in Georgia served to better inform the researcher on the subject matter.

The narratives of key informants were transcribed and analysed thematically. As a result of analysis four different themes were identified: narratives of belonging, narratives of identity, narratives of return and narratives where belonging and return intersect. Also, within the narratives of belonging several sub-themes were identified, that will be more explicitly discussed in chapter three and four. The thematic analysis of the narratives provides more in-depth understanding of what stands behind the motivations of IDPs to a return to the place of their origin.

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[1] See the map of Georgia on page.

## 1.5  Limitations

The paper has several limitations. The concentration of the field work was limited to urban areas and it did not cover rural geographical locations. Another limitation of the paper is the absence of classroom observation at 'IDP schools'. During the field work schools were on holidays and there was no opportunity to attend regular classes and observe the teaching process.

As all interviews were conducted in Georgian language, some phrases or words, that have very important cultural specific meaning and relevancy to the research, might lose its significance when translated into English.

## 1.6  Research Paper Structure

The paper consists of five chapters. Chapter 1 addressed introductory points, setting down the problem, the research aim, questions and method. The second chapter will provide the contextual setting of the study, from the origins of internal displacement in Georgia, through major historical events of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict. It provides background information on national and international responses to internal displacement. Chapter 3 discusses key analytical concepts that are relevant to the study, especially belonging and identity in relation to 'myths of return'. It also provides the analysis of IDPs' identities and different types of belonging. Chapter 4 provides a more in-depth analysis of IDPs' perceptions and narratives around return, a sense of belonging, and finds evidence of resistance to integration. Chapter 4 also emphasizes the role of educational institutions in strengthening the feeling of belonging among the IDP community. The final chapter is a general conclusion which returns to the central findings and reflects on their possible wider implications.

# Chapter 2
# Setting and Dominant Discourses

## 2.1 Introduction

In order to engage in analysis of the key findings first it is necessary to present the contextual setting of the research. Hence, the present chapter introduces the origins of internal displacement in Georgia, more specifically, the background of armed conflict developed in Abkhazia after the collapse of the Soviet Union. It explains the causes of the IDPs inability to return and protracted nature of internal displacement in Georgia. It also provides information on the current situation of IDPs from Abkhazia and state responses to their problems. In addition, this chapter reflects on the dominant Georgian state and international approach in relation to the internal displacement phenomenon. Lastly, it provides a synthesis of the two.

## 2.2 Basic Facts on the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict

Like many other countries that emerged after the break-up of the Soviet Union, Georgia experienced severe political and economic crises in the early 1990s that led to military conflicts in two regions: South Ossetia (1991-92) and Abkhazia (1992-93) (Kharashvili 2001). As a result of these conflicts the Georgian state lost control over these territories and more than one quarter of a million people were forcefully displaced, mostly from Abkhazia.

In the federalism of the Soviet Union, Georgia was a Union Republic (Coppieters 2001). Abkhazia was an Autonomous Republic forming part of the Georgian Union Republic. Its constitutional status made it dependent on decisions taken in both Moscow and Tbilisi. In the Soviet system every federal entity had a so-called "titular nation", from which the name of the republic or region derived (Coppieters 2001). The Georgian nationality constituted about 70% of the population (*see figure 1*) of the Union Republic, while the Abkhazia titular nation (ethnic Abkhazians) did not constitute a majority in its own unit (ibid). Abkhazia had a population of about a half a million, of which the Abkhaz "titular nation" constituted a minority of 17.8%. The remaining population was made up of Georgians (45.7%), Armenians (14.6%) and Russians (14.3%) (International Displacement Monitoring Centre 2007: 14) (*see figure 2*).

In the second half of the 1980s the democratization of the Soviet regime gave the Georgian national movement the opportunity to question the legitimacy of the Soviet political arrangement (Coppieters 2001). The Georgian national movement was striving for secession from the Soviet Union, whereas the Abkhaz national movements wanted to sever their links of dependence on the Georgian authorities (Coppieters 2001). In April 1991, Georgia declared its full independence and elected a new president. He was ousted and replaced by a military coup, shortly after the dissolution of the USSR in December 1991.

**Figure 1**
**Distribution of different Ethnic Populations in Georgia (1995-2006)**
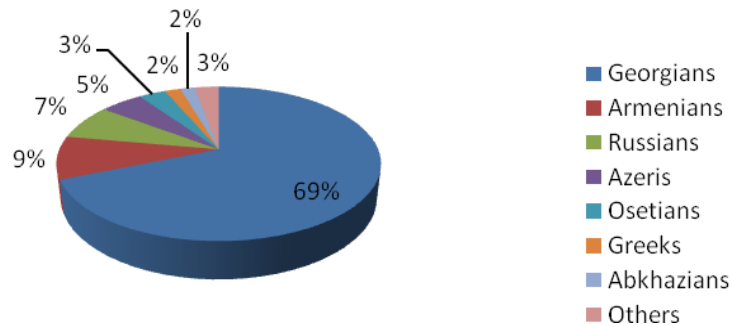


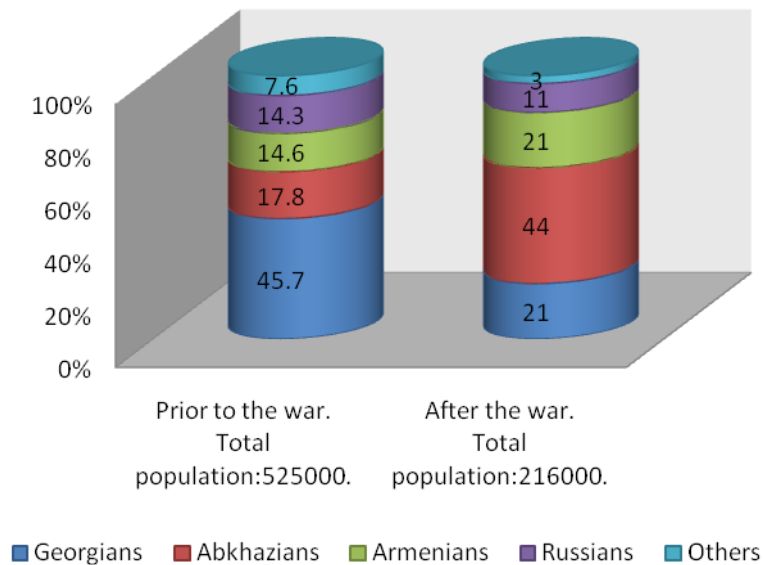*Source*: (International Displacement Monitoring Centre 2009: 14)

In August 1992 armed conflict broke out over the attempted secession of the autonomous region of Abkhazia from the newly independent former Soviet republic of Georgia. The head of the government failed to halt escalating conflict between the Abkhaz and Georgian communities in Abkhazia. Georgian troops entered Abkhazia in August 1992, with the aim of recovering control of the territory. They were defeated, however, by Abkhaz forces which had received the support of volunteers from the North Caucasus and Russian military (Mooney 1996). In September 1993 the Georgian forces fled from Abkhazia, as did its Georgian population. In 1994, Georgian and Abkhaz sides signed an agreement in Moscow on the separation of forces to be monitored by a Russian-dominated peacekeeping force and the United Nation's military Observer Mission in Georgia (Mooney 1996).

Within two years as many as 350, 000 of Abkhazia's original 540 000 inhabitants had been displaced (Mooney 1996: 197). Up to 300, 000 of these uprooted persons were ethnic Georgians who were displaced by a policy of ethnic cleansing after the Abkhaz Forces gained full control over the disputed territory in the fall of 1993 (ibid). At the same time the ethnic Abkhaz[2] displaced in the early of stages of the conflict began returning to their homes (ibid). Holding a similar hope of returning to their places of residence, 260, 000, almost all of the ethnic Georgians displaced from Abkhazia did not flee far from the conflict, but to the western regions of Georgia and the capital city Tbilisi (Mooney 1996: 198). As such, they are internally displaced persons.

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[2] The Abkhazians are a distinct ethnicity, linked linguistically and culturally to peoples of the north Caucasus (Petersen 2008).

**Figure 2  Distribution of Different Ethnic Population of Abkhazia Prior and After 1992-93 War**



*Source:* (International Displacement Monitoring Centre 2007: 15)

Neither Georgia, nor the international community has recognized Abkhazia as an independent state. Georgia claims that Abkhazia owes its de facto autonomy to Russian backing through providing its current inhabitants with Russian passports, residency documents (allowing them free movement), pensions higher than from the Georgian state, financial support and training of the Abkhaz military (International Displacement Monitoring Centre 2007). In 2008 the Russian federation officially recognized Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states.

The Georgian state prefers calling the conflict "political", which implies that the conflict is about statehood, and more particularly, about the independence and territorial integrity of the state of Georgia (Suslu 2006). For Abkhazians the conflict is about self-determination, about their right to define their political status and stand up to those who want to deprive them of their land, their ethnic home (Suslu 2006). Each side started to redefine their national interests through their own interpretation of the history of Abkhazia and its people. Both the Georgian and the Abkhaz myths about their own histories can be understood as intellectual tools for addressing the problem of ethnic diversity, which is perceived as a weakness and as a threat to their culture, statehood and political privileges as a titular nation (Coppieters 2001).

## 2.3 Conditions of Internal Displacement

The vast majority of the Georgian displaced population remained unable to return to their homes of origin or elsewhere in Abkhazia due to high tensions between the two conflicting communities (International Displacement Moni-

toring Centre 2007). Their houses remain burned, criminals still harass the population there and the rights of children are systematically abused, as they are refused education in Georgian language. Hence parents are unable to see a future for their children under such conditions, thus making return a difficult choice (Scarborough et al. 2006).

**Map1. Map of Georgia**



*Source: www.internal-displacement.org by NRC and IDMC*

For years displaced population has been dependent upon the assistance of state and humanitarian organizations (International Displacement Monitoring Centre 2007). According to estimates from NGOs approximately 73% of Georgia's IDPs live in urban areas, primarily in the region bordering Abkhazia and in the Georgian capital, Tbilisi (International Displacement Monitoring Centre 2007: 51). IDPs upon displacement reside in one of three accommodations: 1) in collective centres, 2) in host families (with relatives and friends), and 3) in private accommodation by themselves (rented or bought an apartment/house) (International Displacement Monitoring Centre 2007). About 40% of the displaced population live in 1,683 collective centres, located in former hotels, schools, kindergartens, factories, and military barracks (International Displacement Monitoring Centre 2007: 47). About 70% of these centres do not meet basic living standards, with inadequate access to clean water, unsafe electrical systems and inadequate insulation (International Displacement Monitoring Centre 2007). Due to inadequate living conditions children and youth in IDP collective centres are often isolated from local children and their families (International Displacement Monitoring Centre 2009).

The unemployment rate among IDPs is higher than in the general community. The percentage of families with female breadwinners significantly exceeds those with male breadwinners in the displaced population (Kharashvili

2001). The coping strategies of IDPs regarding unemployment vary. Some reports suggest that displaced people use informal livelihood strategies to a greater degree than the general population. Some IDP households earn an income through small-scale trade, others engage in farming, or income generating activities provided by the non-governmental sector.

One of the major causes of IDP vulnerability is linked to their emotional condition, as experiencing violent conflict and the aftermath of a difficult situation creates the feeling of dependency, helplessness and depression.

## 2.4  International Policy Discourses and Responses

The phenomenon of internal displacement has been widely described by international observers as one of the most pressing humanitarian challenges of our time (Global IDP Survey 2002). By the end of the Cold War, with the breakdown of borders, the changing nature of warfare and civil wars, the number of internally displaced persons grew (UNHCR 2009). At the end of 2008 according to the estimates of the UNHCR, there were 26 million internally displaced persons worldwide (UNHCR 2009: 2) . It has been approximately two decades since the issue of internal displacement was placed on the international agenda and recognized as a legitimate matter of international concern. The number of IDPs is considerably larger than refugees and unlike the latter the former have not crossed borders and still have membership in a state. The state has an obligation to ensure their protection and well-being (Adelman 2008).

Protracted displacement situations challenge the implicit obligation of the UNHCR to find durable solutions for IDPs (Adelman 2008). International humanitarian, human rights and development agencies have been progressively involved with internal displacement at policy level and in the field. Moreover the UNHCR mandate was extended to coordinate their efforts and ensure an adequate and effective international response (Mooney 2005).

Today the political and legal debate on how to assist the millions of IDPs in the world is shaped by a powerful tool – The UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. The concept of IDP has been changed more than once. According the Principles the latest definition of internally displaced people is:

> Persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border (United Nations and OCHA 2004: 1).

It is important to highlight that the displacement of these persons or groups of persons must be involuntary and forced. Other categories of internal migrants who have left their habitual residence due to economic, social or cultural reasons do not meet the definition of an IDP.

These legally non-binding principles, often referred to as "soft law", strengthen the role and responsibility of national government to protect and

assist their displaced population. It is only when the government is unwilling or unable to provide protection and assistance to its displaced citizens that the international community may step in (Chauz 2006). Some scholars like Weiss (2003) criticize the international response to internal displacement for not establishing institutional sponsor or international law governing this fastest growing category of war-effected population (Weiss 2003).

Since the normative framework has been adopted, the international discourse has changed and guiding principles have been circulating across borders. Georgia is among those states who applied the Guiding Principles to the development of laws in regards to internally displaced persons.

## 2.5 National State Discourses and Responses

In Georgia, as well as in many other countries, internal displacement is a protracted state of affairs due to violent conflicts surrounding territorial disputes and aspiration for territorial autonomy or independence. According to the 1996 Law of Georgia on Forcibly Displaced – Persecuted Persons,

> A Citizen of Georgia or stateless person permanently residing in Georgia will be considered persecuted if he/she was forced to leave a place of habitual residence and become displaced (within the territory of Georgia) because of the threat posed to his/her life or lives of the member of his/her family, their health or freedom as a result of aggression of a foreign power, internal conflict or large-scale human rights violation (Cohen et al. 2003:7).

