



# Restricting Education in Native Language in Gali District: In Search of Solutions

Policy Document

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Georgia's Reforms Associates – GRASS is a multi-profile analytical think-tank which conducts research and in-depth analysis of Georgia's foreign, security and public policy, as well as public administration.

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## Introduction

Starting from September 2015, the Abkhaz administration in the so-called “lower zone” of Gali district changed the language of education in the primary classes (I-IV classes) of all 11 Georgian schools to Russian and reduced weekly hours of Georgian language even further. According to this plan, all following classes will continue studying on Russian and if this does not change, the last Georgian-speaking class on the territory of Abkhazia will graduate in 2022.

It is evident that the education policy of the Abkhaz administration aims to discard Georgian language in Gali district and substitute it with Russian completely. Abkhaz and Russian sides hope that by restricting the education on Georgian language in schools, they will weaken cultural and political ties of local Georgians with the rest of Georgia, thus, strengthen their positions in Gali district.

Restricting Georgian, as the native language of the Gali population and the most important element of ethnic Georgian identity, can be freely assessed as an ethnic-based discrimination. It is none the less alarming that changing the language of education to Russian without planning and forcedly will negatively affect the availability of the quality education in Gali district. Russian is unfamiliar for the absolute majority of local teachers and pupils and conducting a high-quality study process on this language is practically impossible.

Even though the Government of Georgia is unable to fully implement its education policy in Gali district, its direct responsibility is to counter the execution of this decision and mitigate the negative consequences stemming from the forceful transfer of the education process to Russian language. The counter steps from the Government of Georgia require complexity. On the one hand, all international political and legal mechanisms of solving the problem should be used. On the other hand, practical decisions should be made in order to keep providing the local Georgians with quality education in their native language. In this regards, engagement of local population as well as those interested and the civil organizations is crucial.

The given document is a tool for achieving the aforementioned goal. Its goal is to highlight the severity of the existing problem, on the one hand, and to support the respective branches of the Government to find a solution, on the other hand. The policy document will closely overview the state policy in Gali district in relation to the existing education institutions. It also concerns programs of certain ministries and departments and offers recommendations to them with the aim of improving their activities.

## Research Methodology

The research process took place in November-December 2015. The research materials were collected via desk research and face-to-face interviews. In the initial stage, reports of international and local organizations, legislation, budgets and acting programs on this matter were collected and analyzed. Official data was also retrieved. At the next stage of the research, 16 semi-structural in-depth interviews were conducted with the departments and persons concerned by the given issue directly or indirectly. Face-to-face interviews were held with the following persons:

Respondent	Position/Status
Lia Gigauri	Deputy Minister of Education and Science of Georgia

Ketevan Tsikhelashvili	Deputy State Minister of Georgia for Reconciliation and Civic Equality
Marina Salukvadze	Head of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia and Former South Ossetian Autonomous District under the Office of State Minister of Georgia for Reintegration
Elene Agladze	Deputy Director of International Organizations' Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia
Shota Malashkhia	Former Chair of Temporary Commission on Territorial Integrity of the Parliament of Georgia
Mamuka Areshidze	Independent Expert
Giorgi Svanadze	Director of Domestic Security and Rule of Law Department of the State Security and Crisis Management Council
Medea Turashvili	Chief Adviser of the Public Ombudsman of Georgia in Human Rights Issues in the Conflict-Affected Regions
Maia Miminoshvili	Director of National Assessment and Examinations Center
Sophio Lobzhanidze	National Center for Professional Development of Teachers
Jemal Gakharia	Deputy Head of the High Council of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia (in-exile)
Igor Kopaliani	Head of Justice Department of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia (in-exile)
Dali Khomeriki	Former Minister of Education and Culture of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia (in-exile)
Nona Shonia	Director of Gali Resource-Center of Ministry of Education and Culture of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia (in-exile)
Malkhaz Patariaia	Chair of the Movement "Dabruneba" ("Return")
Alfred Nurja	Manager of Abkhazia Program of World Vision

With the aim of retrieving information, telephone and electronic communication took place with the National Security Council of Georgia, the Special Representative of the Prime Minister of Georgia in Relations with Russia and the Abkhazia Office of Danish Refugee Council.

*The author of the document thanks all respondents for the provided help in the process of the research, with special thanks to the Director of Gali Resource-Center, Mrs Nona Shonia.*

## Overview

### Education in Georgian in Schools of Gali District

Fifty-eight general education institutions with 13,180 pupils and 1,638 teachers operated in Gali district prior to 1992-1993 military actions.<sup>1</sup> The population that spontaneously returned after the war, restored the study process in 31 schools with their own initiative, with 4,428 pupils and 749 teachers as of today (Table 1).<sup>2</sup>

**Table #1. Number of Pupils, Teachers and Technical Staff by Years**

	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
<b>Pupils</b>	4247	3898	3852	4212	4214	4213	4220	4380	4431	4446	4428
<b>Teachers</b>	612	627	657	736	742	756	735	742	747	749	749
<b>Technical Staff</b>	130	129	137	149	149	155	161	158	154	162	164

*Source: Gali Resource-Center*

Of the restored schools, prior to the war, only two were Russian, one was Georgian-Russian and one – Georgian-Abkhaz. Currently, though, 20 schools of Gali district are transferred to a fully Russian education, whereas in the remaining 11 schools, Georgian will be gradually substituted by Russian (Table 2).

Restriction of education in Georgia in Gali district schools started in 1995 and was carried out stage by stage. Georgian education was banned in 11 schools included in real (pre-war) borders of Gali district<sup>3</sup> <sup>4</sup>, whilst in nine schools of the so-called upper zone of Gali district the “First Grade Principle” was introduced (each first grade started in Russian).<sup>5</sup> The transfer to the Russian education in the “upper zone” was finished in 2004-2005.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Information Provided by Gali District Educational Resource-Centers.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> *Gali district* mentioned in the policy document implies the real (pre-war) borders of Gali district. In 1994, Abkhazians assigned several villages of Gali district to Ochamchire district and newly created Tkvarcheli district. The remaining territory of the district was divided in “upper” and “lower” zones (see maps).

<sup>4</sup> Human Rights Watch. *Living in Limbo; The Rights of Ethnic Georgian Returnees to the Gali District of Abkhazia*. 2011.

