



ლევან მიქელაძის სახელობის ფონდი
THE LEVAN MIKELADZE FOUNDATION

CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION IN GEORGIAN-ABKHAZ AND GEORGIAN-OSSETIAN CONTEXT: FROM IDEA TO ACTION

NATIA CHANKVETADZE

MARCH 2020



**National Endowment
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The Levan Mikeladze Foundation

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FROM IDEA TO ACTION**

Natia Chankvetadze

**Tbilisi
March 2020**

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LMF's ongoing programing has been promoting a transformative approach to Georgia's policy towards the conflict by surveying key stakeholders (including inside Abkhazia), building an evidence base on the unresolved conflict and its influence on Georgia's social, political and economic development, and engaging with the international community and Georgia's expert community. LMF has conducted research along both of Georgia's administrative boundary lines (ABLs) into understandings of and attitudes towards transformative approaches. LMF is also an active participant in the series of policy events convened by the UN Georgia on Georgia's peacebuilding strategy.

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FOREWORD

Events in Georgia in 2008 made already the complicated Georgian-Abkhaz and Georgian-Ossetian relations a hostage to the geopolitical process. The clutches of this process have made it extremely difficult to rebuild the broken bridges in the relationship between the divided societies, and as a result, we have a situation where the relations mentioned are at a record low. These relations are often described as conflicting, confrontational or crisis-prone. However, regardless which adjective is used, the truth is that everything that once connected the Georgians and Abkhaz, and Georgians and Ossetians throughout social history, stretching over centuries, has sunk into oblivion. At the same time, the trust across the division is effectively gone, the image of Georgians as enemies is still running strong, and generations are now growing up in estrangement and alienation. In this light, efforts made by international organizations and donors over the stretch of many years, with the purpose of mediating between the sides and rekindling trust, seem futile. Nor have the expensive peace initiatives of the Government of Georgia yielded any tangible results.

There is no doubt, from the point of view of the long-term perspective of Georgian-Abkhaz and Georgian-Ossetian relations, that it is necessary to change the existing unfavorable context so that at least some constructive process can begin. This urgency is determined by the following two circumstances: the first concerns the cost that Georgians, Abkhaz and Ossetians have to pay daily as a result of the series of humanitarian, human security and human rights problems induced by the unresolved conflicts, hampering social and economic development. In the case of the Georgian state, the protracted conflicts have an additional price tag: they deliver a heavy blow to the country's foreign policy interests. In order to alleviate the mentioned price burden, it is quite natural for the opposing parties to want a positive change to the existing context. The second circumstance relates to international practice, which suggests that a constructive process can still be launched, and relations brought to a more civilized level, without forcing an agreement on major political issues. With our own experience to hand, we do not need to go too far in the search for examples: early in the 2000s, relations had gone back to normal; ethnic Georgian and Ossetian IDPs had started to return to their households; there were no ethnicity-based restrictions on the movement of people; locals from both ethnic backgrounds were again engaging in marriage; and inter-ethnic trade was flourishing as Ossetians and Georgians returned to running joint ventures. Today, these relationships are back to post-conflict square one, and the question as to whether these relationships can be restored in the present reality has yet to be answered.

And answering this question is no easy task. The major intricacy lies in the fact that the above-mentioned constructive process that spearheaded the positive transformation between the sides was more a spontaneity than an intentionally forged political process. Somehow, the context itself, as if a natural course of events, created the opportunity for improved relations. However, the rigidity of the current situation requires a planned and carefully thought-through intervention. This means that conflict transformation must be a peace-oriented political process based on a shared vision. Alas, there is a dire lack of experience of developing this kind of policy, which would certainly be of great importance should any spontaneous and thoughtless decision, even with a noble intention, threaten to upend the process at the very outset. Accordingly, it is necessary to prepare the ground, which primarily involves the preliminary identification, investigation, study and scrutiny of a variety of issues and circumstances. This can be done

through relevant expert discussions and research into the readiness of the Georgian, Abkhaz and Ossetian societies for change, and into the engagement of the international community, the Russian factor, and the political will of Official Tbilisi, Sukhumi and Tskhinvali.

The Levan Mikeladze Foundation is committed to making a humble contribution to understanding of all those issues that may support the positive transformation of Georgian-Abkhaz and Georgian-Ossetian relations. To this end, the Foundation has been implementing projects that conduct research, facilitate expert discussions and organize information meetings. We are delighted that with the financial support of the National Endowment for Democracy, we are able to bring to the readers' attention a report of the research commissioned as part of one of our projects. *Conflict Transformation in the Georgian-Abkhaz and Georgian-Ossetian Contexts: From Idea to Action* serves to explore the readiness of the Georgian side for those changes which are expected to lead to an improvement in the quality of Georgian-Abkhaz and Georgian-Ossetian relations. Even though the present research, with its goals and objectives, is just a first attempt at providing a complex insight into the desired constructive process and identifying the first steps towards effective changes needed in the Georgian-Abkhaz and Georgian-Ossetian contexts, it is not, obviously, without its limitations, and does not exhaust the research agenda for addressing the issue. We will consider our endeavour fruitful if the analysis, conclusions and recommendations presented herein contribute to the revitalization of discussions and study of Georgian-Abkhaz and Georgian-Ossetian relations among the wider Georgian public and professional community, and what is most important, if it leads to the development of a respective policy. We also hope that the present paper will spark interest and incentivize the Abkhaz and Ossetian societies, as well as local professional circles, to start working on the issues highlighted in the paper.

Archil Gegeshidze

INTRODUCTION

The ethnopolitical conflicts befalling Georgia continue to affect the country's security and stability, and to hamper its development. With Georgian-Abkhaz and Georgian-Ossetian relations having been stuck at a standstill for quite some time, social ties have been disrupted and estrangement is spiking, especially among the post-conflict generations. The unresolved conflicts have created dire humanitarian and socio-economic conditions and challenges in the everyday lives of the conflict-affected communities. In addition to creating a series of other problems, the current nature of the Georgian-Abkhaz and Georgian-Ossetian relations is seen as an impediment to Georgia's Euro-Atlantic integration.

Along with protracted conflict resolution efforts, conversations on the need to bring conflict transformation methods to fruition have come to the fore. More specifically, there have been some attempts to understand what conflict transformation implies and to explore the extent of the effectiveness of its visions and approaches. Since a fully-fledged resolution of the Georgian-Abkhaz and Georgian-Ossetian conflicts involves a complex, multi-dimensional and long-standing process, there is an urgency to explore conflict transformation as a more pragmatic paradigm. To this end, the **aim** of the present study is to ascertain the perception, expediency and feasibility of the conflict transformation idea against the backdrop of the Georgian-Abkhaz and Georgian-Ossetian conflicts.