The law has also offered some benefits to the displaced, such as, using public utilities free of charge in collective centres and modest monthly financial allowances. According to the law the state is held responsible to be in charge of the processes caused by the displacement and provide adequate solutions to problems of IDPs. However, until 2007 there was no state policy document reflecting a general vision of IDPs' problems and or an approach to them. Due to the lack of coordination and comprehensive approach between the state and non-governmental sector, IDPs' interests and needs were often neglected and it made it difficult to develop sustainable solutions to their problems. The former Government of Georgia (GoG) has been reluctant to facilitate the durable resettlement and socio-economic integration of the displaced in order to keep up political pressure on the Abkhazian authorities (Global IDP Survey 2002). The previous government right after the war created a system of separate educational and medical facilities for the IDPs as well as a separate government called the Legitimate Government of Abkhazia in Exile (for those IDPs from Abkhazia). The separate facilities were thought to meet the needs of the IDPs better than integrating them into the national educational and medical structures, because such facilities simultaneously provide employment for the IDPs trained in these sectors and could provide services better suited to meet their specific needs. The Ministry of Education and Culture of Abkhazia in Exile supports the concept of separate education systems for the displaced such as Abkhaz schools in exile. These schools provide employment for displaced teachers (Kharashvili 2001). Moreover, university-stage students have access

to the Sukhumi[3] branch of the State University which was opened in exile (Kharashvili 2001). While separate educational structures unify the displaced community and reinforce the desire for return to Abkhazia they also sharpen the social isolation of the IDP population and hinder the process of integration (Mitchneck, Mayorova, Regulska 2009:1024).

In 2007 the current GoG dramatically changed its approach towards the management of IDPs and the subsequent discourse through adopting the State Strategy for Internally Displaced Persons - Persecuted. This document presents the government's approach to internal displacement issues and determines the major priorities: to create conditions for the dignified and safe return of IDPs to their places of permanent residence; and to support decent living conditions for the displaced and their integration in mainstream society. The Ministry of Refugees and Accommodation (MRA) is held in charge to monitor the outcomes of implementation of the strategy. The policy document is very general and lacks indication of concrete activities or measures. Neither does it articulate the goal of integration in addition to safe return. The rest of this section considers official state discourses in terms of IDP integration.

The UNHCR has been the leading stakeholder in managing forced migrants. It facilitates the integration of refugees and forcefully displaced persons in mainstream society (UNHCR 1950).The UNHCR sees the importance of integration of Georgian IDPs into the current place of residence, and at the same time promotes voluntary return to Abkhazia, Georgia. Although UNHCR is one actor in the larger governance environment, it helps to formulate the discourse and the focus on integration found in materials of many other organizations.

The dominant state and NGO discourse around IDPs is the "syndrome of dependence on assistance and lack of initiative" (Government of Georgia 2007, clause 1.6). Therefore the international and local stakeholders promote integration of displaced into the local population. The need for integration was also noted by Walter Kalin (2006), the UN Secretary-General's Representative on the Human Rights of IDPs, who highlighted that Georgian IDPs in collective centres are highly isolated. He also supported the Georgian government's initiative to facilitate economic and social integration of the displaced into the mainstream population, including through the privatization of collective centres to the benefit of IDPs (Mitchneck et al. 2009). Dwelling type is important because much of the discourse on integration centres on moving IDPs from collective centres to private accommodations as a means toward achieving integration (Mitchneck et al. 2009). Underlying discourse is an assumption that living among the local population will lead to socio-economic integration. The meanings of integration vary across those actors and agencies involved in managing the IDPs. The diverse meanings of integration display how the dominant integration discourse contributes to masking the isolation of the displaced community and to developing policy directions guided by the State's political projects (Mitchneck et al. 2009). The next section discusses the synthesis of

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[3] Sukhumi is the capital of Abkhazia.

national and international approaches towards internal displacement phenomenon.


## 2.6 Synthesis: National versus International

The UN Guiding Principles do not constitute an international treaty and do not create legal obligations for States. They are in conformity with international human rights law and humanitarian law but are simply of recommendatory nature. Consequently, the Guiding Principles are not considered part of the national legislation of Georgia. However, when the State of Georgia determined its legal position regarding internally displaced persons it was guided by the Guiding Principles, as a compilation of international standards.

The Georgian national legislation in regards to IDPs is in general conformity with the Guiding principles. Nevertheless, there are some context specific differences. Unlike the Guiding Principles, the Law of Georgia gives a more restrictive definition and lists only three cases where a person may be regarded as an IDP: "aggression of a foreign power, internal conflict or large-scale human rights violations" (Cohen et al. 2003:8). In contrast with the Guiding Principles the Law of Georgia does not consider "natural or human-made disaster" as a reason for displacement (Cohen et al. 2003:7). The definition of internally displaced person according to the law of Georgia reflects the internal and external political affairs of the country. Aggression of foreign power and large-scale human rights violations are the state narratives of the causes of displacement in Georgia.

For GoG the IDP question has been inextricably tied to Georgia's territorial integrity. Following the presidential election in 2004, the new government has intensified its efforts to bring break-away territories back under its control. The state has consistently maintained that return is the only viable option for all IDPs' problems, which is clearly reflected in the State Strategy for IDPs – Persecuted.

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# Chapter 3 Belonging in Theory and Practice

## 3.1 Introduction

The subject of this chapter is the nature and significance of belonging and its intersection with human identity. Its main objective is to address the question of belonging as it arises in (Georgian) displaced community (to the original place of residence), where in connection with national identity it remains to be a highly politicized and contested issues. Belonging is a recurring theme of crucial existential concern in public discourse and across the broad range of disciplines. Consideration of belonging involves identity and how these two concepts interplay together in theory. The latter question is explored by surveying the theoretical and conceptual frameworks from which the sense of fluid identities and belonging of Georgian IDPs evolved.

## 3.2 Theories of Belonging and Identity

The sense of belonging - a component of connectedness and relatedness - was identified by Abraham Maslow as one of the fundamental human needs of survival in a social sense (Kunc 1992). As such, a sense of belonging is important to the individual, family and community (Hill 2006).

Miller (2006) identifies belonging in relation to three senses of connection: the sense of belonging that refers to social connections, i.e. community of people; the sense of belonging that refers to historical connections, such as past or traditions; and the sense of belonging referring to physical connections like a particular locality or dwelling place.

The definitions of belonging in its social designation might be: to be closely associated with others; to be accepted as part of a particular social group or to identify with others (Miller 2006). Considered thus, belonging is taken to have certain positive consequences, one concerning the establishment of shared identity, and the other concerning the positive experiences derived from being so connected or identified (Miller 2006). Belonging as a social designation defines not only who we are in a collective or individual sense, but who 'we' are as human beings per se (Miller 2006).

There is less doubt that our understanding of ourselves is derived from past actions, events and connections. It is generally accepted that the past, whether individual or collective, is frequently utilized as an explanatory mode where identity and belonging are concerned (Miller 2006). As Nietzsche suggested, the stories that we know about ourselves about where we come from are a significant determining factor in the way we understand ourselves and design our lives (Miller 2006). Traditional stories passed down through generations in a community or country act as a device of self-disclosure. Therefore, the story-telling we practice is strongly related to the sense of our collective identity. As Anthony Smith argues, if nation and national identity are based upon a sense of shared history and common origin, then it is the narratives that we circulate about these things that will define our sense of belonging

(Miller 2006). In that case, the past appears to be indivisible from our sense of identity.

According to Miller (2006) environmental factors, both natural and built, are also important in the discussion on belonging. He argues that human beings are influenced by the environments they inhabit. When humans say that they belong somewhere ("home", "here", "there"), these places have strong existential value to them. Often these attachments are understood in emotional terms and humans tend to identify self with these places in a highly sensual mode. There is less doubt that we relate more emotionally to particular landscapes than to others and that could be related to the feeling of security that arises from it. A wide range of theories suggest that physical environment also determines who and what we are. Hence, environmental belonging is necessary for an individual or a group to retain their identity, whereas not belonging to the environment where one is placed may destabilize one's identity either temporary or permanently (Miller 2006). This explains the existential anxiety of displaced people separated from their home-places against their will for a certain period of time.

Hedetoft (2002), on the other hand, introduces four dimensions of belonging: sources, feelings, constructions and fluidities (Nyberg Sørensen and Frederiksen 2002). These key parameters have great importance for the identity politics of different groups. According to Hedetoft's theory, the site of the sources of belonging is locality and familiarity. These elements are rooted in place, familiarity, sensual experience, human interaction and local knowledge, which constitute the sources of homeness (Nyberg Sørensen and Frederiksen 2002). However, they don't automatically produce the feeling of belonging or identity. This theory suggests that belonging is conditioned by social and psychological aspects, such as, persons, landscapes, emotional experiences and mental mappings. These are the things that produce the feeling of belonging, homeness and related identity.

Hedetoft's second key parameter – the feeling of belonging – is rooted in socio-psychological needs, positive identification with locality, and familiarity (Nyberg Sørensen and Frederiksen 2002). The above mentioned elements relevant for the sources of belonging are determinants of self-identity, homeness and socio-psychological security. In this sense, the feelings of belonging serve as a satisfaction of needs, acceptance by the community, and shared identity. This type of belonging does not embed the existence of 'other'. It has not been politicized by nationalizing processes. Whereas, the constructions of belonging (the third key parameter) are collectively transformed into the nation-state dependent form of identity. This understanding of connectedness institutionalizes belonging in the form of citizenship, passport, and ethno-national versions of historical memory (Nyberg Sørensen and Frederiksen 2002). This national identity draws boundaries between 'us' and 'them', transforms concrete 'place' into abstract territoriality, translates 'familiarity' into 'nationality' and produces the discourse on authenticity of belonging (Nyberg Sørensen and Frederiksen 2002).

The last 'compartment' of this theory – fluidities of belonging – is situated in globalization and the context of cosmopolitanism. Migration, dual citizenships and multicultural polities have challenged the ideal model of a homoge-

neous nation-state. Globalization has also strengthened these dynamics and thus contributed to the creation of multiple forms of identity and (non-)belonging (Nyberg Sørensen and Frederiksen 2002).

Yuval-Davis describes belonging as an act of self-identification or identification by others (Yuval-Davis 2006). She simplifies the notion of belonging by introducing building blocks, the so called three major analytical levels: social locations, an individual's identifications and emotional attachments to different groupings, and ethical and political value systems utilized as tools for judgement of their own or others' belonging (Yuval-Davis 2006). By definition, these different levels are interrelated and cannot be reduced to each other. According to her, gender, race and class are not just different categories of social location but categories that have certain positionality along power relations. Such positionalities are different historically and context-wise.

Yuval-Davis perceives the constructions of belonging not merely as cognitive stories, but as reflections of emotional investment and longing for attachment. As she further claims, there is less doubt that the emotional components of people's self-identity become more dominant the more threatened and less secure they feel. When the most crucial aspects of self identity are at stake human beings are willing to sacrifice their lives in order to prolong the existence of the narratives of identities and the objects of their identification (Yuval-Davis 2006).

According to this theory, belonging is also about how the collective or individual identities and attachments are judged and valued. There are specific attitudes and ideologies defining where and how identity and categorical boundaries should be drawn (Yuval-Davis 2006). It is within this discussion on ethical and ideological issues and the way the social locations and narratives of identity are utilized where the focus from belonging moves to the politics of belonging (Yuval-Davis 2006).

In this sense, belonging is fundamental and existential notion, important determinant of individual identity. It is full of sensuality, organicism, romantic images and boundaries that separate the world into 'us' and 'them'.


### 3.3 Fluid Identities

Identities are stories that people narrate about themselves and each other. These stories are contested, fluid and often changing but are gathered around "hegemonic constructions of boundaries" between 'us' and 'them' and are closely related to political processes (Yuval-Davis et al. 2006: 2). The identity narratives can be both individual and collective. These stories are reproduced from generation to generation in a selective way. They shift and change and are often contested and multiplied. As Yuval-Davis puts it, the identity narratives "[…]can relate to the past, to a myth of origin; they can be aimed at explaining the present and, probably above all, they function as a projection of a future trajectory" (Yuval-Davis 2006: 202). Identity narrative, among other things, is also a claim making. For instance, ethnic identity makes a claim about how people make sense of themselves and at the same time it situates people in relation to the wider world (McIntosh 2005). Ethnic identity narratives may also

carry a claim about the authenticity of its origins from concrete locality and ownership rights over the territory. Jeffrey Weeks stated that

> Identity is about belonging, about what you have in common with some people, and what differentiates you from others… It gives you a sense of personal location, the stable core to your individuality. But it is also about your social relationships, your complex involvement with others. (McIntosh 2005: 38)

By their nature, identities are fluid. They are never a finished product. Some scholars argue that a multi-ethnic person can chose one identity but social locations and power relations need to be considered as well. In that sense, identity is less about the choice but more about the dominance of external perceptions (McIntosh 2005). Identity formation is a political process and it is shaped by political realities. What can be concluded is that while some identities are marked by insiders' self-expressions, others are imposed by outsiders' perceptions. These external perceptions are attempts to some extent to apply the rigid lines. In the next section I will explore Georgian IDP identities with a particular focus on their sense of belonging. Also, I will look at the "fluid" IDP identities formed under conditions of long-term exile from the perspective of external perceptions.