<sup>5</sup> *Special Report of the Public Ombudsman of Georgia, Right to Education in Gali District: News of the 2015-2016 Academic Year and Related Novelties*. Tbilisi. 2015.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

Despite their will<sup>7 8 9 10 11</sup>, Abkhaz were unable to transfer the educational process in the schools of the so-called “lower zone” to Russian, due to the lack of resources<sup>12</sup> and fragile security conditions. These schools were transferred to the subordination of Gali’s Abkhaz Administration in 2006<sup>13</sup> and since then, they have been unofficially acting under a double jurisdiction – on the one hand, they were subordinate to the Education Office of Gali’s Abkhaz Administration and on the other hand – to the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia (in exile). It should also be noted that the Gali Administration has never officially allowed the education in Georgian: in all these schools, Russian was agreed to be the language of education officially.<sup>14</sup>

In spite of difficulties, Abkhaz started to accomplish the plan in 2014; in the primary classes, they first decreased the time allocated for Georgian language and literature by four hours and the next year they fully transferred them to the Russian education. According to the same plan, every next grade will continue studying in Russian and if the situation does not change, nearly two-century old history of existence of Georgian schools on the territory of Abkhazia will end in 2022.<sup>15</sup>

In parallel with the violation of the right to receive knowledge in the native language, the transfer to Russian language will negatively affect the quality of education in the schools<sup>16 17 18</sup>, that will, in turn, cause adverse effects for the future career and academic development of the local youth.

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<sup>7</sup> Soso Tsrighvava. *Educational Problems and the Conditions of Georgian Schools in the Conflict Zone (Gali District), Human Rights Conditions in Georgia’s Conflict Zones*. Tbilisi. 2006.

<sup>8</sup> Kevanishvili, Eka. *Georgian Language Under Pressure In Abkhazia*. RadioFreeEurope/Radioliberty. N.p. 22 March 2009. Web.

<sup>9</sup> *Беслан Кантария о положении в школах в Гальском районе*. YouTube. 10 November 2015. Web.

<sup>10</sup> Gulua, Eka. *Education in Georgian is being Restricted in Georgian Schools in Gali District*. Human Rights Center. 3 May 2006.

<sup>11</sup> *GEORGIA: IDPs in Georgia still need attention. Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, Norwegian Refugee Council*. 9 July 2009.

<sup>12</sup> Human Rights Watch. *Living in Limbo; The Rights of Ethnic Georgian Returnees to the Gali District of Abkhazia*. 2011.

<sup>13</sup> *Какова ситуация в Гальских школах сегодня*. YouTube. 10 December 2014. Web.

<sup>14</sup> Human Rights Watch. *Living in Limbo; The Rights of Ethnic Georgian Returnees to the Gali District of Abkhazia*. 2011.

<sup>15</sup> The first school on the territory of Abkhazia was opened in 1851, in the village Okumi of Gali district. The study process in the school was held in Georgian and Russian.

<sup>16</sup> International Crisis Group. *Abkhazia: The Long Road to Reconciliation, Europe Report N°224*. 10 April 2013

<sup>17</sup> *Education near the Dividing line: Availability of Education in Georgia Along the Dividing line and for the Population Living on Occupied Territories*. Institute of Nationalism and Conflict Research and Sinergy Network. Tbilisi. 2015.

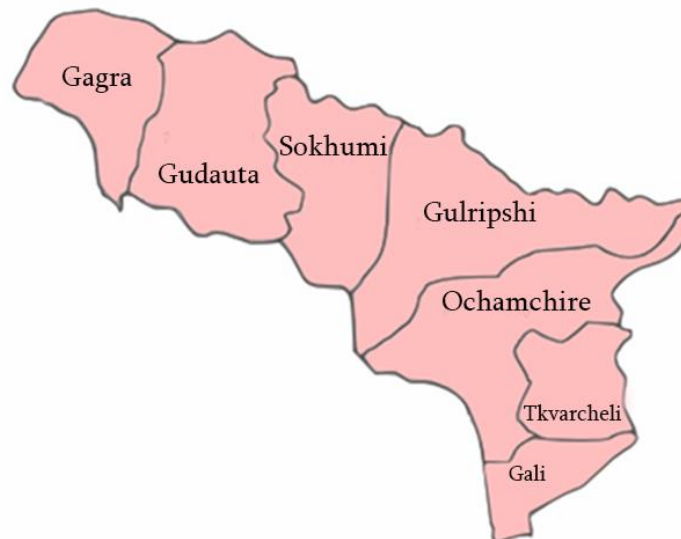
<sup>18</sup> *Report of the Secretary-General concerning the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia (S/2001/59)*. UN Security Council. 18 January 2001.

Russian is unfamiliar for the absolute majority of local teachers and pupils and conducting a high-quality study process on this language is practically impossible.<sup>19 20 21 22 23</sup> Students speak Georgian and Megrelian at home, and study Russian, English and Abkhaz in schools, though insufficiently.

Moreover, in multiple schools of Gali district (in both zones), there is a situation – the education is conducted with two programs, officially – in Russian and with Russian books and unofficially – in Georgian, with books printed by the Ministry of Education of Georgia.<sup>24</sup> The parallel education with two incompatible – Russian and Georgian – study programs adds up to the uncertainty in the already very unstable education conditions in Gali.

Some of the teachers still manage to conduct the study process in Georgian, covertly,<sup>25</sup> however, it is done against the background of constant fear and is negatively reflected in the psychological conditions of both teachers and pupils.<sup>26</sup>

#### **Map #1: Gali District in Abkhaz Borders**



**Source:** Wikipedia

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<sup>19</sup> Адлейба, Стелла. *Проблемы Галского района: Документы, язык, транспорт. Все об отношениях Абхазии и России.* N.p. 19 October 2015. Web.

<sup>20</sup> Comai, Giorgio. *In Abkhazia, worried about the language law.* Osservatorio Balcani E Caucaso. N.p., 16 November 2011. Web.

<sup>21</sup> *Education near the Dividing line: Availability of Education in Georgia Along the Dividing line and for the Population Living on Occupied Territories.* Institute of Nationalism and Conflict Research and Sinergy Network. Tbilisi. 2015.

<sup>22</sup> Human Rights Watch. *Living in Limbo; The Rights of Ethnic Georgian Returnees to the Gali District of Abkhazia.* 2011.

<sup>23</sup> Report of the Representative of the Secretary-General on the human rights of internally displaced persons. Walter Kälin. Human Rights Council. Sixteenth Session. 23 December 2010.