The research rests upon a qualitative methodological framework, more specifically, a *desk research*, *semi-structured in-depth interviews*, and *structured questionnaire*. In-depth interviews were conducted with 21 Georgian respondents, while 23 structured questionnaires were completed by Abkhaz respondents¹ in a survey undertaken by the Institute of Democracy, a Gali based NGO. In addition, three *discussions* were held in Zugdidi, Gori and Tserovani with the participation of representatives of local civil society organizations, municipal authorities, universities, and interested citizens with various occupational backgrounds. The discussions mainly served the purpose of collecting information as to how communities residing in the conflict-affected regions perceive the idea of conflict transformation. A *videoconference* with five Georgian and three Abkhaz experts was also held to look into the urgency and expediency of pursuing the idea of conflict transformation, as well as the readiness for and acceptance of this idea among the Georgian and Abkhaz public. In addition, Abkhaz and Ossetian authors prepared two *analytical reviews* of the research questions. It should be noted that the identities of these authors will remain confidential at their request. Finally, the interim findings of the study were shared with government agencies, the expert community, and international organizations working on conflict related issues. The final account of the research incorporates feedback provided by these actors. More specifically, the collected feedback was used to analyse how the idea of conflict transformation is perceived and understood in the respective societies, what some of the threats associated with this kind of work are, and what resources and practical steps are required to bring the idea of conflict transformation to fruition.

There were three **limitations** with regards the research process. The first concerns the limited number of respondents consenting to participate in the survey in the territory of Abkhazia, which falls short of adequately reflecting the opinion prevailing among the Abkhaz public. Keeping in mind the aim of the present research, however, we thought it would still be interesting for

¹ Additional information about respondents of the study is provided in Annex 1.

readers to include the findings collected from the Abkhaz respondents. The second limitation arose from the growing tension between Tbilisi and Tskhinvali in the recent period,² as well as restrictions imposed on the work of civil society organizations in Tskhinvali³ which made it impossible to mobilize Ossetian respondents. Therefore, the present paper draws heavily on the Georgian-Abkhaz context. However, it still provides a vision for the transformation of the Georgian-Ossetian conflict and relations, shared by the participating Ossetian expert.⁴ The third limitation came in the fact that the study does not extend to the Georgian-Russian dimension of the Georgian-Abkhaz and Georgian-Ossetian conflicts. Yet, the role the Russian Federation may play and the influence it may exert over the transformation of these conflicts is still paid due attention.

The paper is made up of three parts: the first part provides an overview of the conceptual framework of conflict transformation. The second part concerns the discussion of Georgian-Abkhaz and Georgian-Ossetian conflict transformation, while the third and final part of the paper provides a conclusion and recommendations for the Parliament and Government of Georgia, as well as civil society and international organizations working in Georgia.

CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION IN THEORY AND PRACTICE

Conflict transformation is a comparatively new paradigm embracing a series of approaches pertaining to conflict management and conflict resolution. However, where unresolved and protracted conflicts are involved, the paradigm may eventually develop into a unique concept. The essence of conflict transformation is to induce changes in the relations between individuals/groups which are to lead to constructive interdependence between conflict parties. As for conflict resolution, it is a rather complex process which aims to cap off confrontation between conflict parties through negotiation, mediation and dialogue, and find a political resolution concurred with by all parties involved in the conflict. Conflict resolution culminates in the signing of an agreement or other type of formal consent. Therefore, the focus of the conflict resolution approach differs from that of conflict transformation, in that the latter, rather than being concerned with the political component of the conflict and searching for a political resolution, seeks to transform the perceptions and attitudes of conflict-affected individuals, including towards the conflicting party.⁵

As indicated earlier, conflict resolution is more of a results-oriented approach (the result being accepted by all parties involved), whereby external mediators, facilitators, negotiators and local mid-level leaders have to play a lead role. When it comes to conflict transformation, however, the urgency to activate local public leadership comes to the fore. More specifically, conflict

² "EU statement on "rising tension" along Tskhinvali Occupation Line" (2019), Civil Georgia. Available at: <https://civil.ge/archives/325867>; "Tskhinvali accuses Tbilisi of "provoking crisis" (2019). Civil Georgia. Available at: <https://civil.ge/archives/319792>

³ "Другого медиа-центра уже 10 лет нет" (2020). Эхо Кавказа. Available in Russian at: <https://www.ekhokavkaza.com/a/30464675.html>

⁴ "On the conflict transformation - a view from South Ossetia" (2020). An analytical review undertaken within this project (available in Russian).

⁵ Lederach, J.P. (1997). *Building peace : sustainable reconciliation in divided societies*. Washington, D.C: United States Institute of Peace Press. pp. 23-25

transformation seeks the active engagement of decision makers (Track 1), mid- (Track2) and grassroots-level leaders (Track 3).

As mentioned above, conflict transformation seeks to achieve changes at various levels. These changes are necessary both at the personal and relational level. In other words, it aims to induce changes in the value system of individuals and the latter's perception of the conflict.⁶ It is paramount that the conflict parties are able to understand and recognize each other's ethnic and national aspirations.⁷ The four concepts of Truth, Mercy, Justice and Peace are seen as pivotal to forging changes at the personal and relational levels as part of conflict transformation.⁸

Achieving structural changes in a society is equally important for effective conflict transformation. From this perspective, there has to be an assessment as to what specific structures deal with peace building and how flexible and sustainable each of these structures is.⁹ It is important to note that working towards conflict transformation is not often regarded as an isolated process; rather, it is seen as connected to societal transformation and development.¹⁰ Conflict transformation is an inclusive process tightly linked to ideas of social justice and welfare.¹¹ For instance, changes/transformation require the inclusion of not only conflict affected communities, but also other vulnerable and marginalized societal groups, which in turn necessitates the improvement of such groups and the elimination of social inequality.¹²

The Cyprus and Transnistria cases provide good examples of conflicts which are yet to be resolved politically, but which have achieved important transformation. It is important to note that the conflicts in Cyprus and Transnistria have not been affected by violence, with the regions remaining comparatively open to the rest of the world and, notwithstanding disagreements over political status, the parties have demonstrated readiness to compromise and trust each other.¹³ In addition, the EU, as a model and value system, is acceptable to these regions and, therefore, they enjoy the strong presence of international organizations.¹⁴ Subsequently, even though around 15 hundred Russian military troops are still deployed in the territory of Transnistria,¹⁵

⁶ Mitchell, Ch. (2002) *Beyond Resolution: What Does Conflict Transformation Actually Transform?* Peace and Conflict Studies: Vol. 9 : No. 1 , Article 1. pp. 7-8

⁷ Kriesberg, L. (2011). The State of the Art in Conflict Transformation. In: Austin, B., Fischer, M., and Giessmann H.J. eds. *Advancing Conflict Transformation: The Berghof Handbook II*. Opladen & Farmington Hills. Barbara Budrich Publisher. pp. 50-62