## 3.4 IDPs Identities and Belonging

Internally displaced persons being under the jurisdiction of their own state locally become a social category. The interpretation of this category is altered from the original definition made by the humanitarian agencies. In line with humanitarian principles, the IDP status is granted to secure special needs for assistance and protection of the individual or group in question (Brun 2003). However, this study shows that IDP status in Georgia separates internally displaced persons from other co-citizens by social markers and thus gives them a certain identity.

I will preface the analysis on IDPs' identity by exploring their personal perceptions of self-identities in the narratives on belonging. These narratives are thematically different but interconnected. Therefore, I will adopt Miller's (2006) perspective described in the previous section to identify different types of belonging in IDPs' stories. IDPs in Georgia have different sources of belonging: belonging to Abkhazia, idealized past, the former community they used to interact with and solidarity to the present displaced community.

IDPs, in order to cope with the hardships of exile often use idealized images form the past with considerable emotions. In the narratives of my informants, Abkhazia was often referred to as "paradise on earth". A young IDP woman claims: "I have spent the best years of my life in Abkhazia, since then

nothing good has happened in my life[4]". The pioneer displaced generation regrets that their youth did not have a chance to stay longer in Abkhazia and experience all its advantages:

> A child who was born in exile has not been exposed to the beauty of the sea, the warmth, mentality and intelligence of the people of Abkhazia. Here the children don't even know who their next door neighbors are. They don't know what human warmth and mutual support is all about[5].

IDPs miss the sub-culture and way of personal interaction they used to practice in Abkhazia. The urban life in the capital imposes distance in personal interactions and thus distinguishes itself from how IDPs used to live in the past. The second generation of IDPs more or less adopts the current urban life-style and thus generates a fear in the older generation that their special sub-culture is under threat to disappear. Therefore the first generation who still possesses the memories of Abkhazia applies the tactic of transferring collective memories to children from an early age to preserve their identities and the sense of belonging to their 'homeland'.

The narratives on territorial attachment are also prevalent in IDPs stories. However, they are tied with nationalist motives: "When you lose the territory of your country it feels like losing a part of your body, as if they pull out your heart from you[6]". This parallel between one's heart and the home country demonstrates how strong the sense of belonging towards it is. IDP youth born in displacement also possess territorial attachment to Abkhazia. Their sense of belonging is mostly generated by the stories narrated in their community and an imposed obligation to remember and never forget:

> All my family members are originally from Abkhazia. It is shameful for me not to know anything about this place. Every person must know well his/her place of origin. I have never said that I come from Tbilisi, I swear! I think, it is important for children to know where they come from. Even if you were born in Tbilisi, your roots are more important[7].

The young person identifies himself with a certain locality, with his origins. As one of his 'IDP school' teacher says "the tree's height is measured from its roots and not from the ground[8]".

Miller (2006) has identified three different and interdependent senses of connection: social, historical and geographical. The findings of this study sug-

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[4] Interview #19, 27/07/2010, IDP female, NGO worker in Kutaisi.

[5] Interview #15, 22/07/2010, 'IDP school' teacher, resident of IDP collective centre in Tbilisi.

[6] Interview #10, 21/07/2010, IDP parent, female, resident of IDP collective centre in Tbilisi.

[7] Interview #11, 21/07/2010, Youth #1, male, resident of IDP collective centre in Tbilisi.

[8] Interview #15, 22/07/2010, 'IDP school' teacher, resident of IDP collective centre in Tbilisi.

gest the fourth sense of connection – belonging to the lost identity. The narratives of IDPs demonstrate their nostalgic attitude to the past and what they represented prior to the war period.

> In Sukhumi everybody knew who I was and whose daughter I was. When walking on the streets I would get tired of greeting with people. I felt myself as a person there…There I was Marina Bregvadze9 and who am I here? Even if I get rich I would still feel lost in this city… it is a moral death for me10.

As they say, nothing changes ones identity as fast as war. Forced exile and the IDP label changed Marina's self perception about her personality. Her nostalgic feelings for the past are strengthened by the sense of belonging to her previous well-respected, accepted and familiar to all, person she was before displacement. Her belonging is not so much about the certain locality, but about the lost identity she used to have while living in that environment.

Nevertheless, one of the most dominant narratives among IDPs was related to the sense of segregation and stigmatization generated by the local community. It is important to note that in most narratives of the interviewees the experiences of marginality are present, though the form of the responses is different. The IDP label distinguishes their collective identity from the rest of the population and thus highlights their disconnectedness from the locals. IDPs from Abkhazia are both insiders and outsiders to the new location of asylum. They are incorporated but yet excluded. Despite the co-ethnicity with their hosts they are differentiated, not just by dispossession and exile, but by the current dwelling type. Living in the collective centres creates certain stigma of temporariness. An 'IDP school' principle recalls: "Some of my relatives who are locals often use the word 'displaced' when referring to me. It once again reminds me that I am not from here, but from elsewhere"[11]. This is an example of intersection of geographical belongingness with community by outsiders. The segregation once again draws the boundary line between locals and IDPs and intensifies the margins between 'us' and 'them' and thus strengthens the IDPs' sense of connectedness to the displaced population. As Patricia Collins rightly notes:

> As the 'Others' of society who can never really belong, strangers threaten the moral and social order. But they are simultaneously essential for its survival because those who stand at the margins of society clarify its boundaries (Trimiko Melancon 2009: 845).

Being associated with Abkhazia automatically implies representativeness of the displaced community in the general population. Displaced people don't like it when they are referred to as IDPs by outsiders. They take it as an insult.

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[9] The real name of the interviewee is intentionally altered.
[10] Interview #29, 29/07/2010, IDP parent #4, female, resident of IDP collective centre in Tskneti.
[11] Interview #14, 22/07/2010, IDP school principal, resident of IDP collective centre in Tbilisi.

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Due to existing stereotypes around displaced persons the 'IDP' label has acquired a negative connotation and is sometimes used for humiliation. The IDP identity is a marginal identity in Georgia. That is why some IDPs who acknowledge their marginality try to redefine their status under their own terms. Some parents refuse to take their children to a nearby 'IDP school' and prefer to travel far to go to the mainstream school. "I am already an IDP by living in this collective center, why do I have to be an IDP at school?![12]" - was the answer of the young mother to the principle of Abkhaz school in exile. According to IDPs perceptions their status is associated with second class citizens, vulnerable, emotional, dependent on others and in need of assistance. Therefore, it is not surprising that some strive to be perceived differently and not being looked upon as an IDP. Those displaced who live in the collective centers lead almost the same everyday lives. They socialize intensively within the closed circle of IDP neighbors. Marry their IDP neighbors. Become godmothers and godfathers of IDP children from their neighborhood. Go to the nearby school where the teachers and class-mates are their IDPs neighbors. Hence, the interaction circle is narrow and closed. Taking a child to a mainstream school means crossing the boundaries of the closed community, being exposed to something innovative, having interaction with locals and no longer be stuck in the deadlock of 'dilemmas of IDP identity'.

The essence of "dilemmas of IDP identity" situates within plural and sometimes mutually contradictory identities that they display in their narratives. One of the main dilemmas is about ambiguity around the status of a 'returnee' or a 'settler'. While some IDPs strive to be perceived as the same members of the local society, rejecting labeling themselves as 'displaced', at the same time, they acknowledge that they don't belong here but elsewhere. The other ambiguity is felt around their rejection to be perceived by 'outsiders' as poor vulnerable people in need of assistance and compassion. While on the other hand, they accuse locals for not being sensitive enough to their horrible plight. I assume that some of these identities are contextualized to the situation and to the audience.

A very illustrative example of how IDPs are depicted and represented in mainstream society are the recent street posters visualizing IDPs in Tbilisi (*see photo1*). The posters are prepared by a local NGO promoting Georgian displacement issues abroad. The primary objective of these posters was to once again remind the Georgian population that IDPs are still there, the number is huge, they have not disappeared and something has to be done about it. The posters visualize individuals of different generations, displaced from different locations of breakaway regions of Georgia. All posters have the same caption: "today I am an IDP". Each poster quotes the person represented on the photo. "I could only manage to take with me the toy from my house" says a 12 year-old boy. The seven years old girl wishes: "I also want to see Sokhumi".

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[12] Interview #14, 22/07/2010, IDP school principal, resident of IDP collective centre in Tbilisi.

She is seven but the poster says she is from Sokhumi, Abkhazia. Individuals on photos are depicted sad, with teary and angry eyes. The posters are a good illustration of how IDPs are represented in Georgia.

**Photo 1. Street Posters Visualizing IDPs in Tbilisi**



*Source: Photos of the street-posters taken by the researcher during the field work.*

Representation is an important part of the process by which the meaning is produced through language, images or signs (Hall 1997). These posters once again confirm and reinforce the existing stereotypes around the IDP label. They fix an IDP's identity as vulnerable, emotional, one who lost everything, and dreaming of their homeland. The image involves two types of participants, represented and interactive (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006). Interactive participants are the viewers who interpret the images within real social institutions. The context of production and context of reception of these images are identical. The captions of the given posters would be completely irrelevant if the posters depicted happy faces. They simply would not make sense to the viewer. This imagery is understandable for the general public because of its shared meaning around who the IDP is.

In addition to social and humanitarian categories and related identity, the IDP label and IDPs' sense of belonging to their original place of residence has developed into a political category. By that I mean political solidarity of a displaced community united around the principle of Georgia's territorial integrity and their right to return to secessionist regions. The politics of belonging is part of a concrete political project that aims at constructing attachment to certain collectivity or territoriality (Yuval-Davis et al. 2006). It is not fixed but always a dynamic process, which is constructed by the particular hegemonic form of power relations (Yuval-Davis 2006). The notion of belonging in the Georgian context has been utilized either to draw a boundary line between one's own 'natural' integrity, highlighting that they belong 'here', or to state

that they belong 'naturally' to 'elsewhere' and therefore not here. John Crowley described that as "the dirty work of boundary maintenance" (Yuval-Davis 2006: 204). These are the boundaries that draw the rigid lines between IDPs and their hosts.

## 3.5 Conclusion

What was disclosed by this overview of popular academic discourses and the narratives around belonging and identity was the close conceptual interrelation between theories of belonging and theories of identity in general. Different senses of belonging (be they social, historical or environmental) turn out to be interconnected and interdependent with political and other forms of identity formation. Theory thus suggests that in practice, there is always something personal about belonging. In other words, belonging cannot be understood in purely collective terms, but must be understood as something that is experienced. Based on greater familiarity with such theories, in the next chapter, this study will return to the central focus, which is to better understand the narratives and feelings of IDPs around belonging and myths of return.

# Chapter 4 Return: Myth, Rhetoric and Reality

## 4.1 Introduction

In order to answer to the central question of this research – why do IDPs hold on to the myth of return - it is necessary to engage critically with the sources of the dominant Georgian rhetoric on potential return of IDPs to their places of origin. It is important to understand how the state's political determination to restore its territory influences IDPs' discourse around return. This chapter does not try to predict the likelihood of return, instead in intends first to uncover the political objectives that stand behind the rhetoric on return, and second to discuss its consequences. This will be done through brief overview on the origins of the 'myth of return', analysis of school practices, passing on collective memories within IDP community and identifying different articulations of return. The rhetoric on return is important attribute of IDPs lives but its articulation varies per different age group. According to the narratives of IDPs the meaning of "return" depends on individual's perceptions, hopes, fears, identity and sources of belonging. In order to identify these differences this chapter will engage with the narratives of IDPs in relation to this issue.

## 4.2 Exploring the 'Myth of Return'

IDPs strong aspiration for return has its roots in the first years of displacement, when the former government of Georgia did not have the resources and a clear strategy on how to deal with the quarter of a million homeless and unemployed IDPs. At that time, return was seen as the only viable solution to this problem. IDPs periodically were given false signals and promises on upcoming repatriation to Abkhazia. In 2002 the Abkhaz government in exile together with representatives of the displaced community strongly opposed international and humanitarian organizations' "New Approach" aiming at IDPs integration. Back then integration was associated with giving up the hope of return and the claim over Abkhazia forever.

IDPs' stage of limbo and consequential ambiguity around the status of 'returnees' or 'settlers' has been lasting for 17 years. During these years the existence of Abkhaz government's structures in exile has been symbolizing the hope and likelihood of return. IDPs have been frequently exposed to various media campaigns targeting the issue of Abkhazia. Street posters with the slogan "Abkhazia our pain", music videos, such as, "Hello Abkhazia" or "My Abkhazia" depicting the sea, the beautiful nature[13], and mass return of young and elderly displaced people aimed at keeping the issue alive in Georgian society.

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[13] The Black sea and the beautiful nature of Abkhazia are its easily recognizable features and symbolic characteristics.

These images generated the sentimental feelings predominantly in IDP population making the return more desirable. An IDP was never given a chance to forget the tragic past. Instead the reminder was always there that Abkhazia was their pain, it belonged to them and one day they would all say hello to it. Meanwhile, Abkhaz educational institutions in exile (schools, kindergartens and university) have been organizing annual events dedicated to the historic and memorial occasions related to Georgian-Abkhaz war.

There is a generally accepted assumption that eventually most refugees wish to go home. However the desire of return much depends on the living conditions of displaced people in the country or place of asylum. UNHCR has a clearly stated position on the need to create safe and dignified mass return of refugees and IDPs to their initial place of residence. The voluntary return has been seen as one of the three durable solutions for global refugee problem. The other two stages of the "refugee cycle" are: integration in the country of asylum; and resettlement to a third country (Hear Van 2002). However, the international experience shows that repatriation of refugees is the most difficult durable solution. The Georgian government, in its strategy for internally displaced persons, has unified UNHCR's two durable solutions into one: integration before return (Government of Georgia 2007). One of the findings of this study is that in the Georgian political context the socio-economic integration and return of the forcefully displaced in relation to state's political project seems to be mutually incompatible solutions, which is explained in the following paragraph.