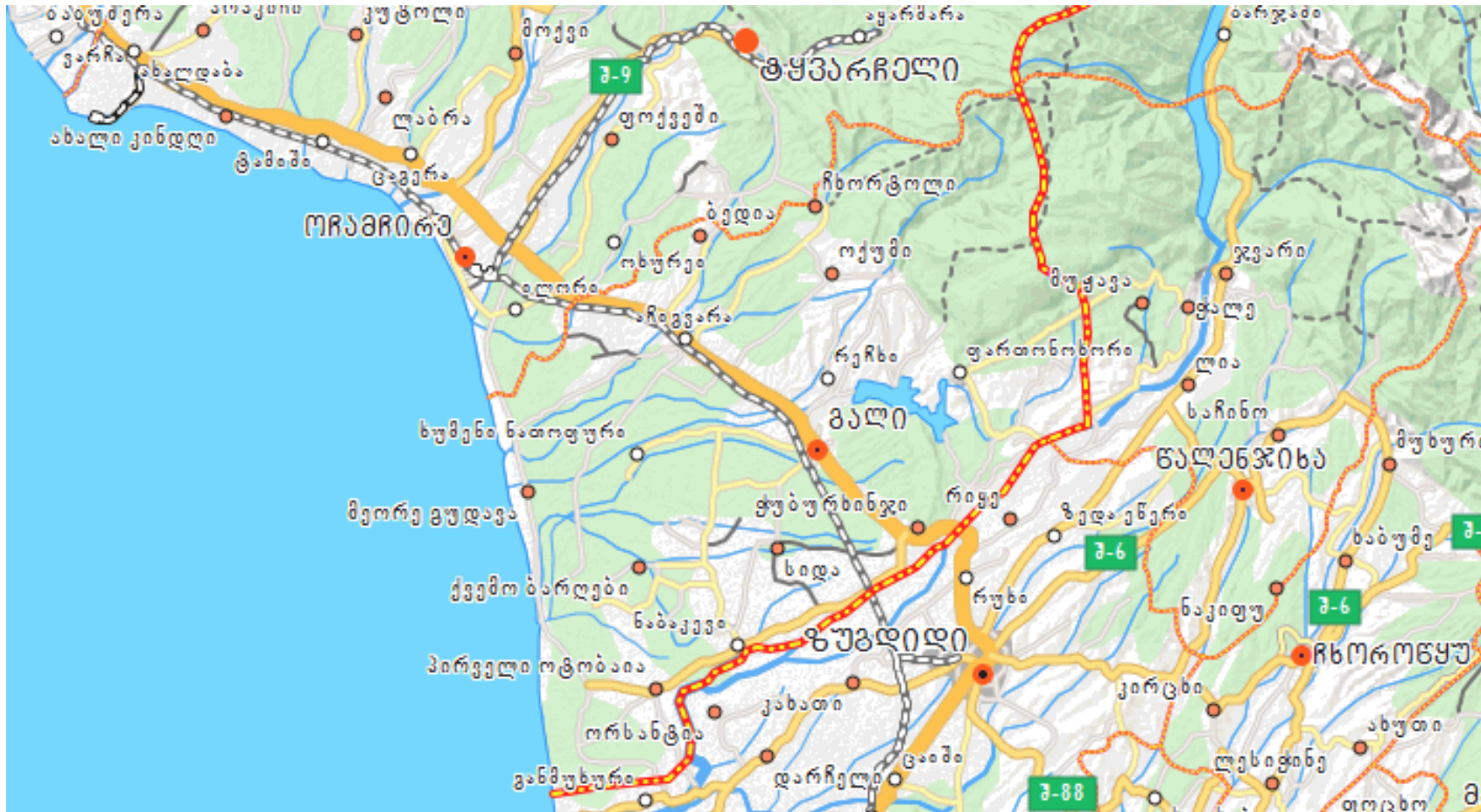
<sup>24</sup> Human Rights Watch. *Living in Limbo; The Rights of Ethnic Georgian Returnees to the Gali District of Abkhazia.* 2011.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> The information is provided by Gali district Educational Resource-Center.



Map #2: Gali District in Real Borders



Source: Geoland

**Table #2: Schools Restored in the Pre-War Borders of Gali District and the Language of Education**

Name and Status (Basic, Secondary, Public) of School	Location	Language of Education Prior to 1994	Language of Education from 1994 to 2014	Language of Education since September 2015
<b>So-called "Upper Zone" of Gali District</b>				
#1 Secondary School of Gali	Gali	Russian	Russian	Russian
#2 Secondary School of Gali	Gali	Georgian	Russian	Russian
Secondary School of Mziuri	Mziuri Village.	Georgian	Russian	Russian
#1 Secondary School of Chuburkhinji	Chuburkhinji Village.	Georgian	Russian	Russian
#2 Secondary School of Chuburkhinji	Chuburkhinji Village.	Georgian	Russian	Russian
#1 Secondary School of Saberio	Saberio Village.	Georgian	Russian	Russian
#2 Secondary School of Saberio	Saberio Village.	Georgian-Russian	Russian	Russian
Secondary School of Lekukhona	Lekukhona Village.	Georgian	Russian	Russian
Secondary School of Dikhazurga	Dikhazurga Village.	Georgian	Russian	Russian
<b>Territory Assigned to Ochamchire District</b>				
Secondary School of Achigvara	Achigvara Village.	Georgian	Russian	Russian
<b>Territory Assigned to Tkvarcheli District</b>				
Secondary School of Okumi	Okumi Village.	Georgian	Russian	Russian

#1 Secondary School of Tsarche	Tsarche Village.	Georgian	Russian	Russian
#2 Secondary School of Tsarche	Tsarche Village.	Georgian	Russian	Russian
Secondary School of Chkhortoli	Chkhortoli Village.	Georgian-Abkhaz	Russian	Russian
Secondary School of Mukhuri	Mukhuri Village.	Georgian	Russian	Russian
Secondary School of Ghumurishi	Ghumurishi Village.	Georgian	Russian	Russian
Secondary School of Narinjovani	Pirveli Gali Village.	Georgian	Russian	Russian
Secondary School of Kokhora	Kokhora Village.	Russian	Russian	Russian
Secondary School of Rechkhi	Rechkhi Village.	Georgian	Russian	Russian
Secondary School of Rechkhi-Tskhiri	Rechkhi-Tskhiri Village.	Georgian	Russian	Russian
<b>So-called "Lower Zone" of Gali District</b>				
Secondary School of Zemo Barghebi	Zemo Barghebi Village.	Georgian	Georgian	Russian 1-4 classes (primary); Georgian 5-11 classes
Secondary School of Kvemo Barghebi	Kvemo Barghebi Village.	Georgian	Georgian	Russian 1-4 classes (primary); Georgian 5-11 classes
Secondary School of Gagida	Gagida Village	Georgian	Georgian	Russian 1-4 classes (primary); Georgian 5-11 classes
Secondary School of Tagiloni	Tagiloni Village.	Georgian	Georgian	Russian 1-4 classes (primary); Georgian 5-11 classes
Secondary School of Sida	Sida Village.	Georgian	Georgian	Russian 1-4 classes (primary); Georgian 5-11 classes
Secondary School of Pichori	Pichori Village.	Georgian	Georgian	Russian 1-4 classes (primary); Georgian 5-11 classes