⁸ Lederach, J.P. Op.Cit. pp.30-31

⁹ Paffenholz, Th. (2004). Designing Transformation and Intervention Processes. In: Austin, A., Fischer, M. and Ropers, N. eds. *Transforming Ethnopolitical Conflict: The Berghof Handbook*. Berlin, Germany: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, p.162

¹⁰ Bachler, G. (2004). Conflict Transformation through State Reform. In: Austin, A., Fischer, M. and Ropers, N. eds. *Transforming Ethnopolitical Conflict: The Berghof Handbook*. Berlin, Germany: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, p. 278

¹¹ Miall, H. (2004). Conflict Transformation: a multi-dimensional task. In: Austin, A., Fischer, M. and Ropers, N. eds. *Transforming Ethnopolitical Conflict: The Berghof Handbook*. Berlin, Germany: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, pp. 67-90

¹² Bigdon, Ch., Korf, B. (2004). The Role of Development Aid in Conflict Transformation: Facilitating Empowerment Processes and Community Building. In: Austin, A., Fischer, M. and Ropers, N. eds. *Transforming Ethnopolitical Conflict: The Berghof Handbook*. Berlin, Germany: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, p. 349

¹³ De Waal, T. (2018) Uncertain Ground: Engaging with Europe's De Facto States and Breakaway Territories. *Carnegie Europe*. Available at: <https://carnegieeurope.eu/2018/12/03/uncertain-ground-engaging-with-europe-s-de-facto-states-and-breakaway-territories-pub-77823>

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ "Russian Military Games On Dniester Anger Moldova" (2018), *Balkaninsight*. Available at: <https://balkaninsight.com/2018/08/15/russian-soldiers-forced-the-dniester-river-from-transnistria-08-15-2018/>

there is free movement between Moldova and the region of Transnistria. As of 2019,¹⁶ Transnistria has trade relations with more than 20 EU countries, an opportunity offered by the Association Agreement between the EU and Moldova. As for Cyprus, despite the presence of up to 35,000 Turkish troops in the region, a so called Green Line opened in 2003 in the north of the Turkish part of the island, providing a buffer zone of some sort to ensure the free movement of people across the division.¹⁷ In addition, the Greek and Turkish Chambers of Commerce cooperate closely, and Northern Cyprus is open to tourists and those who wish to pursue higher education. HSBC, a British bank, went as far as opening a branch in North Cyprus, which is declared an occupied territory by the Republic of Cyprus.¹⁸

In Cyprus and Transnistria, the parties have managed to achieve changes (transformation) at the personal, relational and structural level which, even in light of their politically unresolved conflicts, have made it possible to put together a constructive agenda. Therefore, cases of transformed conflicts corroborate that conflict transformation goes beyond resolution¹⁹ and that it does not aim to build trust solely among decision makers and resolve a political aspect of the conflict: rather, the transformation process takes a path towards reconciliation and social welfare.

CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION IN THE GEORGIAN-ABKHAZ AND GEORGIAN-OSSETIAN CONTEXTS

The influence of unresolved conflicts on the Georgian, Abkhaz and Ossetian societies

All three conflict affected societies – Georgian, Abkhaz and Ossetian, have to face challenges induced by conflicts in their everyday lives, as well as at the strategic level. The Georgian respondents noted that unresolved conflicts threaten the country's security, stability and development. There is a feeling of vulnerability and unaccomplishment, coupled with the "loser complex," which hamper development.²⁰ It should be noted that perception of the conflict as part of the everyday²¹ has created an insurmountable trauma, manifested in the lost territories and displaced population.²² In addition, the presence of a sizeable number of Russian troops in the territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and restrictions of freedom of movement, make human rights difficult to protect, and engender severe humanitarian crises.²³ The Russian influence and unresolved conflicts account for a grave impediment to Georgia's

¹⁶ BIRN Fact-Check: Is Transnistria Really Economically Dependent on Russia? (2019). *Balkaninsight*. Accessed: 15, January, 2019. Available at: <https://balkaninsight.com/2019/12/23/birn-fact-check-is-transnistria-really-economically-dependent-on-russia/>

¹⁷ Mirimanova, N. (2015). Regulation of Trade Across Contested Borders: Case of China/Taiwan, Serbia/ Kosovo and Cyprus. *International Alert*. Accessed: 15 December, 2019, available at: https://www.internationalalert.org/sites/default/files/Caucasus_RegulationOfTradeAcrossBorders_EN_2015.pdf

¹⁸ De Waal, T., Op.Cit. p. 53

¹⁹ Mitchell, Ch., Op.Cit. p. 3

²⁰ Interview #14, Interview #7.

²¹ Interview #19.

²² Interview #20.

²³ Interview #09, Interview #7, Interview #06.

aspiration towards the Euro-Atlantic structures,²⁴ and challenge the implementation of Georgia's independent foreign policy.²⁵ The situation is further exacerbated by economic loss, as the country loses not only the economic potential of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, but the presence of unresolved conflicts also creates a deficit of security and discourages investments.²⁶

All the Abkhaz respondents indicated that the unresolved conflict has been a serious challenge at both the livelihood and political levels. The following problems were mentioned as particularly dire for Abkhaz society: Abkhazia's isolation from the rest of the world (15), the absence of a feeling of security (13), a lack of/limited investments in the region (11), the absence of inter-ethnic harmony in the region (9), corruption and ineffective governance (8), a perception of instability (8), youth leaving the region (8), a lack of social programs (7), limited access to education and healthcare (6), and a high level of unemployment (5).²⁷

The situation in South Ossetia is even graver. The region is completely dependent on Russia, the space for civil society organizations is extremely limited, and no international organization except the Red Cross is allowed to work in the region.²⁸ Crossing points are frequently closed: for example, Sinaguri and Odzisi checkpoints connecting Tskhinvali region with the rest of Georgia, were shut in September 2019.²⁹ Tskhinvali itself is severely affected, experiencing a frequent deficit of goods and commodities, often as a result of the complicated customs registration procedures enforced by Russia.³⁰

In addition to the challenges faced by the affected societies, the unresolved conflicts have also created barriers in relations between the conflict-affected communities. Even though the conflict was fuelled due to clashes between Georgian, Abkhaz, Ossetian and Russian political projects rather than unacceptance based on ethnic grounds, the conflict(s) nevertheless led to alienation of the communities.³¹ The experience of war has led to estrangement among individuals, while a thought-through strategy for rekindling relations is nowhere to be found.³² For instance, the Georgian-Abkhaz interrelationship and perception of each other has acquired an asymmetric character.³³ While the Abkhaz perceive Georgians as "the enemy," Georgians do not necessarily exhibit animosity towards the Abkhaz. It should also be noted that the young generation in Abkhazia is raised not within the paradigm of "future" but with the idea of being a victim and the winners of the war.³⁴

The unresolved conflicts have been a heavy burden for those who continue to pay a high price for them with extremely limited freedom of movement, if any, and lack of access to education

²⁴ Interview #14, Interview #2, Interview #10, Interview #15, Interview #16.