Under the protracted exile, displacement seems to be a permanent state of being. If the problem that caused mass displacement has not ceased for a long period of time, the prospects for return are perceived as something mythical. Here the "myth" stands for the story and a living reality believed to happen in the future and its continuity which keeps influencing human destinies (Malinowski 2002). This study suggests that the values and interests of the 'myth of return' in Georgia can be reduced to a political function. It has been observed that within the displaced community, under the protracted displacement, perceptions of return change and sometimes not in favour of repatriation. The inevitable process of socio-economic integration (despite social isolation and stigmatization) replaces the feelings of belonging to the initial home with the bonding ties to the host environment. These circumstances challenge the above stated assumption that most refugees eventually want to go home. Even though the socio-economic integration is one of the durable solutions, it is perceived to challenge state's political project, such as restoration of the territorial integrity. If the sources of belonging of IDPs to the place of origin fade away, there will be neither demands for return, nor claims over the secessionist territories at stake coming from their side. The causing factors might be favourable socio-economic conditions, feeling of security, and inclusion. That way the state may 'lose' the population, who's claims and demands have been used to put a pressure on separatist government of Abkhazia and international community in order to ensure provision of IDPs with the right of return and respect for Georgia's territorial sovereignty. In order to keep the urgency of the issue of territoriality in Georgia, IDPs need to remain in the state of limbo, through preserving the wish to return and confronting integration in fear of

assimilation. This is accomplished through various tactics, such as media campaigns, restoring Abkhaz government in exile, propaganda at educational institutions, community narratives, public speeches of government authorities and etc. The next sections discuss some of these tactics and their consequences, namely, transmission of collective memories through school education and intergenerational interactions. .

## 4.3 Abkhaz Schools in Exile

The primary objective of the Abkhaz schools in exile has been to educate the generation of IDPs born in displacement about Abkhazia, but beyond the educational curriculum, as well as instil the desire for return. The school posters depict Georgian-Abkhaz war heroes, beautiful nature and left behind orthodox churches in Abkhazia. The phrases on posters, such as "Remember Abkhazia!", "Remember Your Beautiful Land, It is Ruined Today, But You Restore It tomorrow" or "Abkhazia – The Beauty of Georgia" represent the focus of this educational endeavour. The educational systems have been always constructing and reproducing discourses on national identity. Schools are not only places of cultural reproduction (Nice et al. 1990) but also sites where political struggles are identified, articulated and spread (Miranda Christou 2006). In order to create strong national identity it is important to strengthen the collectivity of the national body through constructing the unified vision of the past, present and future. The educational system in Abkhaz schools in exile rests on the idea that education is the key tool in achieving a common national goal – restoration of Georgia's territorial integrity.

   Abkhaz Schools in exile have been established specifically for the education of IDP children in 1994-98. These schools fall under the administration of the Abkhaz Ministry of Education and Culture in Exile, part of the Tbilisi-loyal Abkhaz government based in the Georgian capital. However, they are based on the national standards for Secondary education in Georgia and follow the same curriculum as local schools do. Abkhaz schools in exile were established close to IDP settlements in order to provide accessible education infrastructure for all IDP children. It was seen as temporary because of the expectation that displaced population would return in not-so-distant future. As some studies suggest, there was also a desire to keep displaced people together as a group and maintain administrative structures in order to preserve culture, identity, and a communal link to their places of origin (Loughna et al. 2010). Due to the fact that the school staff and student body are mostly comprised of IDPs, these schools inevitably obtained the "IDP schools" label in general public. There is a lot of sensitivity concerning the use of "IDP schools" label as it may further fuel the stigmatization of IPDs. However there is no policy to keep these children separate from other Georgian students. Initially, there were up to 45 such schools, currently the number has been reduced to 14 (Loughna et al. 2010: 18). The so-called "IDP schools" teach approximately 2704 children and provide employment for 381 teachers throughout Georgia (Loughna et al. 2010: 18). Mostly these schools are located in urban areas.

The displaced children's education is distinguished by a lower quality compare to the rest of the population. The cause is the lack of equipment and books, under-funding, and deteriorated facilities. The majority of Abkhaz education facilities are in urgent need of repair and are located in dilapidated buildings. Some reports suggest that insufficient proper educational conditions hinder the access to quality education for IDP children (International Displacement Monitoring Centre 2007).

The segregation becomes more acute, when "IDP" and mainstream schools are placed in the same building functioning in two different shifts. One of such schools was visited during my fieldwork. The school was situated in the building of the local school, but IDP students were taught by IDP teachers in separate shift. Such segregated systems limit the extent of interaction between displaced and non-displaced fellow students and teachers. However the Minister of the Abkhaz Ministry of Education and Culture in Exile claims: "the problem is not in our children being unable to integrate, but in locals who are reluctant to integrate others in their society"[14]. The segregated educational system is embedded in the language as well. The usage of vocabulary in relation to children such as "our" and "their" highlights the distinction between members of two sub-groups – locals and IDPs. This type of social separation has transferred to different layers of society in everyday life and in particular, to the school environment. The principal of the 'sheltered' school in exile has been recalling painful incidents occurred in the school building. According to her, schoolchildren from the first shift used to leave unwelcoming inscriptions/messages on the blackboard for uninvited 'intruders'. As principal narrates, very frequently the host school administration blamed IDP schoolchildren for all damaged school facilities. Their statements in relation to the 'guest' students are perceived by IDP principal as "everything bad in this school is caused by your children, and what is good is the merit of our children[15]". This type of communication further fuels the distance and confrontation between displaced and locals and depicts IDPs as visitors, not belonging to this environment.

Abkhaz schools in exile are of special interest for this study not only due to their segregation, but of their significant role in deliberate transfer of the 'myth of return' and collective memories on Abkhazia to young IDP generation. Collective memory is a representation of the past shared by the members of the group and shaped by participation in collective life (Wertsch 2008). Memory plays a crucial role in the transmission of cultural and national identity to youth through variety of channels. It influences their perception of their cultural identity and values, and their willingness to invest in them (Dessí 2008). Channels of memory transmissions for "IDP schools" educators' are school events, classroom discussions, essays assignments on patriotic theme, and exhibition of visual materials of Abkhazia.

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[14] Interview #21, 28/07/2010, IDP, female, Tbilisi.
[15] Interview #23, 29/07/2010, IDP, female, resident of IDP collective settlement in Tskneti.

The school staff's narratives about the past in Abkhazia play a significant role in organizing a collective memory shared in young generation. All three "IDP schools" visited were identical in relation to the teaching objectives and extracurricular activities on the theme of Abkhazia. Is that a matter of mere coincidence of personal aspirations, indirect imposition of the state policy, community mobilisation or combination of all three? It is hard to say, especially within the given sample number. However, teachers' narratives point at a very strong personal determination to educate young IDPs about their 'genuine' yet distant, invisible and unknown 'homeland':

> Whatever our school gives to our children none of the schools does. We constantly remind them of their origins and obligation to return to Abkhazia [...] every lesson is surrounded by the love for their homeland and all the time we talk about Abkhazia, Abkhazia, and Abkhazia16.

Displaced teachers acknowledge that the only thing they could manage to save from Abkhazia are their memories. They regret that the youth slowly are forgetting their past. The educators fear that forgetting consequently leads to losing Abkhazia eventually. For them, Abkhaz schools in exile are the only remnants and symbolic representation preserved from the past. "If they [Ministry of Education] close down our school it will feel like losing Abkhazia over again[17]" says the IDP teacher of Georgian language and literature. It explains their motivation to educate children about Abkhazia outside of the dictates of the general curriculum. The school staff is concerned about other IDP children who go to the mainstream schools and know nothing about Abkhazia compare to those who study at "our schools". The theme of Abkhazia is embedded in every discipline at Abkhaz schools in exile. Even the class on chemistry is not an exception. The teacher of chemistry recalls the open lesson she conducted with her students dedicated to Abkhazia: "I tell students, just like Georgia does not exist without Abkhazia, so is chemical element, it does not exist without the other"[18]. The teachers are very proud of this 'duty' that they have voluntarily imposed on themselves. In their opinion, through the teaching they contribute to construction of the patriotic national identity for their country.

The other tactic of transferring the collective memory about Abkhazia is school plays and performances. Abkhaz schools in exile annually on most of the memorial days related to Georgian-Abkhaz war organize school events. Teachers write and stage plays, children perform and read poems on patriotic theme, while audiences comprised of IDP parents and guests get emotional. The teachers' enthusiasm is supported all IDP parents interviewed. They very

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[16] Interview #23, 29/07/2010, IDP, female, resident of IDP collective settlement in Tskneti.
[17] Interview #28, 29/07/2010, IDP, female, resident of IDP collective settlement in Tskneti.
[18] Interview #24, 29/07/2010, IDP, female, resident of IDP collective settlement in Tskneti.

much appreciate educators' efforts to preserve the memories about the "lost paradise" and generate the love for the homeland:

> Our school has been constantly agitating children for return, because it is so hard to keep this attitude for 17 years. Our school never forgets about September 27 or March 1419. These and other memorial dates are always celebrated there. That is what I like most about our school[20].

IDP parents who are nostalgic about their past and dreaming of return compromise with schools' deteriorated infrastructure and consequent lower quality of education because there their children are taught those precious principles such as, remembering Abkhazia and its return back to Georgia. These are the general aspirations that many informants of this study share. "All parents of our students are real Georgian patriots, potential returnees to Abkhazia[21]" - claims the "IDP school" principal with pride. According to this statement, one is a real patriot if he/she aims at going back to the place of origin and raises his/her child with the same sense and aspirations. But the one who prefers to integrate and give up thinking about return is deviant from this idealised model.

The rhetoric in the school setting and in the displaced community could be tracked in the essays of IDP school children. The female student of sixth grade wrote:

> Abkhazia is the place where I was born and learned how to speak...My whole life is connected to this fairy place. For me Georgia begins with Abkhazia. It is the place where the sun rises and sets. There is my beautiful home. Without us the sea is no longer the same, it calls us to come back[22].

This excerpt demonstrates youth's internalisation of existing cultural values shared within the IDP community. The essay reflects the collection of dominant narratives on an idealized past represented as fairy place, the national value of Abkhazia within Georgia, the perception that Abkhazia without Georgians is no longer the same, and lastly the narrative on return. Other students' essays also narrate about envisioned return, kind relationships with former adversaries, and a problem free environment in future Abkhazia. All essays collected for this research are distinguished by over-optimism about the future in their homeland.

The cultural over-optimism (Dessí 2008) transmitted from the older generation to the young suppresses the negative signals of the narratives about the past and future. Teachers select the information to be transmitted to school

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[19] Both dates are memorial dates related to the war in Abkhazia.

[20] Interview #10, 21/07/2010, IDP, female, resident of IDP collective centre in Tbilisi.

[21] Interview #14, 22/07/2010, IDP, female, resident of IDP collective centre in Tbilisi.

[22] Abstract from the student's essay published in the local newspaper "Dilis Gazeti"in January 19, 2001.

children so as to maximum their welfare. The recurring themes of their stories are: idealised past, comparing Abkhazia to heaven, describing its unique nature, long lasting friendship between Georgians and Abkhazians, return and etc. The youth, consequently, believe that they have inherited the special past and mission to restore it, which distinguishes them from non-displaced fellows. Memory transmission within the school setting enforces youth's commitment to do their best to make the return possible. By that, educators unconsciously put the burden on young IDP generation to be in charge of Georgia's full territorial restoration.

## 4.4 Peace Education Program at Abkhaz Schools in Exile

The State Strategy on IDPs calls for closing down the segregated schools to integrate IDP children, youth and teachers in mainstream society and education system. The Abkhaz Ministry of Education and Culture in Exile, on the other hand, tries to prolong the existence of these schools through designing specific educational projects exclusively to 'IDP Schools'. It is obvious that when the Abkhaz education structures close down the Abkhaz Ministry of Education and Culture in Exile losses its function and its employees their jobs.

In order to maintain its 'value' the Ministry of Education and Culture in Exile has elaborated a program for introducing the peace education exclusively in 'IDP schools'. The peace education program also entails teaching school children the Abkhazian language. According to the Minister, the program will hold a special value – it will attract local students to enrol to Abkhaz schools and consequently contribute to mutual integration of displaced and local population. The Ministry tries to justify the importance of the program through claiming that it intends to meet the objectives of two state strategies: State Strategy for IDPs-Persecuted and State Strategy on Occupied Territories[23]. The former prioritizes integration of IDPs in host community, while the latter promotes inter-community relations between Georgian and Abkhazian people. Both strategies are documents with concrete political and socio-economic objectives. In that sense, in order to maintain its status the Ministry commits itself to correspond to State political determination through utilizing education system.

Very essential is the choice of the Ministry to focus on peace education and not on any other discipline, which is also predetermined by these two state strategies. Due to the fact that IDPs in Georgia are conflict-induced, they have been always associated with peace-building, peace-education, and any other activity related to 'peace'. This approach is part of commodification of peace-

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[23] The Strategy on Occupied Territories is part of Georgia's determination to achieve the full de-occupation of Abkhazia and the South Ossetia, reverse the process of annexation of these territories by the Russian Federation, and peacefully reintegrate these territories and their populations into Georgia's constitutional ambit (The Government of Georgia 2010).

building (Bush 2004) and is based on the idea that war affected common people need peace education to prevent exacerbation of another conflict. The peace education program has been submitted but not yet approved. However if this subject will be introduced to Abkhaz schools in exile that will further strengthen the assumption that peace building should be the number one priority for IDPs, as in case of repatriation, they are the ones who would have to live in a harmony with Abkhaz community in Abkhazia. The rest of the Georgian population apart from displaced is perceived as 'neutral' and therefore not in need of peace education. In that sense, IDPs again are granted with the special national identity of contributors to peace-building and restorers of Georgia's territorial integrity.