Secondary School of Otovaia	Otovaia Village.	Georgian	Georgian	Russian 1-4 classes (primary); Georgian 5-11 classes
#13 Public School of Abkhazia in Nabakevi	Nabakevi Village.	Georgian	Georgian	Russian 1-4 classes (primary); Georgian 5-11 classes
#16 Public School of Abkhazia in Meore Otovaia	Meore Otovaia Village.	Georgian	Georgian	Russian 1-4 classes (primary); Georgian 5-11 classes
Basic School of Ganakhleba	Ganakhleba Village.	Georgian	Georgian	Russian 1-4 classes (primary); Georgian 5-11 classes
Basic School of Tagiloni	Tagiloni Village.	Georgian	Georgian	Russian 1-4 classes (primary); Georgian 5-11 classes

**Source:** Gali Resource-Center

The position of the Abkhaz Administration and the Russian side on the substitution of Georgian education with Russian is as follows: according to the majority of Abkhaz public figures, carrying out education process with Georgian books in Abkhaz schools is ideologically unacceptable, as graduates of the Georgian schools are not loyal towards the Abkhaz state.<sup>27 28 29 30 31 32 33</sup> Others stress the importance of Russian for Gali youth due to their prospects of career and academic development in Russia.<sup>34 35</sup> There has also been an opinion that Georgian, ostensibly, is not the native language of the Gali district population and only Megrelian can be considered as their native language.<sup>36</sup> Also, according to the Abkhaz and Russian sides, the situation in Gali should be analyzed in the light of ethnic minority rights and in that case, their condition meets international standards.<sup>37</sup>

According to the Abkhaz constitution, the state provides for “the right for each ethnic group living in Abkhazia to freely use its native language”.<sup>38</sup> The Law on State Language repeats the same: according to it, “Citizens of the Republic of Abkhazia have a right to receive education in their native language and select the education language in the framework of the capacity offered by the education system;” “national cultural communities existing in Abkhazia have a right to create preschool and cultural institutions in their native language in accordance with the existing rules.”<sup>39 40</sup>

Rights included in the Abkhaz law are more or less protected for other ethnic groups living in Abkhazia; i.e. as of November 2012, 169 schools were functioning in Abkhazia, 62 of which were considered Abkhaz, 48 – Russian, 16 – Russian-Abkhazian, 32 – Armenian and 11 – Georgian.<sup>41</sup>

The case of Armenian schools is similar to the Georgian schools’ case. According to the survey, conducted in 2011 by the Abkhaz, the number of ethnic Georgians was 46,000 and of ethnic Armenians – 42,000.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Rimple, Paul, and Temo Bardzimashvili. *Abkhazia: Gali Pupils Dodge Russian Border Guards for Education in Georgian*. EURASIANET.org. N.p. 22 December 2010. Web.

<sup>28</sup> *А накануне сопредседатели Женевских дискуссий посетили Галский район*. YouTube. 19 February 2015. Web.

<sup>29</sup> *Школы Галского района перейдут на абхазскую программу обучения*. Sputnik Абхазия. N.p. 21 February 2015. Web.

<sup>30</sup> *Пресс-конференция и.о. главы Администрации Гальского района Темура Надарая*. YouTube. 28 March 2015. Web.

<sup>31</sup> *Президент Абхазии в Галском районе. Все об отношениях Абхазии и России*. N.p. 12 March 2015. Web.

<sup>32</sup> *Какова ситуация в Гальских школах сегодня*. YouTube. 10 December 2014. Web.

<sup>33</sup> *Гальский район 07.08.2015*. YouTube. n.d. Web. 8 August 2015.

<sup>34</sup> *Адлейба, Стелла. Грузинские учебники в Гале: сепаратисты и русский медведь. Все об отношениях Абхазии и России*. N.p., 19 March 2015. Web.

<sup>35</sup> Human Rights Watch. *Living in Limbo; The Rights of Ethnic Georgian Returnees to the Gali District of Abkhazia*. 2011.

<sup>36</sup> Interview with Elene Agladze; interview with Ketevan Tsikhelashvili.

<sup>37</sup> Interview with Elene Agladze.

<sup>38</sup> СТАТЬЯ 6. *Государственный язык Республики Абхазия – абхазский, Конституция Республики Абхазия, Народное Собрание-Парламент Республики Абхазия*.

<sup>39</sup> СТАТЬЯ 7. *Язык воспитания и обучения, ЗРА "О Государственном языке Республики Абхазия", Народное Собрание-Парламент Республики Абхазия*.

<sup>40</sup> Comai, Giorgio. *In Abkhazia, worried about the language law*. Osservatorio Balcani E Caucaso. N.p., 16 ბოქმბერი 2011. Web.

<sup>41</sup> Giorgio Comai, Bernardo Venturi. *Language and education laws in multi-ethnic de facto states: the cases of Abkhazia and Transnistria Nationalities Papers*. Vol. 43, Iss. 6. 2015.

<sup>42</sup> *НАСЕЛЕНИЕ АБХАЗИИ; ТЕРРИТОРИЯ СОВРЕМЕННОЙ АБХАЗИИ (1886 г.). ЭТНО-КАВКАЗ*.

Nevertheless the preference in the number of population, the number of Armenian schools exceeded the number of Georgian schools three times. Even more, in these schools, it is allowed to carry out educational process using books issued in Armenia<sup>43</sup>. These books are written in the eastern Armenian dialect, widespread in the Republic of Armenia, not in the western Armenian (Homshetsi) – a vernacular used by Armenians in Abkhazia, which is certainly different from standard Armenian.<sup>44 45</sup>

The case of Armenian schools rectifies arguments of the Abkhaz and Russian sides and reveals that Georgian are in a discriminated condition, as compared to other ethnic groups living in Abkhazia. The fact that all school graduates in Gali receive a diploma with indication of their actual native language, unlike the graduates of all 31 schools in Gali that have “Russian” written in their diplomas as a native language, proves the aforementioned.<sup>46</sup>

Hence, it can be freely said that the education policy of the Abkhaz Administration is to discard Georgian language from Gali district and substitute it with Russian completely. The restriction of Georgian language, as the native language of Gali population and the most important element of ethnic Georgians can be freely assessed as a restriction of the right to education and ethnic-based discrimination. Right to education recognized by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (article 26)<sup>47 48</sup>, International Pact on Social Economic and Cultural Rights (article 13)<sup>49</sup>, Convention on the Rights of the Child (article 29)<sup>50</sup> and the Additional Protocol of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (article 2)<sup>51</sup> etc.