²⁵ Interview #09, Interview #08.

²⁶ Interview #12, Interview #06, Interview #09.

²⁷ The numbers indicated in brackets denote the number of respondents who noted/checked the issue as a particularly pressing problem tied to the unresolved conflict.

²⁸ Joint Statement of Human Rights Organizations concerning pressing human rights conditions in South Ossetia, Georgia (2019) *Open Society Georgia Foundation*. Available at: <https://osgf.ge/en/the-joint-statement-of-human-rights-organizations-concerning-pressing-human-rights-conditions-in-south-ossetia-georgia/>

²⁹ "Seventh technical meeting in Ergneti delivers no "substantial progress", *Civil Georgia*, 12.11.2019, available at: <https://civil.ge/archives/326046>

³⁰ "Грозит ли цхинвальцам продовольственный кризис?" (2020), *Эхо Кавказа*. Available in Russian at: <https://www.ekhokavkaza.com/a/30427350.html>

³¹ Interview #14, Interview #20.

³² Interview #07.

³³ Interview #08.

³⁴ Interview #17.

and healthcare. Therefore, invigorated work towards transforming the conflicts in the Georgian, Abkhaz and Ossetian societies is not only a desired course of action, but is a logical solution for overcoming these most pressing of challenges.

Conflict transformation in the Georgian-Abkhaz and Georgia-Ossetian contexts

Defining conflict transformation

A fully-fledged resolution of the conflict is largely related to resolving the status-related issue in the Georgian, Abkhaz and Ossetian societies. However, visions for resolving the status-related dispute are inherently incompatible and put the parties in a zero-sum game.³⁵ For instance, Georgians are adamant about upholding “everything except recognition,” while the Abkhaz continue to stick to the “nothing without recognition” stance.³⁶ However, in addition to the intransigent positions displayed by the parties, political resolution of the conflict has been made extremely complicated by the Russian factor. More specifically, the overwhelming presence of Russian troops on the territory of Abkhazia and South Ossetia,³⁷ and the growing socio-economic and political dependence of these regions on Russia.

Therefore, efforts towards a fully-fledged resolution of the conflict are not likely to yield any positive results with respect to political resolution. Nor do they offer a shared agenda to ensure the security and wellbeing of the conflict-affected communities. As indicated earlier, unlike conflict resolution, the primary goal of striving for transformation is to achieve human security and wellbeing, and to positively transform relations insofar as possible. Subsequently, working on conflict transformation makes it feasible for the parties to agree on core principles and an agenda since they are not required to compromise on strategically important and politically sensitive matters.

Research has shown that the idea of conflict transformation, as perceived in the Georgian, Abkhaz and Ossetian societies, is tied to individual perceptions and changes in attitudes, as well as the development of cooperative relationships. It has been suggested that the introduction of the idea of conflict transformation may be the very change that will enable Georgia to step out of the shadow of being a post-Soviet country and reinforce its image as a modern and progressive country.³⁸

Even though the Georgian-Abkhaz and Georgian Ossetian conflicts represent complex, multi-dimensional and distinct cases, the definition of conflict transformation as pertaining to the Georgian-Abkhaz and Georgian-Ossetian context may be worded as follows:

In the context of politically unresolved/unsettled conflict(s), conflict transformation represents changes at the personal, relational and structural levels towards ensuring the security and wellbeing of conflict-affected communities, as well as improving interrelations between the conflict parties.

³⁵ A zero-sum game is a situation in which one party's gain is another's loss, and vice versa.

³⁶ Interview #08, discussion in Zugdidi, 19/07/2019.

³⁷ “Tbilisi Condemns Russian Military Drills in Abkhazia” (2019). Civil Georgia, 24.04.2019, available at: <https://civil.ge/archives/303263>

³⁸ Interview #17.

Based on the above definition, the work on conflict transformation includes actions to be undertaken within Georgian, Abkhaz and Ossetian communities as well as changes needing to be made as the parties interact with each other. As indicated above, conflict transformation also implies achieving changes at the personal, relational and structural levels.

At the **individual level**, transformation is to be achieved by working with local communities. More specifically, it implies critically revisiting, analysing and altering the *attitudes, discourse and information* that the public receives about the conflict and the other party(ies).

At the **relational level**, changes require the assessment of all formats used to facilitate meetings between Georgians, Abkhaz and Ossetians. Therefore, it is pivotal to critically analyse and evaluate *behaviours, interests and issues* on the agenda for meetings.

At the **structural level**, changes require an assessment of all those structures that are directly or indirectly related to the regulation of the conflict, peace building, and mitigation of the damage sustained by animosity and tensions. Hence, certain *principles/values* and a *strategy*, which lay the foundation for the work of these structures, have to be critically revisited and changed.

The goal of the transformation process is twofold: on the one hand, it should ensure the security and wellbeing of the conflict-affected individuals, and on the other, positively transform relations between the conflict parties.

Obviously, those programs and projects with a focus on confidence and peace building, implemented in Georgia over the course of many years, have helped (and continue to do so) the process of conflict transformation. However, there are two aspects that need to be highlighted: the first concerns the strategy that these interventions have been built on, while the second is the question as to who has been involved in the implementation of these programs/projects.

In fact, there is no tangible **vision** or **strategy** for the transformation of the conflict and relations in Georgia. Confidence and peace-building projects mostly rely on the engagement of civil society and Track 2 leaders, as a result of which the internal vertical, government/political leaders ⇒ civil society ⇒ local leaders/grassroot, lacks action and coordination. Therefore, working on conflict transformation will become a qualitatively new approach provided that:

1. It is built on a vision and strategy defining the directions of the **targeted transformation**.
2. The internal social vertical becomes active. The political elite, civil society and community leaders will be involved in the process of **targeted transformation**, but to a varying degree. For instance, “A step to a better future,” the 2018 initiative of the Government of Georgia,³⁹ which is a political mechanism of conflict transformation, should also be based on a long-term vision for the transformation of relationships between parties, which will ease its implementation and make the program more effective.