## 4.5 Resistance to Integration

The priority and rhetoric of the Georgian Government on integration of displaced in the mainstream society became part of the dominant public discourse in Georgia. However the concept and concrete measures have not been defined for displaced people. Due to uncertainty around this term displaced have multiple but mutually contradictory understandings of it. The research findings suggest that IDPs are resistant and even fearful of integration. This section discusses IDPs' reluctance to integration process and unfolds some of its causes.

Integration in Georgia and in academic world in general is a contested concept. As already discussed in chapter two, interpretation of this concept varies per different stakeholder within the governance environment. The term is individualized, contested and contextualized. Definitions of integration adopted by a community inevitably depend on that community's sense of identity, its cultural understandings of nation and nationhood (Ager and Strang 2008). This sense of identity incorporates certain values that significantly shape the way integration is approached (Ager and Strang 2008). IDPs interviewed reject the term 'integration' applied to them and instead suggest the concept of 'adaptation'. A teacher of "IDP school" expresses her concern on youth who go through the process of integration within host community:

> The integration process is on-going. Our children assimilate with locals. Some are even ashamed of their status. Integration is important, but we, original settlers of Abkhazia must preserve the love for Abkhazia in their hearts[24].

For the teacher abandoning one's identity is associated with losing collective memory and sense of belonging to Abkhazia. For displaced maintaining the identity connected to Abkhazia is very valuable. One of the prevalent reasons why participants of this research resist integration is its identification with assimilation. To their understanding integration means losing one's own identity and adopting of others. Despite the acknowledgement that integration car-

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[24] Interview #9, 21/07/2010, IDP, female, resident of IDP collective centre in Tbilisi.

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ries positive consequences, yet it is perceived as the process weakening the love for the 'homeland'.

The mother whose children go to the mainstream school in Tbilisi also echoes teacher's concern:

> I don't want them [children] to lose their identity. Just like religion, if you are a catholic and I am an Orthodox Christian I cannot impose my faith on you. If you preserve your identity others will respect you, but if you try to rearrange yourself than no one will respect you[25].

A parallel made between identity and religion means that respondent situates both values on one dimension. Both are of equal importance. Therefore, changing identity is associated by the parent with betraying yourself, something that is opposite of a noble act.

The term integration also generates fear of a material type. For some, being integrated means being deprived of the IDP status. The IDP status in Georgia, among other things, represents the legal claim over assets abandoned in Abkhazia due to the war.

> The fear of my generation is that if in case of restitution our children or grandchildren do not hold the IDP status thy will be deprived of the legal claim and ownership rights over our belongings left in Abkhazia[26].

The youth also have their own understanding of integration. In line with older generation they also look sceptically at government's determination to integrate displaced in the mainstream population. They feel that they are already integrated and there is no need for extra efforts. The 17 years-old male recent graduate of Abkhaz school in exile claims:

> The main goal of IDPs' integration is to finally get rid of the problems of displaced. They [government] give us one room apartments in this settlement whereas we have left three-store houses in Abkhazia. They are trying to buy us with this miserable help. Too much money is spent from the state budget on IDPs' assistance every year. That is why they want to integrate us to no longer be in charge of IDPs. They just want to get rid of us[27].

The state's priority of integration is interpreted as abandoning IDPs. Youth demonstrate fear of not being entitled to assistance package due to integration. Again integration is understood as losing the social status of internally displaced person.

Significantly less research is done on IDPs living in the private accommodation but there is a widespread public assumption that displaced population living within local community is better integrated than those who reside in IDP

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[25] Interview #10, 21/07/2010, IDP, female, resident of IDP collective centre in Tbilisi.

[26] Intervew #3, 18/07/2010, IDP, female, NGO worker, resides in private accommodation in Tbilisi.

[27] Interview #25, 29/07/2010, IDP, male, resident of IDP collective settlement in Tskneti.

collective centres. Another cause of reluctance to be integrated is stated by NGO worker who works with IDP youth and observes their changing attitude about Abkhazia, sense of belonging and perceptions of possible return:

> Youth is positioned in a very difficult situation. I can tell from my personal observation. My nephews are originally from Abkhazia, now they live in a private accommodation in Tbilisi. They are very much integrated here and I doubt they desire to return to Abkhazia[28].

The NGO working in Kutaisi established by IDPs themselves has formed the youth club under the name "Abkhazia – want to know everything". The club is open to all IDP and non-IDP youth and aims at educating young generation about all aspects of Abkhazia. The famous writers and journalists originally from Abkhazia conduct weekly sessions for the young members of the club and discuss different historical or cultural issues concerning this region. The youth club, in the words of its organizers, offers the opportunity for IDP youth to make a wise choice in relation to a possible repatriation. The NGO workers believe that provision with comprehensive and not selective knowledge on Abkhazia will enable a young person better decide for himself/herself whether to return or not to the place of origin. The youth club is another channel for transmitting collective memory on pre-war Abkhazia and intentionally develop IDPs' sense of belonging to imagined homeland. It is another tool to 'deal' with the natural process of integration that consequently weakens affiliation with Abkhazia.

## 4.6 Belonging and the Myth of Return among the First and Second Generation of IDPs

The question of return within displaced people is ambiguous and confusing. Internally displaced disagree among themselves about interpretations and perceptions of return, whether it is part of the sustained dream or distant reality. Between the old and young generations there are different perceptions of repatriation and belonging to the distant 'homeland'. However, after the two decades of exile the sense of affiliation to Abkhazia is still intense within the both groups. The intergenerational transmission of the collective memory of the past plays an important role in establishing the sense of attachment and consequent longing for repatriation. As stated above, the findings of the study suggest that IDPs through their narratives display different perceptions and motivations of return and this section presents recurring themes within these narratives.

There are multiple interpretations of return in the IDP community, but, all participants interviewed for this research are united around the idea that in order for return to take place first of all Abkhazia must be reintegrated to Georgia. They all claim that they would not go back to independent state of Abkha-

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[28] Interview #2, 13/07/2010, IDP, female, NGO worker in Kutaisi.

zia unless it is part of Georgia. "I do not want to feel as a guest on my own homeland" is the prevalent theme among IDPs.

The stigmatization and alienation of IDPs within mainstream society intensifies the wish to return. The "IDP school" teacher makes an interesting analogy comparing life with hosts to a mother in law:

> I want to return to Abkhazia, because living here feels like staying with a mother in law. You know what type of mother in law I mean, the one who always looks for the reasons to make negative remarks about you[29].

This comparison points at the feeling of temporariness and non-belongingness to the host environment despite the co-ethnicity with the locals. Stigma of IDPs reinforces rigid lines of their collective identity and their reflections upon idealised past, which could be recaptured by return (Zetter 1994). Older generations' feelings of alienation and exclusion depict return as a solution to this problem. The experiences of stigmatization transferred to the young generation establish the feeling of inferiority compare to others. "I want to return because here I feel like a second class citizen, we don't get to say a final word in this society[30]" – says 17 years-old boy. In this case return is desirable because it is perceived to provide the status of an equal citizen.

Almost two decades of exile have fundamentally reshaped IDPs way of life. The protracted displacement had an erosive effect on perceptions of repatriation. Integration has created new aspirations. Few indicators convey the successful adaptation of IDP households into the social and economic structures in exile. However, some of those who managed to find sustainable job and purchase private accommodations are undetermined about their position in regards to return:

> For me return would mean reorganizing my way of life, I do not know if I would return...I would go back only if I were able to restore the former way of life of pre-war period, but I know it is impossible. That's why I don't know what I would do[31].

Return is a tangible process, but it is understood in the abstract terms. This response displays the nostalgia of the past being associated with return. It is believed that return will provide mechanism to rebuild former social networks and recapture lost identities (Zetter 1994). For some respondents it was hard to see the clear difference between the physical process of repatriation and restoration of previous lives.

In order to ensure realisation of their aspirations the pioneer generation of IDPs agitates children and youth about going back to Abkhazia. Elders see the linear interrelationship between memory, belonging and return. Representatives of the older generation believe that memory about the past and place

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[29] Interview #24, 29/07/2010, IDP, female, resident of IDP collective settlement in Tskneti.
[30] Interview #20, 27/07/2010, IDP, male, resident of IDP collective settlement in Tskneti.
[31] Interview #19, 27/07/2010, IDP, female, NGO worker in Kutaisi

generates a sense of belonging which consequently results into an aspiration for return. The following story narrated by the 17 years old male demonstrates the direct influence of this approach:

> My mother was pregnant with me when the war started. I was born in Tbilisi, I have never been to Abkhazia and all I know about it are from the narratives of my family and relatives. I feel certain warmth and love when I listen to the stories about this place. They recall it very emotionally and with love. It is impossible not to be infected with the same feeling, it is impossible not to be interested to go there for once and see it yourself. There is no *supra*32 without a toast dedicated to those heroes who fought and died for Abkhazia, with these toasts we wish each other to return there one day all together[33].

The narratives of the youth unfold the oversimplified expectations about the implication of return. Some are motivated to return out of curiosity. After listening to all these stories about Abkhazia they want to see what it is like. Their curiosity does not necessarily entail their physical long term resettlement to Abkhazia but they name this visit as "return". The responses of youth from IDP collective centres, who have been living there for much longer than they have lived in Abkhazia, could not establish the feeling of belonging to their host environment. The responses like "I have nothing here that would keep me in this place", "what I have here is all mine, I just can bring it with me when we return" or "if they announce this moment that repatriation has began I will directly head to Abkhazia" indicate that what they possess and value here is only seen in physical items which are removable any time. They do not connect to this environment and have less value of it. The imaginary homeland is the antidote to frustration: if life is not good in exile for young IDPs, they need to believe that somewhere they have a 'home' where achieving personal well-being is possible (SIDAWAY 1995).

The perception of return depends on persons' socio-economic status and the background. The young IDP lawyer and chair of the non-governmental organization perceives return in purely legal terms. He also sees the need to define this term for the displaced population:

> There were number of surveys conducted with IDPs by the NGO sector on question "would you return or not?". First of all, the term "return" needs to be defined clearly. Does return mean our physical being there permanently, or does it mean the restitution of the property rights? For me return means to restore my property rights there and the right of free movement to Abkhazia whenever I want[34].

Considering the different perceptions of return listed above indicates that indeed there is a need for clarification. The key stakeholders such as, GoG,

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32 *Supra* –Traditional Georgian feast and part of Georgian social culture. The supra is headed by the toastmaster who introduces the toasts during the feast.
33 Interview #27, 29/07/2010, IDP, male, resident of IDP collective settlement in Tskneti.
34 Interview #5, 19/07/2010, IDP, male, resident of IDP collective centre in Tbilisi.

government in exile, schools and media, facilitate the 'myth of return', but do not define it. The IDP community has not been informed about what stands behind the loud claims on "voluntary repatriation". That is why there is an oversimplified understanding of return especially in the young generation. While having a realistic understanding of implications of repatriation it will enable displaced to have practical expectations about it.

From analysing participants' points of views and considering political tensions within Georgia one conclusion can be drawn that the ideas of homeland and return are still intense among young and elder generation of displaced. Although the notion of return has multiple interpretations it remains part of the unimplemented myth.


## 4.7 Conclusion

What this chapter has shown is how political solidarity among representatives of IDPs has remained remarkably firm on the issue of return for the past two decades or so. As the analysis of the IDPs' narratives showed, there remains implacable opposition to any solution which compromises territorial restoration of Abkhazia to Georgia, or compromises IDPs' future political rights to return. The situation remains unresolved by government policies, education or approaches of the media, also considered in this chapter. Paradoxically, what seems to provide refugees with importance in Georgia today is also their main problem. IDPs' most strong reasons to return and reconstruct life in Abkhazia remain the fragmentation of their lives by war. Familiar social fabric have destroyed, community networks have broken up, and their perturbing redefinition of identity and inferior IDP status, all serve to reinforce the 'myth of return' among the displaced community. Chapter 5 returns to the central questions of this study, to present some overall findings and conclusions.

# Chapter 5 Conclusion

In addressing the main research questions, the present study focused on the narratives of belonging, of return to the original place of residence and of identity of Georgian internally displaced persons. The narratives explored in this research show how storytelling becomes a vehicle for adjustment, culture maintenance and community building. In all the narratives that I have studied, a central theme is found to recur in relation to immortal land of home: Abkhazia. IDPs' narratives can also be regarded as descriptions of the past life in the pre-war period. The stories transmitted as a collective memories offer a window to the past for the younger generation of IDPs, who are originally from Abkhazia but have never been there. However, the window to the past that IDPs' narratives provide sheds light on limited segments of the past and offers only a narrow view. The narrated past is framed in an idealised form, first to preserve the positive memories and the hope for return, and second to generate optimism in youth that somewhere they have a real 'home.'

The experiences of war, fragmented familiar social order, dramatization of displacement, rejection of the current situation, maintenance of the sub-culture through resistance to integration and exhibitions of photographs of homes left behind in Abkhazia are the mechanisms that sustain IDPs' collective memory of loss and the solidarity of the group. This trauma is vivid in the stories of the pioneer generation of the displaced and is kept alive in subsequent generations through a symbolic representation of the past reconstructed and preserved in mythical form, which becomes a strategy of adjustment and transition.