This opinion is further confirmed by the reduction of the hours allocated for Georgian language and literature, in parallel with the transfer to Russian language. In this regard, the situation is as follows:

- In the schools of the villages attached to Ochamchire and Tkvarcheli districts, no hours have been allocated for Georgian language and literature since 2008. The reduction of hours was followed by firing of 26 teachers of Georgian language and literature;
- In 2015-2016 academic year, in the schools of the so-called “upper zone” of Gali district, only one hour is allocated for Georgian language and literature (two hours were allocated in 2014-2015 academic year);
- In 2015-2016 academic year, in the primary and V-VII classes of schools of the so-called “lower zone” of Gali district, a total of three hours are allocated for Georgian language and literature,

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<sup>43</sup> Comai Giorgio (2013), *Sovereignty Conflicts and Minority Protection: the Case of Abkhazia in Self-determination and sovereignty in Europe*. Angelo Longo, Ravenna. [ISBN 9788880637608]

<sup>44</sup> Comai, Giorgio. *Abkhazia's Armenians, Multilingualism Is the Future*. Osservatorio Balcani E Caucaso. N.p. 30 Nov. 2011. Web.

<sup>45</sup> Дмитрий Статейнов, *Моя дочка знала всего три слова на армянском - море, цыплёнок и рыба. Все об отношениях России и Абхазии*. 10 September 2015.

<sup>46</sup> *Special Report of the Public Ombudsman of Georgia, Right to Education in Gali District: News of the 2015-2016 Academic Year and Related Novelities*. Tbilisi. 2015

<sup>47</sup> *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. United Nations. 1948.

<sup>48</sup> It is noteworthy that Abkhaz constitution too recognizes the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

<sup>49</sup> *International Pact on Social Economic and Cultural Rights*. United Nations. 1966.

<sup>50</sup> *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. United Nations. 1989.

<sup>51</sup> *Additional Protocol of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms*. Council of Europe. 1952.

whilst only one hour is allocated to the VIII-XI classes (in 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 academic years, these indicators were at least twice higher).<sup>52 53 54</sup>

It should also be noted that the education process is not allowed in Georgian in none of the preschool institutions of Gali district (Gali (2), Saberio (2), Mziuri, Okumi, Sida and Zemo Barghebi kindergartens).<sup>55</sup>

### Movement across the Dividing Line

Children, living in villages near the administrative border of Gali district, often prefer to study in schools of Zugdidi municipality with the aim of receiving quality education in their native language.<sup>56</sup> Right after entering the territory controlled by Georgia, they are served by the buses provided by the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia.<sup>57</sup> However, the situation has become alarming in this regard, too; appearance of Russian border guards on the dividing line and restrictions imposed by the Gali Administration since 2008 significantly decreased the movement of pupils across the dividing line (table #3).<sup>58</sup>

**Table #3: Movement of Pupils across the Dividing Line**

Direction and Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
From Khurcha Village of Zugdidi Municipality to the Public School of Nabakevi Village of Gali District	40	22	13	7	5
From Saberio Village of Gali District to the Tskoushi Village of Tsalenjikha Municipality	-	-	48	18	11
From Saberio Village of Gali District to the Pakhulani Village in Tsalenjikha Municipality	-	-	13	12	12
From Otobaia Village of Gali District to the Ganmukhuri Village of Zugdidi Municipality	-	-	34	18	15

**Source:** *Special Report of the Public Ombudsman.*

<sup>52</sup> *Special Report of the Public Ombudsman of Georgia, Right to Education in Gali District: News of the 2015-2016 Academic Year and Related Novelties.* Tbilisi. 2015.

<sup>53</sup> *Report on the Condition of Protection of Human Rights and Freedoms in Georgia; 2014.* Public Ombudsman of Georgia. Tbilisi. 2014.

<sup>54</sup> *Какова ситуация в Гальских школах сегодня.* YouTube. 10 December 2014. Web.

<sup>55</sup> The information has been provided by the Gali district Educational Resource-Center.

<sup>56</sup> Rimple, Paul, and Temo Bardzimashvili. *Abkhazia: Gali Pupils Dodge Russian Border Guards for Education in Georgian.* EURASIANET.org. N.p. 22 December 2010. Web.

<sup>57</sup> *Special Report of the Public Ombudsman of Georgia, Right to Education in Gali District: News of the 2015-2016 Academic Year and Related Novelties.* Tbilisi. 2015.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

## Participation in Unified National Exams

The situation regarding enrolment in higher education institutions is as follows: in general, half of the graduates of Gali district schools either do not continue studies or apply to Sokhumi's Abkhaz State University, whilst the rest prefers to study in Georgian higher education institutions (table #4). Unfortunately, it has been impossible to accurately determine the number of graduates that applied and continued studies in Sokhumi's Abkhaz State University in the last several years, using open sources. However, based on available information, if the number of pupils going to the Abkhaz State University did not exceed 12 in 2012-2013, in 2015 it reached 62<sup>59</sup>, from which 24 are studying on a special free program.<sup>60</sup>

We should estimate that in parallel with the ban on Georgian language, number of those from Gali district who wish to get enrolled in Sokhumi's Abkhaz State University, will increase even more. If the entrants will have received general education in Russian, they will prefer continuing studies in Russian, rather than in universities of Georgia, in Georgian.<sup>61</sup> Several factors facilitate this, including the fact that a concession system is on for the graduates from Gali; since 2002, graduates from Gali schools have been getting enrolled in universities based on interview, not exams. In 2014, a free Gali-Sokhumi bus was launched for these students.<sup>62</sup> Moreover, citizens of Abkhazia enjoy quotas in Russian high education institutions that is considered as a very good opportunity for career growth for many.<sup>63</sup> It is also noteworthy that the Abkhaz Administration does not recognize the education received in Georgia that restricts the option of returning to Gali and working there for the graduates of Georgian universities.

It is noteworthy that the number of those who would like to continue studies in the rest of Georgia has slightly decreased already. Table #4 shows that if 65% of graduates registered for the Unified National Exams in 2010-2012, the number decreased by 7% in the following three years.