³⁹ “A step to a better future” (2018). A peace initiative of the Georgian Government to encourage trade and enhance educational opportunities across the conflict divide. Available at: <https://smr.gov.ge/en/page/40/nabiji-uketesi-momavlisken>

Challenges associated with conflict transformation

Based on the above definition of conflict transformation, it becomes evident that this is a complex and time-consuming process, which, in the context of Georgian-Abkhaz and Georgian-Ossetian relations is coupled with those challenges that the Georgian, Abkhaz and Ossetian societies perceive as associated with this process. For Abkhaz respondents, the major concern/fear with respect to conflict transformation, and changes in general, is linked to the matter of trust. Respondents note that the image of Georgians as “the enemy” is still strong in Abkhaz society, whose citizens tend to exhibit mistrust as to what the “real agenda” of Georgians might be.⁴⁰ The Ossetian expert concurs with this view and points out that Ossetian civil society perceives working on transformation as an instrument of Georgia’s soft power, the ultimate aim of which is to regain South Ossetia as part of Georgia. In addition to mistrust, Abkhaz respondents also indicated other threats: potential violation of an agreement/agenda achieved as a result of the transformation process, questioning/compromising Abkhazia’s independence, assimilation/extinction of the Abkhaz nation and politicization of the process.

The absolute majority of Georgian respondents (20 respondents) believe that there are no particular threats attached to working on conflict transformation. However, one still needs to consider two tentative risks:

1. One-sidedness of the process - if Georgian society is left alone to work towards the transformation of the conflict, this may result in even greater asymmetry in relation to the Abkhaz and Ossetian societies.
2. The international community may reach a point where they pay little attention to the Russian occupation, resulting in Russia’s gaining strength in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. This, for instance, may lead to the complete annexation of the regions.⁴¹

However, it has also been noted that the implementation of transformative or change-oriented policies is important not only for the transformation of Georgian-Abkhaz and Georgian-Ossetian relations, but for the development of all three societies.⁴² Therefore, if Georgian society becomes more active, there is a chance that working on the transformation may mobilize more resources and attention on the process. In addition, the implementation of change-oriented politics is important for both a more accurate assessment of reality (for instance, to see “what length Russia is ready to go to”) as well as for the consideration of the needs and interests of the local communities.

In addition to threats, the presence of **impeding factors** and **circumstances** which may hamper the transformation process in the Georgian, Abkhaz and Ossetian societies, needs to be considered.

The following factors hamper the development of a vision for targeted transformation and an agenda in Georgian society:

1. Political polarization. When the level of polarization is high, the space for openly expressing positions and taking bold steps is limited to the bare minimum.⁴³ In addition,

⁴⁰ “A perspective of the transformation of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict - a view from Sukhumi” (2020). An analytical review undertaken within this project (available in Russian).

⁴¹ Interview #06, Interview #09, Interview #21.

⁴² Interview #17, Interview #13.

⁴³ Interview #15.

polarization also makes mobilization of resources and agreement on basic principles rather difficult a task;⁴⁴

2. Russia's growing influence over Abkhazia and South Ossetia enables it to prevent any process beyond its interests from developing at the very outset;⁴⁵
3. Scarcity of resources. The financial support is insufficient and so is the number of those individuals who have a specific vision for the transformation and the capacity to pursue this line of work.⁴⁶

From factors perceived to be deterrents in Abkhaz and Ossetian societies, controversy existing among the public stands out in both. For instance, the majority of Abkhaz respondents (19) believe that there will always be individuals and interest groups who intentionally target the conflict transformation efforts. According to the respondents, such individuals and groups may include representatives of the political elite, crime groups, and influencers with a rigid stance. In Ossetian society, duress exerted on civil society actors working on conflict, with the aim of preventing their participation in dialogues and hampering their actions in general, is seen as an important impediment.⁴⁷ Some Abkhaz respondents (11) noted that Russia is unlikely to be keen on the idea of transformation.

The issues related to rhetoric affect all three societies, but in different ways. The majority of the Abkhaz respondents (17) indicated that aggressive rhetoric hampers the process of conflict transformation. Propaganda and the promotion of the image of an enemy, as well as the use of terminology unacceptable to the other side, create barriers to transformation.⁴⁸ However, unlike rhetoric, striking an agreement on the use of terminology is far more challenging. According to one of the views, "if you manage to agree on terms, you can go as far as to resolve the conflict".⁴⁹ Nevertheless, a disagreement over terms and terminology must not be used as a ruse for driving the process of transformation to a deadlock since "agreement that parties will disagree over certain terms" is an approach that will be acceptable to all parties.

The government is seen as being in the best position to counterbalance rhetoric.⁵⁰ However, respondents recognize that it will be difficult to dramatically change the rhetoric as this may trigger protest in Abkhaz, Ossetian and Georgian societies alike.⁵¹ Experts/NGOs are the actors with considerable resources at hand in this regard. That said, they require more coordinated action and internal consensus.

Resources for the conflict transformation

In addition to potential threats and challenges which are likely to hamper the transformation process, it is important to assess the **resources** that the work on conflict transformation is related to in the Georgian, Abkhaz and Ossetian societies.

⁴⁴ Interview #09, Interview #17, Interview #06.

⁴⁵ Interview #13, Interview #12.

⁴⁶ Interview #04, Interview #19.

⁴⁷ "On the conflict transformation - a view from South Ossetia", Op.Cit.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Interview #14.

⁵⁰ Responses of the Abkhaz respondents to the multiple-choice question "Which of the following actors have the capacity/resources to change hostile rhetoric: government (17), experts (8), media (8).

⁵¹ Interview #07.

The availability of *material/human resources* is an important factor when embarking on conflict transformation work. It has been noted that this type of work is mostly donor-led, while local Georgian resources are rarely spared.⁵² However, there is still a possibility and a history of raising funds from the private sector.⁵³ Notably, considerable financial resources have been allocated in order to make the idea of European integration more attractive for the wider public.⁵⁴ Therefore, it is possible to make the idea of conflict transformation comprehensible and acceptable to the wider public provided that there is consensus among the political elites, and adequate financial resources are mobilized.⁵⁵

The Abkhaz respondents (20) held that the transformation process must be financially aided by international donors. However, the Georgian government (11) and Abkhaz authorities (8) can also make financial contributions to the process⁵⁶ since transformation will require strong governmental support (19). However, responses differ when it comes to governmental resources and interests. For instance, in response to the question “Is the Government of Abkhazia interested in transforming relations with Georgians?” the responses were distributed as follows: Agree (6), Disagree (7), Do not know (10). The respondents were also asked if “the Government of Abkhazia can support the transformation of relations with Georgians”. To this question, 2 respondents indicated that they agreed, 7 disagreed while 14 checked the “Don’t know” option. It is important to note that the responses to these questions are indicative of an information vacuum and puzzlement among the respondents, rather than a strictly intransigent stance towards the research question.