As the findings suggest, one of the functions of story-telling within educational institutions in exile is to ensure that the original case of displacement is remembered and the grief of loss is passed on to the next generation. The desire to return to the abandoned areas of Georgia is expressed in the teaching of all disciplines and other activities within the 'IDP school' settings. IDP educators intentionally preserve the memories of Abkhazia in the minds of children to generate love for their 'homeland' and belief in an eventual return to it. Teachers' narratives mediate symbolically between past, present and future, serving to construct the national identity of the youth. In educators' understanding, forgetting about Abkhazia would mean renouncing any claim to it. The most prevalent narrative within Abkhaz schools in exile was the obligation of the new generation to restore what has been lost by the first generation. Most graduates of 'IDP schools' read the phrases on school posters and interpret teachers' agitation as an order to remember certain events and places and eventually return there.

The mechanisms described above distinguish IDPs from the non-displaced community and strengthen the IDP identity and sense of belonging to the IDP group and the place of origin. Among other factors, housing conditions (IDP collective centres) have separated the majority of IDPs from the rest of the Georgian population, making it a vital factor in labelling them as internally displaced and shaping their consequent collective identity. Having no access to alternative housing, IDPs are compelled to accept, yet also reject, the physical distinctiveness by which the housing estates symbolize their social

conditions as IDPs. Despite the co-ethnicity of their hosts, they perceive themselves as both insiders and outsiders, differentiated from their hosts in physical terms by the housing conditions and associated IDP identity.

The research findings have revealed several other factors that have hampered the inclusion of displaced people into mainstream society. National politicians emphasizing the return of seceded territories have seen integration as a political liability. Displaced people themselves have feared integration as something that is meant to imply giving up their right to return. The remnant institutions from pre-war era of Abkhazia contributed significantly to these fears. Known as the 'government in exile,' politicians still hold the office they held in the pre-war period. They have opposed IDP integration, which they see as a threat to their claim to represent a separate, unified, displaced community.

The state and media rhetoric of firm determination to regain Georgia's territorial integrity in not-so-distant future has been facilitating the 'myth of return' to Abkhazia among the IDP population, thus hindering their full integration into mainstream society. Moreover international institutions in charge of forcefully displaced migrants prioritize return as one of the more durable solutions for refugees and IDPs. As a result, the rhetoric of return has established the feeling of temporariness and uncertainty with regard to the future in displaced community. The term 'temporary' is reflected in every stage of their life experiences as IDPs: a temporary home[35], temporary kindergartens, temporary schools, temporary neighbourhoods, temporary jobs and temporary displacement. There is nothing stable in their lives except the aspiration to return to Abkhazia.

Well-tested tactics, such as media campaigns, speeches by government authorities about secessionist territories and their current leaders, street posters with patriotic slogans and imagery of IDPs, are part of the political project to keep the issue alive. In the Georgian context the political project is situated on the national level and rests on the principles of Georgia's territorial integrity and the legal right of IDPs to return to their initial place of residence. Hence, as long as IDP attachments to the secessionist territories and relevant identities are strong and prevalent, the issue will stay alive and remain part of the dominant state- and public discourse. Therefore the state political project is in need of maintaining clear-cut boundaries between displaced and non-displaced communities in relation to their identity and belonging. The outcome, conceptualized as the dilemma of IDP identity, provides both the key and appropriate conceptual tool to examine how the internally displaced people articulate their perspective on a potential return.

The ideology of the state of Georgia, media, NGOs (established by IDPs), educational and other institutions in exile promotes and cultivates the desire of return of the displaced to the occupied territories. However, these actors do little to advance the public understanding of what this 'return' really means. According to the research findings, the staff of the schools in exile and the IDP community in general point to a return to an idealized pre-war Abkhazia

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[35] So called IDP collective centres

through their narratives. A majority of participants interviewed for this research, predominantly of the pioneer generation of the displaced, appeared to retain a profound belief in and strong hope for return. However, the meaning of return is not unified in the IDP community, instead varying by different generational group, social status and individual background. Some interpret return as regaining Georgia's territorial integrity and not necessarily their physical resettlement to Abkhazia. Others perceive return as regaining the idealised past of the pre-war period. There are individuals who by return mean regaining their identity and their former place in the social fabric of Abkhazia. Some understand return in legal terms as restoration of free movement and ownership rights in Abkhazia. On the other hand, youth bombarded with idealised stories about their parents' past and the myth of 'paradise lost' imagine Abkhazia as a problem-free land. The intergenerational transmission of collective memories of the past has resulted in an oversimplified imagined return to the occupied part of Georgia and to a glorious past.

The overall conclusion of this study is that exploring internally displaced persons' own perceptions, motivations and claims with regard to the return to Abkhazia within the context of the political project of the state of Georgia is useful. IDPs' decision to return is complex and conditioned on very different considerations. Understanding of these considerations might usefully influence the decision-making process in relation to repatriation. A solid understanding of the invisible aspirations of the displaced community can fundamentally impact on the form, process and extent of any return that might take place in Georgia.

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# Appendix I

List of interviews and data on research participants:

| State Representatives | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| No. | Institution | Position | Date and No. of interview | Additional data |
| 1 | Ministry of The internally Displaced persons from the Occupied Territories, Accommodation and Refugees of Georgia | Minister - Koba Subeliani | 30.07.2010 Interview #32 | Has been holding this position since 2007. |
| 2 | Ministry of The internally Displaced persons from the Occupied Territories, Accommodation and Refugees of Georgia | Independent Consultant – Guy Hovey | 20.07.2010 Interview # 7 | British Independent Consultant hired by USAID. Has been holding this position for last 2 years, right after 2008 Georgian-Russian war. |
| 3 | Ministry of The internally Displaced persons from the Occupied Territories, Accommodation and Refugees of Georgia | Head of Community Development Program - Besik Tserediani | 22.07.2010 Interview # 16 | IDP from Abkhazia; Male |
| 4 | Abkhazian Government in Exile | Deputy of the department of IDP affairs - Lado Arkania | 23.07.2010 Interview #18 | IDP from Abkhazia; male |
| 5 | Abkhazian Government in Exile | Minister of Education and Culture of Abkhazia - Dali Khomeriki | 28.07.2010 Interview #21 | IDP from Abkhazia; Has been holding the office for recent 1 year. |

| Representatives of Local NGOs | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| No | NGO | Position | Date and No. of Interview | Additional Data |
|  | NGO "Atinati" | Chair | 13.07.2010 Interview #1 | NGO is located in Zugdidi, covers Samegrelo region which borders with Abkhazia (conflict zone).Organization founded by Women in 1995, since then the NGO has been successful in implementing projects targeting IDPs from Abkhazia; female. |
| 2 | Foundation "Sokhumi" | Co-chair | 13.07.2010 Interview # 2 | Organization founded by IDP women from Abkhazia in 2000. NGO works with IDP women in Imereti Re- |

| | | | | gion in West Georgia. Recently the NGO has established youth clubs for IDP and non-IDPs; female. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3 | IDP Women Association "Consent" | Deputy chair | 18.07.2010<br><br>Interview #3 | IDP from Abkhazia; female. NGO founded by IDP women in 1996. NGO works on IDP issues in many regions of Georgia. |
| 4 | NGO "Postfactum" | Chair | 19.07.2010<br><br>Interview #4 | Female, IDP from Abkhazia. The NGO prepares radio and internet programs covering issues related to internal displacement in Georgia. |
| 5 | Social Program Foundation | Chair | 19.07.2010<br><br>Interview #5 | Male, IDP from Abkazia; NGO actively advocates IDP rights in Georgia. NGO participated in elaboration process of the State Strategy for IDPs. |
| 6 | IDP Women Association "Consent" | Chair | 22.07.2010<br><br>Interview #17 | Female, IDP from Abkhazia. Has founded this NGO in 1996, implemented many projects on peace education targeting IDP youth. |
| 7 | Foundation "Sokhumi" | Youth Project Assistant | 27.07.2010<br><br>Interview #19 | Female, former resident of Abkhazia. Coordinates youth clubs. |

| Representatives of IDP youth | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| No. | Participant | Type of Interview | Date and No. of Interview | Additional Data |
| 1 | Young Male | Individual interview | 21.07.200<br><br>Interview #11 | Male,18 years-old; he was several month old when his family fled Abkhazia. Now lives in IDP Collective Center in Tbilisi. Has recently graduated Abkhaz school in exile located in his neighborhood. Lives with parents |
| 2 | Young female | Individual Interview | 21.07.2010<br><br>Interview #12 | Female, 22 years old, has graduated Abkhaz school in exile. Lives in IDP Collective Center in Tbilisi. Lives with parents and sister. Current Masters student. |
| 3 | Female Participants of youth clubs of Foundation "Sokhumi" | Group interview | 27.07.2010<br><br>Interview #20 | 5 IDP participants and 1 non IDP. All are students of Bachelors degree. All has graduated mainstream school in Kutaisi. Average age-20. |
| 4 | Young Male | Individual Interview | 29.07.2010<br>Interview # 25 | IDP, male, Age 18, Lives in IDP collective settlement in Tskneti. Is a recent graduate |

| | | | | of Abkhaz school in exile located in the his neighborhood. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | Male IDP Youth – 3 participants | Group Interview | 29.07.2010 Interview #26 | IDP male, all recent graduates of the secondary school. Average-18. All live IDP collective settlement in Tskneti. All have graduated Abkhaz school in exile. |
| 6 | Young male | Individual Intervie | 29.07.2010 Interview #27 | IDP male, age 17. Lives in IDP collective settlement in Tskneti. Goes to mainstream school located in Tbilisi. Single child lives with parents. |
| 7 | Young male | Individual Interview | 30.07.2010 Interview #31 | IDP, male, age 20. Lives in IDP collective centre-former hotel located near Tbilisi sea. Has graduated Abkhaz school in exile located in his area. Now is a student of bachelor's level. |
| 8 | Young female | Individual Interview | 1.10.2010 | Female, IDP, age 25. Lives in IDP collective centre in Tbilisi. Went to local school, graduated Sukhumi State University. |
| 9 | Young female | Individual interview | 1.10.2010 | Female, IDP, age 24. Lived in IDP collective centre in Tbilisi. Graduated local school. Received her bachelors degree in local university and her masters in Sukhumi state university. |

| IDP Parents | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| No. | Participant | Type of interview | Date and No. of interview | Additional Data |
| 1 | IDP Parent | Individual interview. | 21.07.2010 Interview # 10 | Mother of 3 children, and wife of former combatant of war in Abkhazia. Was pregnant with her first child when the war started in Abkhazia. She Lives in collective centre with 3 children husband and mother in law. She is unemployed. Her child used to study in Abkhaz school in exile. |
| 2 | IDP Parent | Individual interview | 21.07.2010 Interview #13 | IDP Mother of 2 daughters. Both her and her husband Unemployed. Live in IDP Collective Center for all their displacement years. |
| 3 | IDP Parent | Individual interview | 28.07.2010 Interview # 22 | Female, unemployed. Lives in IDP collective centre in the |

6

| | | | | former hotel building near Tbilisi sea isolated. Has 5 children, 3 went to Abkhaz school in exile. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4 | ID_ Parent | Individual interview. | 29.07.2010 Interview # 29 | Female, IDP. Mother of 17 years old boy (also interviewed ). Lives in IDP collective settlement in Tskneti. Her son goes to mainstream school located in Tbilisi, |

| Representatives of Mainstream and Abkhaz Schools in Exile |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *No.* | *School* | *Representative* | *Date and No. of Interview* | *Additional Dada* |
| 1 | #63 Public School of Tbilisi (Mainstream) | Principal | 20.07.2010 Interview #6 | Female, non-IDP. Has few IDP students from Abkhazia. |
| 2 | # 36 Public School of Tbilisi (Mainstream) | Principal | 21.07.2010 Interview # 8 | Female, has new case load IDP students in her school. Has few IDP students from Abkhazia. |
| 3 | #2 Abkhaz School in exile (located in Tbilisi) | Teacher of Georgian Language and Literature | 21.07.2010 Interview # 9 | IDP, Female, Teacher of Georgian Language and literature. Has organized many school activities dedicated to Abkhazia. Lives in IDP collective centre in Tbilisi |
| 4 | #2 Abkhaz School in exile (located in Tbilisi) | Principal | 22.07.2010 Interview # 14 | IDP, female, used to be the teacher of Mathematics. Lives in IDP collective centre located in other region of Tbilisi. |
| 5 | #2 Abkhaz School in exile (located in Tbilisi) | Teacher of Music | 22.07.2010 Group interview 15 | Females, all IDPs, live in IDP Collective center. All incorporate the theme of Abkhazia in their pedagogic work. |
| 6 | #2 Abkhaz School in exile (located in Tbilisi) | Teacher of English language | | |
| 7 | #2 Abkhaz School in exile (located in Tbilisi) | Teacher of Elementary level | | |
| 8 | #3 Abkhaz School in exile (located in Tbilisi) | Teacher of physics | 29.07.2010 Interview # 30 | IDP, Female, Teacher of physics. Lives in Tbilisi sea IDP collective center.. |
| 9 | #8 Abkhaz School in exile (located in Tskneti) | Principal | 29.07.2010 interview # 23 | IDP, female, The School is sharing the building with the mainstream school but functioning in different shift. Lives in IDP collective settlement in Tskneti |
| 10 | #8 Abkhaz School in exile (located in Tskneti) | Two Teachers | 29.07.2010 Group interview | One IDP one non-IDP, females, teacher of chemistry (IDP) and teacher of foreign |

| | | | | language (non-IDP). |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 11 | #8 Abkhaz School in exile (located in Tskneti) | Teacher | 29.07.2010<br><br>Interview # 28 | IDP, female, teacher of Georgian Language and literature. IDP lives in IDP collective settlement in Tskneti. |

# Appendix II

Excerpt from The State Strategy for IDPs-Persecuted

**Chapter III - Goals and Objectives**

1. The government of Georgia takes into account the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, protects internationally recognized human rights and freedoms, and expresses its political will for peaceful resolution of the conflicts in Georgia, which shall become the grounds for safe and dignified return of IDPs to their permanent places of residence. The government pays specific attention to the socio-economic rehabilitation of IDPs and to the preparation of suitable conditions for their return.