**Table #4: Participation in Unified National Exams**

Years	Number of Graduates	Number of Registered as Entrants and %		Number of Enrolled and %	
2010	315	192	61.0%	90	46.9%
2011	309	198	64.1%	126	63.6%
2012	223	156	70.0%	71	45.5%
2013	239	145	60.7%	60	41.4%
2014	272	147	54.0%	86	58.5%
2015	323	190	58.8%	90	47.4%

**Source:** Gali Resource-Center

<sup>59</sup> Анаида Фарманян, Темур Надарая. *Галский район из категории одного из самых сложных районов по криминогенной ситуации стал одним из самых спокойных*. Чегемская правда, 12 November 2015.

<sup>60</sup> *Conciliation Resources, The Realm of the Possible Finding ways forward in the Georgian-Abkhaz context: People in the Gali region*. June 2015. [http://www.c-r.org/downloads/CR\\_The-Realm-of-the-possible\\_Gal-i\\_43\\_webEn.pdf](http://www.c-r.org/downloads/CR_The-Realm-of-the-possible_Gal-i_43_webEn.pdf)

<sup>61</sup> The statistic of registered for the Unified National Exams this year confirms this, too: the number of graduates of Russian schools significantly fell behind the number of graduates of Georgian schools (so-called "upper zone" – 77, "lower zone" – 94, villages assigned to Tkvarcheli – 18, Achigvara - 1). The information has been provided by the Gali Educational Resource-Center.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Markko Kallonen. *Conflict Affected Peoples' Access to Education: IDP Pupils in Georgia*. Università di Bologna, 2014.



Even though the Government of Georgia is unable to fully implement its education policy in Gali district, its direct responsibility is to counter the execution of this decision and mitigate the negative consequences stemming from the forceful and spontaneous transfer of the education process to Russian language.

The counter steps from the Government of Georgia require complexity. On the one hand, all international political and legal mechanisms of solving the problem should be used. On the other hand, practical decisions should be made in order to keep providing the local Georgians with quality education in their native language.

The next several chapters review in details the legal and institutional framework of the government of Georgia towards the education institutions located in Gali district. They concern programs of certain ministries and departments and recommendations are presented in order to improve their activities.

## Legal Framework

The State Strategy Towards the Occupied Territories – Engagement Through Cooperation – and its action plan approved in 2010 by the Government of Georgia are two of the most important documents of the state policy concerning the occupied territories. The policy of the Government conducted in relation to the schools in Gali is implemented in the framework of these two documents.

The state strategy towards the occupied territories prioritizes the issue of receiving education in native language and concerns the provision of education in native language as well as the availability of Georgian textbooks for the Georgian-speaking population.<sup>64</sup> Moreover, according to the strategy, joint scientific researches and academic study programs (including professional programs) should be promoted between the population left on the other side of the division line and the rest of Georgia.<sup>65</sup> In addition, the Government should provide for the production of textbooks on Abkhazian and Ossetian languages and the youth living in Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia should receive opportunities to continue studies in the rest of Georgia or abroad.<sup>66</sup>

As for the action plan of the engagement strategy, the document concerns the issue of the availability of education to the population living on the occupied territories, in general and not the education of population in Gali district in native language, in particular.<sup>67</sup> It concerns the possibility to take Unified national Exams in Ossetian and Abkhaz language, recognizing educational certificates, strengthening the field of Abkhazology at Tbilisi State University, development of Georgian and Ossetian textbooks for primary classes, producing special literature for kindergarten tutors etc.<sup>68</sup>

It should be noted that the state strategy and, especially, the action plan, do not reflect the severity of the problem existing on the territory of Gali district. The prioritization of receiving education on native language and the issue of providing Georgian textbooks should be clearly assessed in a positive light,

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<sup>64</sup> Government of Georgia. *State Strategy Towards the Occupied Territories: Engagement Through Cooperation*. [http://gov.ge/files/224\\_31227\\_132584\\_SMR-Strategy-ge\(1\).pdf](http://gov.ge/files/224_31227_132584_SMR-Strategy-ge(1).pdf)

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Government of Georgia. *Action Plan of the Engagement Strategy*. [http://gov.ge/files/224\\_31227\\_382248\\_action\\_plan\\_ge.pdf](http://gov.ge/files/224_31227_382248_action_plan_ge.pdf)

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

however, the action plan is subject to criticism, as it refers to all ethnic Georgians living on the occupied territory in the general context and not as separate target groups. Therefore, the action plan does not have any initiatives precisely for them, based on their needs. Naturally, in case of a full enactment of all activities included in the action plan, the ethnic Georgians will benefit as well, however, as their human rights situation of local Georgians is rather different from other groups living on the occupied territories, an individual approach is necessary.

**Therefore, it is important to, at least, illustrate in the engagement strategy action plan the mechanisms and programs that the Government of Georgia is implementing and/or will implement for providing ethnic Georgians across the dividing line with quality education on their mother tongue.**

## Institutional Framework

### Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia

Ministry of Education and Science is implementing several programs for Gali district schools. The most important of all is the *Program of Financial Aid for Teachers and Administrative-Technical Staff on the Occupied Territories* that includes the financial (social) aid for the beneficiaries (see Table #1) living on the occupied territories with the following amounts: a) Directors – GEL 210 monthly; b) Teachers – GEL 200 monthly; c) Technical Staff – GEL 130 monthly.<sup>69</sup>

The Government started providing financial aid to the teachers and technical staff in Gali in 2001. In 1994-2001, the schools did not receive funding, whilst in 2001-2004, the aid was GEL 200 for teachers and GEL 150 for technical staff.<sup>70</sup> For the following three years, the financial aid for the teachers was GEL 120 and GEL 80 for technical staff.<sup>71</sup> With the current form and amount, the program was approved<sup>72</sup> in 2008 and has not been amended since then.

The Ministry of Education and Culture of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia and the Provisional Administration of the Former South Ossetian Autonomous Republic (for their respective domains) are responsible for making the list of beneficiaries of the program. As for the two public schools in Gali district (#13 Public School in Nabakevi and #16 Public School in Meore Otobaia), the teachers of these schools are funded via voucher system.<sup>73</sup>

The existence of this program is unambiguously a positive fact. However, it is also noteworthy that the funds allocated by the state for the teachers in Gali are more of a symbolic character, rather than a real financial aid. The case is that the funds allocated for them are much less than the salaries of teachers living in Georgia proper that places them in an unfair condition. Considering the conditions that the teachers in Gali have to work in, leaving the existing amounts unchanged is unacceptable. However, whilst defining

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<sup>69</sup> Webpage of the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia. *Current General Education Programs*. <http://mes.gov.ge/content.php?id=5887&lang=geo>

<sup>70</sup> Information provided by the Gali district Educational Resource-Center.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> *Education near the Dividing line: Availability of Education in Georgia Along the Dividing line and for the Population Living on Occupied Territories*. Institute of Nationalism and Conflict Research and Sinergy Network. Tbilisi. 2015.