In addition to financial resources, *human and ethical resources* have no less an impact on conflict transformation. What is important is that there appear to be individuals who strongly uphold the idea of transformation and partnership on both sides of the divide.⁵⁷ Even though Georgian and Abkhaz youth live in dramatically different economic and political spaces, there are still immense human resources within the younger generations to give rise to a completely new political and intellectual class.⁵⁸ In addition, regardless of having a strong emotional bond to the conflict, veterans of war and IDPs serve as a huge human resource, the wealth of which is yet to be adequately explored, analyzed and utilized.⁵⁹

Interestingly, Georgian communities residing in the Gali and Akhagori districts are not seen as a backbone to the conflict transformation process, even though these communities have the strong social relations needed to play an important role in the confidence-building process.⁶⁰ Nor have the potential and resources of mixed families and ethnic Abkhaz and Ossetian communities residing in the Georgian controlled territories been explored and assessed for their potential contribution to the transformation process.⁶¹

⁵² Interview #14.

⁵³ Interview #15.

⁵⁴ Interview #20.

⁵⁵ Interview #19.

⁵⁶ The author uses terminology shared by Abkhaz respondents.

⁵⁷ Interview #20, Interview #10, Interview #12.

⁵⁸ Interview #19.

⁵⁹ Interview #15, Interview #03.

⁶⁰ Interview #04, Interview #09, Interview #19, Interview #06.

⁶¹ Discussions in Zugdidi on 19 July, 2019 and in Gori on 23 July, 2019.

Readiness for conflict transformation

It is important that all parties involved understand the importance of the transformation, since it is needed in the Georgian, Abkhaz and Ossetian societies. The statement “*The transformation of Georgian-Abkhaz relationships is in Abkhazia’s interests*” was shared with 17 respondents. Three respondents did not agree, while three others indicated they did not know.⁶² Work on conflict transformation is also needed in Ossetian society. However, according to an Ossetian expert, neither the authorities nor the people are ready at this stage for conflict transformation.

When it comes to readiness, the research also revealed divergent opinions among Georgian respondents. It was suggested that the commencement of the transformation process requires the manifestation of political will which, in turn, rests upon a consensus among political powers and the recognition of the urgency to make concessions.⁶³ However, it is also obvious that the political elite is not likely to push for changes unless supported by the wider public.⁶⁴

Working on conflict transformation cannot be effective without diversified communication channels or means and opportunities for delivering messages without their being slanted or distorted. As a result of these efforts, the affected societies will see that economic, infrastructural and other projects can be implemented for the interest and benefits of all parties involved.⁶⁵

Regardless of the level of readiness in the Georgian, Abkhaz or Ossetian societies to embark on the transformation process, it should be noted that expectation toward the transformation process is rather positive. One of the Georgian experts notes that “*if we take a path towards transformation, we will be able to improve the relations and life of the societies*”.⁶⁶ In addition, it should be noted that most Abkhaz respondents think there is a positive correlation between improved Georgian-Abkhaz relations and the resolution of some of the problems faced by Abkhaz society in their everyday lives.⁶⁷ Further, the notion of conflict transformation as perceived by Abkhaz respondents is related to more effective communication, mutual understanding and deeper partnership, as well as to the decrease in aggressive and hostile attitudes and other issues important for the development of society in Abkhazia.⁶⁸

Identifying initial steps for conflict transformation

For targeted conflict transformation to be effective, it is important to identify the **initial steps** needed to blaze a trail towards activating transformation processes.

One of the most urgent matters is to develop *a vision* with respect to the conflict transformation. More specifically, all three societies must strike an internal as well as inter-party consensus as to what the goal of this process is, who (individuals/groups/institutions) should be involved in

⁶² “On the conflict transformation - a view from South Ossetia”, Op.Cit.

⁶³ Interview #01, Interview #19, Interview #14, Interview #04, Interview #17.

⁶⁴ Interview #04, Interview #07.

⁶⁵ Interview #19, Interview #02.

⁶⁶ Interview #20.

⁶⁷ Respondents 23 and 21 noted that if Georgian-Abkhaz relations are to be improved, this will remove some of the challenges they have to face on a daily basis.

⁶⁸ For more information about the expectations for conflict transformation in Abkhaz society, see Annex 2, Table.

the process, and what roles/guiding principles should be in place.

The list below (which is far from exhaustive) has been compiled based

on the findings of the study, and offers the steps Georgian society needs to take in order to forge changes at individual, relational and structural levels.

Transformation at the individual level requires changes to the information/media space, discourse and, consequently, attitudes of communities on the other side of the conflict. The following steps may be helpful to this end:

1. Study/analysis/assessment of the past (the beginning of the 1990s) from a political as well as legal perspective;
2. Research/analyze and assess approaches promoted by general and higher education curricula with respect to the conflicts;
3. Assess/analyze the dispositions/level of awareness of the wider public with respect to the conflicts;
4. Identify various interest groups connected to the conflicts (IDPs, veterans, mixed families, individuals with Abkhaz and Ossetian ethnic background) with the purpose of researching/considering their stake and resources.
5. Research/analyze/assess/consider the behaviour of media actors (mainstream media/critical media) in relation to the conflicts.

At a relational level, changes require a shift in *agenda items, behaviour and positions of the parties*. The following steps may be taken at the initial phase:

1. Diversify channels of direct dialogue with the Abkhaz and Ossetian sides;
2. Agree on a status-neutral question for the Abkhaz and Ossetian sides;
3. Recognize the Abkhaz and Ossetian sides as parties to the conflict;
4. Assess/analyze and consider the needs of the Abkhaz and Ossetian societies.
5. Initiate a discussion and reflect on a vision/principles and an agenda for conflict transformation in the existing dialogue formats.

In order to achieve structural changes, it is important to revise the existing *strategy and principles* that lay the foundation for conflict resolution and peace-building programs. Following these initial steps may be useful for this purpose:

1. Organize local political dialogue between the ruling and opposition parties/representatives of the political elite on the goals and agenda of conflict transformation;
2. Analyse and assess mandates and resources of and coordination between the state institutions involved in the resolution of the conflicts;
3. Incorporate a vision and approaches to conflict transformation in the parties' programs;
4. Identify those interest groups/influencers within society who share the goals and agenda of conflict transformation;
5. Consolidate non-state actors and expert community members to define a vision/principles and an agenda of conflict transformation;
6. Analyze/research and consider processes ongoing in Russia.