2. The State Strategy has two main goals:

**2.1. Creation of conditions for the dignified and safe return of IDPs**

2.1.1. Creation of conditions for the dignified and safe return of IDPs implies creation of conditions so that IDPs' return to their places of permanent residence is voluntary and dignified, and in a safe environment.

2.1.2. All IDPs, who so wish, should be given an opportunity to return in dignity and safety to their permanent places of residence after resolution of the conflict (or, whenever it is possible, before the conflict is finally settled), and should be provided with economic assistance. Their property and other rights should be fully restored; in case of destroyed or inaccessible property, they should receive adequate compensation. The protection of the rights of the returnees should be ensured. Realization of property rights by IDPs is not linked to their return to their places of permanent residence. To support restoration of the property rights of IDPs, the State Strategy also foresees the establishment of joint commissions for identifying on-site and compiling an inventory of the immovable properties of IDPs.

2.1.3. Those IDPs who have spontaneously returned to their places of permanent residence should be provided with all types of support from the government with the purpose of ensuring their safety and life in dignity and improving their socio-economic situation and protecting their civil rights.

2.1.4. Governmental agencies should be able, with the support of international organizations, to implement socio-economic programs and activities of humanitarian assistance in the conflict regions.

**2.2. Integration of the Displaced Population**

2.2.1. It is necessary to create, or to eradicate the hindering factors, for IDPs to enjoy legal, political, living and socio-economic conditions like other

citizens of Georgia. It should be pointed out that from the legal viewpoint, IDPs have all the rights as other citizens of Georgia; despite this, however, they are not fully integrated in the society:

a) In accordance with the Constitution of Georgia, IDPs, like other population of the country, have the right to choose any place in Georgia for their residence; b) IDPs have the right to equally benefit from state and other programs of social welfare, healthcare and education, that the government of Georgia or the non-governmental sector offers to any citizen of Georgia; c) IDPs have the right to pursue economic activity and to have the same access to economic resources as any citizen of Georgia; d) IDPs have the right to participate equally in the public discussion of civil issues and in the process of decision making and to exercise equally their democratic rights of active vote (to elect) and passive vote (to be elected).

2.2.2. For IDPs' integration, implementation of additional activities which consider their specific problems is required; and, if needed, positive discrimination within the frameworks of state programs before the goals of the Strategy are achieved. The purpose of additional programs is to achieve social integration of IDPs through the gradual closure of collective centers, reduction of IDPs' dependence on state assistance, and inclusion of vulnerable IDPs in general state programs. It is envisaged:

a) To reduce the number of collective centers, to gradually close them, vacating them for rehabilitation, and supporting alternative resettlement for IDPs, with the Government of Georgia using a case-by-case approach in making such decisions; b) To provide vocational education and training to IDPs within the framework of state programs, activate their economic initiative and ensure advantageous conditions of economic activities; c) To include IDPs fully in state social programs.


3. Strategic priorities are divided into three phases according to timeframe, the terms of which depend on the continued progress of resolution of the internal conflicts:

**3.1. First Phase -**

3.1.1. Support to ensure safety and provision of basic living conditions for the IDPs who have spontaneously returned to Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region;

3.1.2. Initiation of the process for closing the collective centers:

a) In reference to the privatized collective centers, the government will assist the owners of the buildings in vacating the property in their possession; b) Privatization and vacating the buildings of state-owned collective centers of special importance for the state in a manner by which the IDPs will be satisfied by proper compensation; c) The state will assist IDPs, in cases when they consent, to privatize the state-owned collective centers, which are not of special importance for the state, at acceptable prices (privatization of buildings for IDPs will take place at a reasonable price that is less than market price).

3.1.3. Ensure involvement of extremely vulnerable IDPs in existing state programs;

3.1.4. While implementing the activities for improving socio-economic conditions of IDPs, Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region as well as Samegrelo, Shida Kartli and Akhalgori district represent priority regions;

3.1.5. Elaboration of a special status for the families residing in Upper (Zemo) Abkhazia (a high-risk zone for life and health), ensuring safety and elementary living conditions.

### 3.2. Second Phase

3.2.1. To vacate the collective centers gradually;

3.2.2. To improve the situations of vulnerable IDPs, to provide support for their integration;

3.2.3. To support the safe and dignified return of IDPs before the final resolution of the conflicts.

### 3.3. Third Phase

3.3.1. To ensure the safe and dignified return of IDPs after the resolution of conflicts;

3.3.2. To integrate those IDPs who will not return to their places of permanent residence after resolving the conflicts.

### CHAPTER IV - Support to the Return of IDPs

Providing opportunities for the displaced population to return to their homes represents the main priority and the most important issue for the state. Return of IDPs implies both the currently ongoing spontaneous process as well as their organized return upon the final resolution of the conflict or (in the transitional stage) on the basis of separate negotiation.

1. Providing conditions for the return of IDPs in the transitional stage

The government of Georgia continues to work in the direction of gradual return of IDPs until the final resolution of the conflict. With the aim of achieving this, the state conducts negotiations with the parties involved in the conflict and calls upon the international community for assistance. The objective of diplomatic pressure is that the self-declared authorities fulfill their obligations in reference to the safe and dignified return of IDPs.

2. Support to IDPs who spontaneously return to the conflict zone

2.1. Governmental agencies are purposefully working to ensure the safety of IDPs who have spontaneously returned to the conflict zones. For this, they use not only direct negotiations with the parties to the conflicts, but also the assistance of the international community in order to monitor the situation in the spheres of human rights and safety.

2.2. Special importance is given to addressing the situation of criminality in the regions where the returned displaced population is living. For this purpose the government seeks opportunities for internationalization of the peacekeeping forces and the deployment of international law-enforcement forces in the problematic regions (Gali).

2.3. Respective governmental agencies are working to activate social services in the places of spontaneous return; first of all, enhancing the educational system – schools. Negotiations should be conducted to ensure that teaching in these schools is conducted in the Georgian language and according to the Georgian state curriculum. International assistance will be needed.

2.4. More active and coordinated efforts by international organizations are required in order to rehabilitate houses and renew production means in those districts where the spontaneous return of IDPs has taken place as well as to support small businesses and to significantly improve the healthcare of the population.

3. Support the return of IDPs after conflict resolution

3.1. Upon resolution of the conflict, governmental agencies should be ready to support the dignified return of IDPs in a safe environment. The government of Georgia shall implement a specific action plan that will determine the mechanisms for ensuring safety, the restoration of houses and productive means, and the return of property, as well as for support of the mobility of socially integrated IDPs, eradication of discrimination, protection of cultural identity, the creation of adequate living conditions, opportunities for income generation, and participation in legitimate public and political activities.

3.2. A mechanism should be elaborated for ensuring the rights of return for those internally displaced persons who are currently residing in other countries. For this purpose it is necessary to strictly delineate the rights of IDPs to receive state assistance, and the basic right of an internally displaced person and that of their descendants, regardless of current place of residence, to return to their homes. People-to-people diplomacy also is important in order to support the restoration of trust among communities.

**CHAPTER V - Integration of IDPs**

1. In order to realize the goal of integration of the internally displaced population, the State Strategy aims at implementing activities for improving the living and social conditions, as well as health and economic status of IDPs, undertaking necessary legislative initiatives in this regard. These programs shall be based on the identification of IDP categories according to their poverty level (the kind of care they require) and their skills (ability to become self-reliant), which requires the elaboration of relevant indicators. In fulfilling these objectives, it is important to plan programs in a way which does not harm the existing social and economic linkages established among IDPs.

2. Improvement of Living Conditions for IDPs

2.1 Effective resettlement of IDPs represents a precondition for the improvement of their living conditions and for their integration as well. The existence of approximately 1,600 collective centers, most of which are unsuitable for living, on the territory of Georgia not only poses a threat to the lives and welfare of their residents, but also hinders the social and economic advancement of the country. Resolving the issue of collective centers will assist in improving the living conditions of IDPs and will address the following significant issues:

a) Collective centers of public purpose will regain their primary function of social institutions (hospitals, schools, etc.); b) Collective centers which have commercial value will be vacated for private investment. Monetary compensations, which will be given to IDPs in exchange for vacating the places they are currently occupying for residence, shall be relevant and adequate to market prices; c) The collective centers that are suitable for living and do not have a specific importance, will be transferred to IDPs, if they so desire, for self-privatization (price for the privatization should be determined by considering the social condition of each IDP).

2.2. IDPs shall be protected against illegal eviction.

2.3. State assistance will be provided based on strictly determined selection criteria, according to which IDPs residing in the private sector and those in the collective centers shall be offered specific assistance tailored to their needs. The programs listed below provide for the stable and long-term improvement of living conditions of IDPs:

a) Use of specialized social institutions, within state programs, for IDPs with limited mental/physical abilities who are in need of special care (different types of shelters for groups of persons with specific health needs); b) Social assistance, within state programs, to healthy elderly and other vulnerable IDPs (those without a breadwinner, etc.) without any income (deinstitutionalized care for those who cannot survive independently and will not be able to become self-reliant in the future, though do not need special care); c) Financial assistance (ex. vouchers or other forms of assistance) for those IDPs who do not have a place to live or who leave collective centers, to support them to purchase a residence.

2.4. Transfer of residences into private ownership will be especially encouraged, though this option shall not take place automatically. Participation and contribution of IDPs in this process is a precondition for their purchasing of flats.


3. Improvement of socio-economic conditions of IDPs

3.1. Improvement of living conditions of IDPs depends upon access to adequate social services, first of all in the spheres of healthcare and education. In order to achieve these goals, the state strategy envisages implementation of following activities:

a) A survey of the health status and morbidity of IDPs should be conducted. Special attention should be paid to researching the prevalence of diseases of probable high risk among IDPs. It is recommended to elaborate medical and psycho-social assistance/rehabilitation programs for IDPs; b) For the extremely vulnerable groups of IDPs (such as people with disabilities, vulnerable elderly people, single mothers and their children, orphans etc.), who do not possess the necessary resources for achieving self-reliance, the State Strategy envisages the timely identification of their needs and their inclusion in existing programs of humanitarian assistance or of targeted care and social and home-care programs, or if needed, elaboration of special programs for them; c) Segregated schools affiliated with collective centers should be closed once these collective centers are vacated and IDP teachers should be included in the na-

tional program for upgrading their qualification; d) In order to increase the effectiveness of IDP-targeted programs, it is necessary to ensure awareness-raising among IDPs, and this requires the development and implementation of informational programs.

3.2. With a view to ensuring the right of IDPs to return to their places of permanent residence while at the same time supporting achievement of their social integration, the issue of IDP status should be dissociated from the receipt of social assistance. IDPs, like other persons in Georgia, may take part in social state programs, determined on the basis of needs, and regardless of the status of the beneficiary. In addition, inclusion of IDPs in social programs should not reduce the state assistance allocated to them. Before the goals of the Strategy are achieved, IDPs' participation in state social programs can be considered as an additional measure.

3.3. The ability of IDPs to pursue economic activities and initiatives is fundamental to their welfare, for which crucial importance is given to the human and social capital of IDPs as well as their access to material and financial resources. It is important to support economic activities of IDPs that will facilitate their reintegration after their return to their places of permanent residence. The State Strategy envisages implementation of the following activities:

a) It is necessary to provide support, within state educational programs, for vocational education for IDPs, which can become a tool for the social integration of IDPs, to encourage their motivation for participation in vocational training and to increase IDPs' access to such programs; also, to raise their awareness about vocational training, professional skills-development or other learning opportunities; b) It is important to implement programs for supporting the development of small business and enterprise among IDPs, that will encourage entrepreneurship and provide access to start-up capital as well as the acquiring of relevant knowledge and skills; it is necessary to support employment in rural areas for those IDPs who possess relevant agricultural skills; (this should be implemented through the assistance of donors (e.g. grants) and no budgetary/state resources should be used); Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region, also Samegrelo, Shida Kartli and Akhalgori district represent priority regions. c) In the areas where IDPs are residing in buildings with significant economic potential (e.g. Tskaltubo, Borjomi), there is need to elaborate area-based development programs, which among other activities imply vacating such buildings and restoring their economic functions.

# Appendix III

Photos of School Posters in Abkhaz Schools in Exile

# Appendix IV

Essays of IDP School Children in Georgian

№4. 2008წ.

## ჩვენი ტკივილი

გვ.12

**საქართველოს დიდება**

საქართველოს დიდება
სულ წაგვართვეს რუსებმა,
მაგრამ ვერ დაგვამარცხეს
ვერ წაგვართვეს ღირსება.
მათ უნდოდათ, რომ ყველას
აგვეწია ხელები
და სუყველას რომ გვეთქვა
სუყველანი გნებდებით.
მთელი ჩვენი სოფლები
გაასწორეს მიწასთან.
მაინც არ იხვენებენ
არ გადიან მთლიანად.
მაგრამ ჩვენ არ გვეშინია
და ვიბრძოლებთ ბოლომდე.
საქართველოს გულისთვის
ბევრს ვიდოღვცებთ ყოველდღე.
ვიდოღცებთ, რათა სამშობლოს
გადვურჩინოთ ღირსება,
რადგან სამშობლოს დიდება
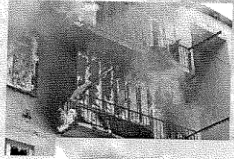ერისთვის არის ღირსება

**სამშობლოს არვის დავუთმობთ!**

ჩვენი ლამაზი სამშობლო
რუსებმა გაგვიდნადგურეს,
აღარაფერი დატოვეს
სულ ყველაფერი წაიღეს,
სახლებიც კი დაგვინგრიეს,
სოფლები გაგვიდნადგურეს,
ჩვენ უფლის მადლით გადავრჩით
მადლობას ვუხდით ჩვენს მფარველს.
რუსებმა არვინ დაინდეს,
იქვე ჩახოცეს ყველანი,
ბრძოლის ველიდან საწყლები
არვინ დაბრუნდა ცოცხალი.
რუსები თავს რომ გვესხმიან
მათ ააქვთ დიდი მიზები,
სამშობლოს წართმევა უნდათ
მიტომ გვედგებიან წიხლებით.
სამშობლოს არვის დავუთმობთ
და ნუვინ შეგვეცილების,
ჩვენ სამშობლოსთვის ვილოცავთ
მუდამ მის გვერდით ვიქნებით.