<sup>73</sup> Information provided by the Gali district Educational Resource-Center.

the new amounts, several factors have to be considered such as teachers' professional qualification and work experience so that the interests of both young and elderly teachers are observed.

- **Therefore, it is preferred to develop a special formula for determining the financial aid that will, on the one hand, reserve the basic fixed aid with the existing amount for all and, on the other hand, will fairly consider, to the extent possible, teachers' professional qualification and work experience when determining bonuses above the fixed amount.**

In parallel with the financial aid, the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia, via National Assessment and Examinations Center, implements the subprogram – *Training Gali District Teachers and Preparing Entrants for the Unified National Exams*.

The subprogram includes training of teachers in the following subjects: 1) Georgian Language and Literature; 2) Russian Language; 3) History; 4) Geography; 5) Mathematics; 6) General Skills; 7) English; 8) Biology. The duration of the subprogram is three months.<sup>74</sup> After the three-months training, Gali district teachers prepare pupils from their district for three months.<sup>75</sup> Entrants and teachers are given examination collections and preparation manuals.

In 2005-2013, entrants from Gali were preparing for the Unified National Exams in the framework of the subprogram of the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia – *Preparation Center for the Entrants from the Occupied Territories*.<sup>76</sup> The budget of the subprogram in 2010 and 2013 was GEL 6,000.<sup>77 78</sup> Due to the restricted movement across the dividing line, the approach was changed and now the teachers trained in Zugdidi prepare pupils in four different places on the territory of Gali district.<sup>79</sup>

In the framework of the given program, in 2015 (2014), entrants and teachers of schools<sup>80</sup> in Gali district were awarded 2,277 (1672) examination collections and auxiliary literature published by the National Examinations Center.<sup>81 82</sup> In parallel, with the aim of training teachers in separate subjects, the center

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<sup>74</sup> Webpage of the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia. *Current General Education Programs*. <http://mes.gov.ge/content.php?id=5878&lang=geo>

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Government of Abkhazia. *Law on the 2013 Budget of Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia*. [http://abkhazia.gov.ge/files/documents/biujeti\\_2013\\_wlis.pdf](http://abkhazia.gov.ge/files/documents/biujeti_2013_wlis.pdf)

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Ministry of Education and Culture of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia. Report 2010. <http://meca.gov.ge/itst/index.php?module=Content-House&action=view&id=1506&lang=geo>

<sup>79</sup> *Education near the Dividing line: Availability of Education in Georgia Along the Dividing line and for the Population Living on Occupied Territories*. Institute of Nationalism and Conflict Research and Sinergy Network. Tbilisi. 2015.

<sup>80</sup> Schools subordinate to the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia that are located in the rest of Georgia.

<sup>81</sup> Ministry of Finance of Georgia. 2015 Budget Completion Report. [http://www.mof.ge/images/File/biuj2015\\_6tve/TAVI\\_V.pdf](http://www.mof.ge/images/File/biuj2015_6tve/TAVI_V.pdf)

<sup>82</sup> Ministry of Finance of Georgia. 2014 Budget Completion Report. [http://www.mof.ge/images/File/biuj2014\\_12tve/TAVI\\_V.pdf](http://www.mof.ge/images/File/biuj2014_12tve/TAVI_V.pdf)

employees trained 45 (47) teachers from Gali district that, in turn, prepared up to 450 (up to 450) entrants for the Unified National Exams.<sup>83 84</sup>

The existence of the given program is definitely a positive fact. Therefore:

- **It is necessary to continue and broaden the subprogram – *Training of Teachers and Preparing Entrants for Unified National Exams in Gali District* – so that it includes more entrants and, together with entrants, the pupils from lower classes, as well; the six-month cycle of the program should be implemented twice in a year.**

One more program of the Ministry of Education and Science – *Providing Pupils with Textbooks* – includes Gali district, as well. In 2015-2016, in the framework of the given program, the pupils who are studying in Georgian-speaking schools of the occupied territories (including nine schools bordering Enguri River), will receive officially approved textbooks (together with the schools of other category across Georgia) necessary for receiving education.<sup>85</sup>

Considering that the lack of textbooks is one of the most important problems of the locals<sup>86</sup>, inclusion of Gali district in the program - *Providing Pupils with Textbooks* – is an absolutely positive fact. However, it is unclear, why does the program not include the remaining schools of Gali district, whilst the second component of the program – *Providing with Auxiliary Literature* – does not cover any school of Gali district.

Due to the covert character of export of Georgian textbooks to the occupied territories, it was impossible to establish during the research, whether the school textbooks were exported this year. However, we should estimate that during the last years, massive export of textbooks did not take place.<sup>87</sup>

- **Therefore, it is necessary to cover all 31 schools of Gali district with both components (school textbooks and auxiliary literature) of the program – *Providing Pupils with Textbooks*.**

***The Social Program for Pupils (Bachelors) Enrolled in Accredited HEIs after the Unified National Exams*** includes the Gali district students as well. In the framework of this program, students that were studying in the last two years and received the General Education Document in the general education institutions located in Gali district and successfully passed the Unified National Exams, have their tuition covered.<sup>88</sup> In 2015-2016 academic year, 87 students were funded with this program and in 2014 – 82 (table #5).

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<sup>83</sup> Ministry of Finance of Georgia. 2015 Budget Completion Report. [http://www.mof.ge/images/File/biuj2015\\_6tve/TAVI\\_V.pdf](http://www.mof.ge/images/File/biuj2015_6tve/TAVI_V.pdf)

<sup>84</sup> Ministry of Finance of Georgia. 2015 Budget Completion Report. [http://www.mof.ge/images/File/biuj2015\\_6tve/TAVI\\_V.pdf](http://www.mof.ge/images/File/biuj2015_6tve/TAVI_V.pdf)

<sup>85</sup> Webpage of the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia. *Current General Education Programs*. <http://mes.gov.ge/content.php?id=5892&lang=geo>

<sup>86</sup> *Education near the Dividing line: Availability of Education in Georgia Along the Dividing line and for the Population Living on Occupied Territories*. Institute of Nationalism and Conflict Research and Sinergy Network. Tbilisi. 2015.

<sup>87</sup> The last massive export of textbooks took place in 2009; then, the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia allocated 37,637 officially approved textbooks for I-VIII classes for 31 schools in Gali district. Information provided by the Gali district Educational Resource-Center.