Opportunities for working towards conflict transformation are more limited in Abkhaz and

Ossetian societies, especially in the latter, where both local non-governmental and international organizations operate under extreme restrictions. Therefore, it is not easy to identify those individuals/groups who will take over the work on conflict transformation. However, what is important for transformation is a shift to a more or less symmetric interrelationship and recognition of the Ossetians as a party to the conflict.⁶⁹ Changes in the perceptions and attitudes of individuals, which will eventually lead to a change in the discourse, are also believed to be an important stepping stone to transformation.⁷⁰

As for Abkhaz society, the findings have revealed that civil society actors are believed to be able to play a particularly important role.⁷¹ Further, conflict transformation goals, principles and safeguards need to be agreed upon prior to kicking off the target transformation process.⁷² Launching discussions on the expediency of transforming Georgian-Abkhaz relations⁷³ and altering hostile rhetoric towards the Georgian side⁷⁴ are also seen as important steps in the process, since transformation is not likely to be achieved without working at a societal level towards changing individuals' perceptions and attitudes.⁷⁵ In addition, recognition of the Abkhaz as a party to the conflict and their having a direct dialogue with Georgians will considerably contribute to the conflict transformation.⁷⁶

There are two other important aspects or questions to be considered before putting the conflict transformation paradigm into practice: *who (which party) should initiate the process and how (in what form) the discussion of the idea with the other party should proceed.*

Georgian society should initiate work towards conflict transformation with a strong understanding that this endeavor will be asymmetric.⁷⁷ It is expected that, at least at the initial stage of the process, there will be few constructive responses from the Abkhaz and Ossetian societies. As for discussions within the affected societies, in Georgia's case, the country's government is the actor with access to particularly important resources and the means which must be employed for the development of a vision, principles and strategy for conflict transformation, together with NGOs/the expert community, and the engagement of political elites in the process of reviewing and agreeing upon these documents. Notably, when it comes to the Georgian context, it is important to seek the engagement of the media and the Church, as both actors have the power to significantly shape public opinion and the value system that the public abides by.⁷⁸

The Abkhaz respondents believe that experts and the government are better positioned to spearhead a discussion within society about the transformation of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict

⁶⁹ "On the conflict transformation - a view from South Ossetia", Op.Cit.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Civil society should be actively involved in the transformation process - agree (21), disagree (0), do not know (2).

⁷² Requires a prior agreement - 15 respondents, requires no prior agreement - 8 respondents

⁷³ "A perspective of the transformation of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict - a view from Sukhumi" (2020). An analytical review undertaken under the project (available in Russian)

⁷⁴ Conflict transformation will change hostile rhetoric - agree (17), disagree (2), do not know (4).

⁷⁵ "A perspective of the transformation of Georgian-Abkhaz conflict - a view from Sukhumi", Op.Cit.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Interview #8, Interview #17, Interview #03.

⁷⁸ Interview #19.

and relations,⁷⁹ while businesses, culture and media representatives seem to have a stronger locus in Ossetian society.⁸⁰

Currently, there are two formats that can be used to discuss the conflict transformation of the Georgian-Abkhaz and Georgian-Ossetian conflict: direct dialogue and the Geneva international talks. However, neither format is without its challenges.

The Georgian respondents agree that there is need for a direct dialogue at both the formal and informal levels. However, at the outset, the official dialogue should not be made open/public, otherwise, it will exert pressure on representatives, considering the presence of various interest groups among the public with their own expectations and fears.⁸¹ The Abkhaz respondents, however, are of the view that the dialogue must be open and allow for the engagement of respective agencies/institutes or individuals with relevant mandates.⁸²

As for the Geneva International Discussions, respondents believe that the format has no sufficient flexibility to host discussions about transformation.⁸³ For instance, the Ossetian expert holds that Geneva brings together more than one conflict, therefore, perceptions as to what role and resources it can offer differ.⁸⁴ For this reason, conflicting interests and positions come into play in Geneva, which restricts the room for compromises.⁸⁵ In addition, it was also noted that the agenda for the Geneva discussions is not set by the Georgian, Abkhaz nor Ossetian parties.⁸⁶

One of the matters that needs to be seen if conflict transformation is to be brought to fruition is the identification of a *mediator*. Since mobilization of local human and material resources is of great importance for conflict transformation, the presence of a mediator is not pivotal in this regard. However, all international organizations working in Abkhazia constitute an important resource to supporting conflict transformation at the local level. It should be noted that Georgian respondents highlight the role played by the EU, especially its endeavour to create important resources with the purpose of balancing the existing geopolitical situation and Russia's negative influence.⁸⁷

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Regardless of the extent to which the Georgian, Abkhaz and Ossetian societies agree as to what caused the conflicts, it is evident that the conflicts affected all three societies, drove communities apart and placed them in dissenting value systems. Therefore, it is important

⁷⁹ "Who should initiate a discussion about the need for the transformation of Georgian-Abkhaz relations?" - experts (11), government (10), interest groups (6), media (3).

⁸⁰ "On the conflict transformation - a view from South Ossetia", Op.Cit.

⁸¹ Interview #14, Interview #13, Interview #09, Interview #06, Interview #12.

⁸² "At what level should direct consultations between the parties be launched?" - respective agencies/institutes (11), persons with a respective mandate (10), top leaders (8)

⁸³ Interview #04, Interview #07, Interview #13, Interview #15, Interview #17.

⁸⁴ "On the conflict transformation - a view from South Ossetia", Op.Cit.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Interview #09

⁸⁷ Interview #07, Interview #09, Interview #13, Interview #15.

that the interest in and need to talk to each other is encouraged in all three societies, as is the putting away of status-related and politically sensitive matters for a time, with the prioritizing of human security and wellbeing.

Working on conflict transformation is a time-consuming and complex process which requires goal-oriented and coordinated measures backed by adequate resources. The Georgian, Abkhaz and Ossetian societies need substantial help so that they can come to understand that being in a confrontational state only brings harm and curbs opportunities for development.

The study has found that changes are crucial for the better understanding of reality, confidence re-building and development of said societies. It has also become evident that without transformation, there will be no progress. Moreover, even the prospect of maintaining the status quo is likely to be thrown into question if there is no transformation. Even though there is a series of challenges associated with working towards transformation, the findings suggest that there is positive expectation of transformation. Therefore, there is certainly space to strive towards transformation by making a shift from responsive/reactive to proactive politics which, in parallel to tackling the existing issues, will go beyond political resolution of the conflicts and be focused on developing a reconciliation-centered vision for long-term development.

The following recommendations have been developed for undertaking measures towards transforming the conflict:

Recommendations for the Government and Parliament of Georgia

1. The Government of Georgia should launch an internal political dialogue with representatives of the opposition parties in order to develop a vision/principles and a strategy for conflict transformation;
2. The Government of Georgia should delimitate their work towards the Georgian-Russian conflict/de-occupation from that directed at the transformation of the Georgian-Ossetian/Georgian-Abkhaz conflicts and relations;
3. The Government of Georgia should take measures to integrate issues related to conflict transformation in the Georgian-Russian dialogue format (Abashidze-Karasin);
4. The Government of Georgia should take steps toward setting up direct dialogue formats with the Abkhaz and Ossetians;
5. The Government of Georgia should strengthen the mandate of the Office of the State Minister for Reconciliation and Civic Equality, and allocate resources to broaden the scope of programing;
6. The Government of Georgia should nurture awareness oriented at tolerance and reconciliation among youth by introducing, inter alia, conflict-sensitive teaching in general and higher education institutions;
7. The Government of Georgia should disseminate messages invoking conflict transformation and reconciliation through the Public Broadcaster and social networks;
8. The Government of Georgia should invigorate partnership with non-state actors while developing a vision/principles and a strategy for conflict transformation;
9. The Government of Georgia should intensify its work with municipalities, especially those in conflict affected regions, in order to effectively explore and consider resources that

- local communities can offer in the transformation process;
10. The Interim Commission on Restoration of Territorial Integrity and De-occupation at the Parliament of Georgia should revisit priorities and incorporate certain aspects of a conflict transformation strand;
 11. The Diaspora and Caucasus Issues Committee at the Parliament of Georgia should extend its mandate to working with the Abkhaz and Ossetian diaspora, as well as with Georgian diaspora in the North Caucasus and Turkey, with possibilities to communicate with the Abkhaz and Ossetians;
 12. The LEPL Research Center of the Parliament of Georgia should invigorate research into resources and opportunities for conflict transformation and intra-community peace building.