*მაისურაძე სოფიკო VIა კლ. (ლტოლვილი გორის რაიონიდან)*

**ომი – საქართველოში**

შავი კვამლი...
დანგრეული შენობები, მტვრიანი ქუჩები, ხმაური...
ზუზუნი...
მიწის ზანზარი...
ტირის დედა... გლოვის ხმა ისმის...
უიმედობა, შიშჩამდგარი თვალები, ველური გამოხედვა,
ხალხი უაღრო მიმოსვლა... გარბენა უმისამართოდ,
დამდგვა... მხდალობა... დაუნდობლობა... ჩადირვა...
აქ ომია.
სისხლის ტბორები.
უამრავი ტკივილი... ტანჯვა და წუხილი.
უიმედობა ისევ...
აქ ომია.
შავ ბურუსში გახვეული...
დაბნეულებული.. უმწეო...
ტირილიც არ შეუძლია... ცუდადაა...
ეს საქართველოა...

*თამათა გკადუა XIბ კლ.*

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### ჩემი თვალით დანახული რუსეთ-საქართველოს ომი

2008 წელი, 7 აგვისტო, შემზარავი დილა გაუთენდა საქართველოს და ქართველ ერს. არა, რა დროს ომია? მაგრამ როგორ არ შეიძლება დაიჯერო? როცა რეალობა თვალებში გეჯახება და გაქცევის საშუალებას არ გაძლევს... მდგომარეობა უფრო და უფრო იძაბება. ხალხი პანიკამ მოიცვა, მაგრამ სიმშვიდეს ყველა ინარჩუნებს. ქართველებს ძლიერი ბუნება გვაქვს...

ჩემი თვალით დანახული ქართველი ჯარისკაცების შეიარაღებული არმია. უცხო და საშიში რაღაცა იყო ჩემივის. რაღაც უცნაურს ვგრძნობდი და განვიცდიდი. ალბათ შიში უფრო შვია ამ გრძნობას, შიში, თუ რა იქნება ხვალ... მაგრამ იმავდროულად ამდი ვიყავი და დაცული ვგრძნობდი თავს, როცა თითოეული ჯარისკაცის თვალებში მედგარ ხასიათს ვკითხულობდი. მათ თვალებში დანახული ის, რასაც მებრძოლი სულისკვეთება შქვია, ჩემს ცნობიერებაში სამუდამოდ ალიბეგდა.

9, 10, 11 აგვისტოს მოვლენები... შემზარავია ყოველივე, რაც ხდება. დაბომბილი გორი, ცხინვალი. დახოცილები, დაშავებულები, დარბეული სახლები, მტვრად ქცეული ქალაქი.

კარგი ინფორმაციის მოლოდინში გადის საათები, მაგრამ არა. ისევ ტყვილი, ფარისევლობა, სისასტიკე.

ომი, თინაც ოცდამეერთე საუკუნეში? ცივილიზაციას მოკლებული ფაქტია, მაგრამ ეს რეალობაა. ერთი რამ, რაც ნამდვილად ვიცი, ქართველების მთავარი იარაღი სიმართლეა, რაც ამ უთანასწორო ბრძოლაში საგულისხმოა. ამ ბრძოლაში მორალური გამარჯვება ჩვენ გვეკუთვნის, ქართველების გუტეხლობა სამაგალითო ფაქტია, მაგრამ გვრჩება მზარე რეალობა. გაპანაგებული, დანგრეული, გადამწვარი, გადარცვული სახლები. თითქოს ფეხზე წამომდგარ ქვეყანას ძირი ეთხრება და უკუნითში მიექანება...

მოწინააღმდეგის იარაღს კი ფარისეველობა, სისასტიკეც წარმოადგენს. სისასტიკე, რომელსაც საზღვარი არა აქვს.

ერთი შეხედვით უიმედოა ყველაფერი, მაგრამ რატომ? რისთვის ვისხვებით? ჩვენ ხომ თავისუფლება გვინდა და სხვა არაფერი, როდემდე შეიძლება ასე გაგრძელდეს? რამდენი უდანაშაულო ადამიანის სიცოცხლე მოისპო სულ რამდენიმე დღეში და რისთვის? ისევ იმ ამბიციების გამო, რომელსაც ატარებს აგრესიორი რუსეთი?

გაუტეხლობა ხასიათში გვაქვს ქართველებს, ამის გამოხატულებად იქცა ის, რომ ყველამ აილო იარაღი ხელში, ჟურნალისტებმა მიკროფონის სახით, პოეტებმა ლექსის სახით, მომღერლებმა სიმღერის სახით, ვისაც როგორ შეეძლო. ამან შექმნა ის ცოცხალი ჯაჭვი, რომელსაც მცირე, მაგრამ ძლიერი, გამძლე, გაუტეხელი სულის მქონე ქართველი ერი შქვია.

თითქოს ყველაფერი ლაგდება, თვალებს გისაქანი ეძლევა, გულს კი არა, მხოლოდ ხელნაწერი რჩება საქართველოს მწარე რეალობის სახით. რწმენა იმისა, რომ სუფთა ზღლდეს, სისხლიან ხელებს დაამარცხებს. მთავარი ეთიკური ნორმების ჩარჩოში მოქცევა და იმ ბოროტების ჩახშობა საგირო, რომელსაც 21-ე საუკუნის დიპლომატი აცხორციელებს მეზობელი პატარა ქვეყნისადმი, რომელსაც ღვთისნიერი საქართველო შქვია.

ნათია ბასარია XIბ კლ.

**პროზა**

## აფხაზეთი დაბრუნდება!

საქართველოს დიდი ტკივილია აფხაზეთის დაკარგვა. ყოველი ქართველის გულში არსებობს აფხაზეთის დაბრუნების იმედი. ჩვენ ვიცით, რომ ბევრი ახალგაზრდა დაიღუპა აფხაზეთის ომში. ეს კი ჩვენთვის დიდი ტკივილი იყო. აფხაზეთში დღესაც ცდილობენ შეინახონ ქართული ნათელი სიტყვა. ბოგი სიმღერას უძღვნის აფხაზეთის, ბოგი ლექსს, ბოგი მოთხრობას, ასე გამოხატავენ ქართველები სიყვარულს აფხაზეთისადმი. ჩვენ ბევრი დაბრკოლება გადაგვიდგასავს და იმედი მაქვს, რომ მალე მთელი საქართველო იქნება მუდამ გაერთიანებული და გაბრწყინებული.

*ქდერია რუსიკო VIა კლ.*

## კაქტუსი

ეკლიანი წაწვეტებული, მუქი ჩალისფერი, გრიალ მინდორში, ადამიანებისგან მოწყვეტილი, მხურვალე მზის ქვეშ – ეს კაქტუსია
მიგოვეპ ული...
უმწეო....

მისი ყოველი დღე ერთფეროვანია ცმ... ცისა ვარსკვლავებიანი ღამე, ცხელი დღე მზისგან გახურებულს, სარევ... ლას შემყურეს იქ ყოფნა ბებრდება. ასეთია თითქმის ყოველი დღე კაქტუსისთვის.

ისიც სუნთქავს, მასაც თავისი ცხოვრება აქვს და რალაც იმედით შემყურებს მომავალს, მასაც უხარია სიცოცხლე.

ამ ბოლო დროს თითქოს დანაღვლიანდა, სახე ჩამოსხტირის.

იცით? ის ყველაფერს გრძნობს.

რამდენიმე დღეა მას წვიმა არ მიჰკარებია, წვეთებს არ დაუსველებია მისი სახ... სწყურია... წვლის მონატრებისა, დარდისა და სევდისათვის მიუდია თავი. ის გირის... წუხს... მაგრამ იმედს მაინც არ კარგავს. მწვანე, ხასხასა, ერთ დროს სიცოცხლით აღსავსე კაქტუსი გამომშრა. ძალაგამოცლილი ერთ წერტილს თითქოს უიმედოდ მიშტერებია...

გადის დღეები... თვეები... კაქტუსი უფრო და უფრო ნაღვლიანდება, მზე უფრო და უფრო აცხუნებს და ისედაც ჩამომხმარ კაქტუსს კანს უქერცლავს...

ბოლო წუთამდე მისული კაქტუსი სევდიანი თვალებით აიხედავს ცისკენ და გულში ჩუმად გაიმეორებს – განწირული ვარ... არ წვიმს....

ის კვდება...

*ჭკადუა თამთია Xბ კლ.*

### ჩემი თვალით დანახული რუსეთ საქართველოს ომი

ერთ მზიან დღეს საქართველოს შავად გაუთენდა. ყვავმა დაიჩხავლა, ცას შავი ზეწარი გადააფარა, მზე გაშავდა. დღე ნაცრისფერი გახდა. თითქოსდა სიცოცხლე შეჩერდა... საათის ჩარხი უკუღმა დატრიალდა. იმძლავრა შიშმა...

რაც ვნახე და განვიცადე ამის გადმოცემა ძალიან მიჭირს. დაძაბულობა, ფიქრი ცუდზე, ფიქრი ჩემს ძმაზე, რომელიც ჯარში იყო. დარდი ყველაზე, საქართველოზე, ჩვენ მომავალზე. ეს მტანჯველი ფიქრი იყო, რომელიც დიდ სიცარიელეს მიტოვებდა. მებადებოდა უამრავი კითხვა, რომლის პასუხსაც ვერ ვპოულობდი. დაუბრუნდება ყველაფერი ძველებურობას? ეს კითხვა კი მახრჩობდა, წამდაუწუმ ვიმეორებდი. პასუხი იყო, - ისე, არ ვიცი, ოღონდ ამ სიტყვაში უფრო პესიმისტობა იგრძნობოდა.

ვხედავდი აგრემლიანებულ და სახედაკაწრულ დედებს, რომლებსაც შვილი დაელუპათ ომში. გაუბედურებულ, აჩიოკებულ ოჯახებს. მესმოდა მათი კვნესა, დარდი. ვხედავდი მათ უცნაურ შიმშისფერ სახეებს. ვხედავდი, როგორ იტანჯებოდა დაყრილი ჯარისკაცი, როგორ ებრძოდა სიკვდილს. ეს იყო საზარელი კადრები, რომლებიც სამუდამოდ დამრჩა მეხსიერებაში, რომელსაც ვერ ამოვშლი. გახსენებისას ვიცი, რომ ცუდად გავხდები. ისევ წარმომიდგება ომი, რუსეთ-საქართველოს ომი.

ზოგჯერ მგონია, რაც მოხდა ცუდი, შემზარავი სიზმარი იყო. არ მინდა, რომ დავიჯერო, მაგრამ არარეალურად მოხდა. მინდა, რაც ვნახე ყველაფერი გაქრეს, ომი - ლექსიკონიდან ამოვიდეს. შიში, ჩერვიულობა, ტკივილი წყალმა წაიღოს და არ მინდა, მახსენდებოდეს...

<div align="right">თამთა გკადუა XIბ კლ.</div>

### ჩემი სოხუმი

ცისფერი ცა... აელვებული ზღვა, წყნარი ღამე, ვარსკვლავებით განათებული... თბილი გარემო, ეს სოხუმია.

თითქოს სოხუმის პარკებში დავრბივარ, მიხარია სიცოცხლე. მოფუსფუსე შევვარდებულები. გაბრწყინებული სახე. მხიარულება ... ძალიან მიხარია, რომ სოხუმში ვარ... მაგრამ ეს ოცნებითაა, ოცნება რომელიც ტკბილია.

... ის ჩემი ტკივილია, რადგან მხოლოდ ვოცნებობ მასზე. მეძახის ის და ვერ მივდივარ, ფიქრებს გონიათ, რომ ვერასდეს დავბრუნდები მასთან.

მახაც ურჩხნის გულს რალაც... სიცარიელეს გრძნობს, ის მე მელოდება.. ასე მგონია გავა წლები და თანდათან ჩემი ოცნება გაქრება. სოხუმშიც ჩემს მაგივრად სხვა ჩავა... არ იფიქრებს ჩემზე... დრო განკურნავს ტკივილს და ჩვენს შორის კედელს აღმართავს...

გული მეთანხმება როცა ვიცი, რომ ჩემს ადგილს სხვა წამართმევს, ჩემს მაგივრად შეხედავს დილით ზღვას, თავისუფლად ინავარდებს მის ტალღებში. ქუჩებში ჩაივლის თითქოს, იქ დაიბადათ,

ის მიხმობს, თავის მამულიშვილებს უხმობს, მასთან უნდა რომ გივყოთ.

ტირის... იმედი ეწურება!

მის ენაზე უნდა რომ დაილაპარაკოს, მაგრამ მისი არავის ესმის. არ ესმით, რადგან ქართველია.

სოხუმი ტირის... ის დაიდალა დარდითა და ჩვენსკე ფიქრით.

ყოველ ღამე მისი ცრემლით ინამება ქუჩები... ის მეტს ვეღარ იტევს...

<div align="right">თამთა გკადუა XIბ კლ.</div>