Recommendations for NGOs working in Georgia

1. NGOs/the expert community should develop a consolidated vision for conflict transformation in the Georgian-Abkhaz and Georgian-Ossetian contexts;
2. NGOs/the expert community should set up [an interim] network/coalition to define a vision/principles and a strategy for conflict transformation;
3. NGOs/the expert community should work closely with media outlets and comment on events unfolding in Abkhazia and South Ossetia in a coordinated manner, which will contribute to raised awareness among the general public and diminished aggressive rhetoric;
4. NGOs/the expert community involved in confidence and peace-building programs should work closely with organizations working on IDP issues, to ensure that resources within IDP communities for peace-building are adequately exploited.

Recommendations for international organizations working on Georgian-Abkhaz and Georgian-Ossetian conflicts:

1. International organizations working on conflict settlement and confidence-building should work closely with the Government of Georgia and contribute to the development and lobbying of a vision/principles and a strategy for conflict transformation for Abkhaz and Ossetian parties by allocating more financial and human resources;
2. International and regional donor organizations should incorporate conflict transformation efforts in their strategic goals and subsequently provide funding for localized activities as well as for those between professional and interest groups, which will directly or indirectly foster conflict transformation;
3. The EU should engage more actively in the process of conflict transformation by, inter alia, taking steps to diversify dialogue/communication channels between the Georgians and Abkhaz, Georgians and Ossetians, and to establish more active communication with Russia to neutralize potential impediments/interference.

ANNEX 1

Information about the Georgian and Abkhaz respondents and experts

GEORGIAN RESPONDENTS

21 in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted.
Gender division: 6 female and 15 male respondents.

1. Interview #01, Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia, 30/09/19.
2. Interview #02, Parliament of Georgia, Georgian Dream faction, 02/10/2019.
3. Interview #03, Government of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia, 02/10/2019.
4. Interview #04, Expert, former minister, 07/10/2019.
5. Interview #05, Representative of the Prime Minister of the Government of Georgia, 08/10/2019.
6. Interview #06, Parliament of Georgia, Georgian Dream faction, 10/10/2019.
7. Interview #07, Professor, GIPA, 11/10/2019.
8. Interview #08, Office of the State Minister of Georgia for Reconciliation and Civic Equality, 16/10/2019.
9. Interview #09, Parliament of Georgia, European Georgia faction, 17/10/2019.
10. Interview #10, Professor, Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, 18/10/2019.
11. Interview #11, United National Movement Party, 28/10/2019.
12. Interview #12, Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia, 30/10/2019.
13. Interview #13, Lecturer, Sokhumi State University, 30/10/2019.
14. Interview #14, Professor, Ilia State University, 31/10/2019.
15. Interview #15, Expert, former minister, 05/11/2019.
16. Interview #16, Democratic Movement – United Georgia Party, 08/11/2019.
17. Interview #17, Expert, NGO, 15/11/2019.
18. Interview #18, Expert, NGO, 25/11/2019.
19. Interview #19, Expert, NGO, 25/11/2019.
20. Interview #20, Expert, NGO, 27/11/2019.
21. Interview #21, Parliament of Georgia, European Georgia faction, 21/02/2020.

SURVEY OF ABKHAZ RESPONDENTS

23 Structured questionnaires were completed.
Gender Division: Female (11), Male (11), Not indicated (1).
Ethnic Division: Abkhaz (16), Georgian (4), Armenian (3).
District Division: Sukhumi (11), Ochamchire (6), Gali (4), Gagra (1), Gulripshi (1).
Occupation: NGO (4), Politics (3), Teacher (3), Local Administration (2), Other (12).
Age Division: 18-30 (4), 30-50 (10), 50+ (7), Not indicated (2).

VIDEO-CONFERENCE

From the Georgian side: 5 Experts/members of NGOs. Female (3), Male (2).
From the Abkhaz side: 3 Experts/members of NGOs. Female (2), Male (1).

ANALYTICAL REVIEWS

From the Abkhaz side: 1 Expert (female)
From the South Ossetian side: 1 Expert (female)

ANNEX 2

Table - Expectation of Abkhaz Respondents regarding the Process of Conflict Transformation.

(Answers to possible expectations given in a structured survey)

Total Number of Respondents: 23

Expectation/Opinion	Agree	Disagree	Don't know
-Conflict transformation will foster communication/relationship between Georgian and Abkhaz societies.	20	1	2
-Conflict transformation will result in reduced hatred and aggression between the Georgian and Abkhaz societies.	20	2	1
-Mutual understanding and cooperation between conflict parties will be enhanced as a result of conflict transformation.	22	1	-
-Conflict transformation will create conditions for safe and free movement, cooperation on environmental protection, regulation of cross-divide trade, resolution of humanitarian issues, coordination of the hospitality sector and development of transport infrastructure.	19	2	2
-Conflict transformation will help to revive certain sectors of Abkhazia's economy.	20	-	3
-Conflict transformation will create a supportive environment for peace initiatives to be successfully implemented.	22	-	1
-In the conditions of conflict transformation, it will be possible to create guarantees of non-resumption of hostilities.	14	2	7
-Conflict transformation will ease conditions to reach an agreement about Abkhazia's de-isolation and its access to the wider world.	16	1	6
-Conflict transformation will help donor organizations to conduct infrastructural, economic projects and ones aimed at normalizing the Georgian-Abkhaz relationship.	20	2	1
-The platform of Geneva International Discussions can be used to gradually introduce a new agenda of conflict transformation.	10	2	11
-In the framework of conflict transformation, Abkhaz society is interested in improving the Georgian-Abkhaz relationship.	14	4	5
-Abkhaz society has human and other resources to work on conflict transformation.	5	10	8
-Transformation of the Georgian-Abkhaz relationship is visible due to current (geo)political contradictions.	16	6	1