<sup>88</sup> Webpage of Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia. *Current Higher Education Programs*. <http://mes.gov.ge/content.php?id=4791&lang=geo>

**Table #5. Engagement in National Exams and Students' Social Program**

Years	Number of Graduates	Number of Registered Entrants	Number of Enrolled	Funded by Study Grant of the Social Program
2010	315	192	90	83
2011	309	198	126	77
2012	223	156	71	71
2013	239	145	60	60
2014	272	147	86	82
2015	323	190	90	87

*Source: Gali Resource-Center*

Considering the level of poverty in Gali district, the existence of the Students' Social Program is a definitely positive event, nevertheless insufficient. Apart from the tuition, students require funds for food, accommodation, transportation, clothing and books that their parents are often unable to afford.

In 2015, with the initiative of the Government of Georgia, construction of a 300-bed dormitory for the inhabitants of the occupied territories and the socially vulnerable students was started<sup>89</sup> that is clearly a step forward and will completely satisfy the students that come to Tbilisi for their studies. Although, the problem of other costs and the accommodation of the students living in other cities still exists. Therefore:

- **It is desirable that the Ministry of Education and Science provides dormitories for the students enrolled in other cities' universities as well, apart from Tbilisi;**
- **It is desirable that the Ministry of Education and Science addresses the Administration of the President of Georgia to form a scholarship program for the pupils living on the occupied territory, with a special priority on those who study pedagogics (with the condition that the university graduates will spend some time in Gali).<sup>90</sup>**

*Additional recommendations to the Ministry of Education and Science:*

- **Discuss the possibility of establishing a special program that will allow the pupils of final grades (XII)<sup>91</sup> in Gali district to spend the last year of their secondary school in schools on the Georgian-controlled territory and live there, too.**
- **Provide for a maximal involvement of pupils and students from Gali district in all other general and higher education programs;**
- **Form a strategy for training new teachers in Gali together with the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia and Office of the State Minister of Georgia for Reconciliation and Civic Equality.**

<sup>89</sup> Ministry of Finance of Georgia. 2015 Budget Completion Report. [http://www.mof.ge/images/File/biuj2015\\_6tve/TAVI\\_V.pdf](http://www.mof.ge/images/File/biuj2015_6tve/TAVI_V.pdf)

<sup>90</sup> With the aim of substituting the existing teachers' corps with young people

<sup>91</sup> School studies last 11 years in Abkhazia.

## Ministry of Education and Culture of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia (in Exile)

Ministry of Education and Culture of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia provides for conducting a unified state policy in the sphere of education on the general education institutions of Abkhazia, including 13 public schools of Abkhazia (based outside of Abkhazia) and 31 schools of Gali district.

In the recent years, Ministry of Education and Culture of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia was carrying out activities based on the 2012-2015 action plan. The document laid down the ways of mutually accepted cooperation between the structural units of the ministry and combined the long-term views and goals existing in the different spheres. The existence of the action plan can be assessed in a positive light.

In Gali district, Ministry of Education and Culture of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia implements the program – ***Financial Aid to the Preschool Tutors, Art School Teachers and Administrative-Technical Staff in Gali District*** – that provides for GEL 100 aid to the teachers (65) and GEL 80 aid to the technical workers (49).<sup>92</sup>

In general, it should be noted that the conditions in kindergartens located on the territory of Gali district did not have such international and local publicity, as the ongoing processes in schools. Unfortunately, the same can be said about the Government; the only acting instrument of the Government is the subprogram *Financial Aid to the Preschool Tutors, Art School Teachers and Administrative-Technical Staff in Gali District* and it only includes financial aid.

A territorial body of the Ministry of Education and Culture of Abkhazia - Gali District Educational Resource Center facilitates the implementation of educational policy in Gali district. During the pre-war period and in 1994-2004, the Gali district educational system was governed by the Education Department of the Gali District Administration and by Education Office of Gali in 2004-2006.<sup>93</sup> In 2007, based on the Education Office of Gali, the Gali District Educational Resource Center was created. As of today, the resource-center's office employs eight employees<sup>94</sup> and its main function is to communicate with all directors and teachers in all kinds of educational and preschool institutions and to monitor and research the ongoing processes there.<sup>95</sup> Therefore, Gali Resource-Center has the clearest picture of the situation in Gali and the needs of the local teachers and pupils.

**Table #6: Budget of Ministry of Education and Culture of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia**

	<b>Budget of Ministry of Education and Culture of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia</b>	<b>Financial Aid to the Tutors and Art School Teachers in Gali District</b>	<b>Budget of Gali District Resource-Center</b>
2009	2,789,697	84,180	85,327
2010	2,794,144	93,600	93,604
2011	2,697,128	97,200	102,434
2012	2,693,171	97,440	106,770
2013	2,703,243	123,200	115,033

<sup>92</sup> Information provided by Gali district Educational Resource-Center.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Decree of 2 April 2007 #145/B<sup>1</sup> of the Minister of Education and Culture of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia, Temporary Provision of Gali district Educational Resource-Center.

2014	3,024,079	125,100	122,990
2015	3,064,091	125,100	122,040

*Source: Budget of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia*

Considering the aforementioned, we believe that:

- **It is necessary to formulate a unified action plan for the education policy towards the occupied territories, together with the Ministry of Education of Georgia;**
- **It is necessary to establish promotion and reward mechanisms of Gali district teachers;**
- ***Financial Aid to the Preschool Tutors, Art School Teachers and Administrative-Technical Staff in Gali District* subprogram must continue and funds must be increased to even the financial aid of kindergarten tutors and administration representatives to the standards existing in other kindergartens in Georgia;**
- **It is desirable to find ways and funds to provide Gali district kindergartens with children's literature and children's films in Georgian;**
- **It is desirable to increase budgetary funding to the Gali Educational Resource-Center so that the latter could independently and regularly conduct trainings, seminars and other events in accordance with needs of the teachers and pupils;**
- **It is desirable to establish a scholarship program for the successful students with a special priority on those who study pedagogics (with the condition that the university graduates will spend some time in Gali).**

#### [Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia and Office of the State Minister of Georgia for Reconciliation and Civic Equality](#)

Raising awareness and mainstreaming the issue of restriction of education in native language in Gali on the international level is one of the most important duties of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia and the Office of the State Minister of Georgia for Reconciliation and Civic Equality.

The issue is a permanent part of the Geneva talks' agenda that is the most important format of discussion on Georgia's territorial integrity and on the consequences of the Russo-Georgian war and the completion of commitments taken by Russia. Discussing problems in this format is important due to two factors. First, Geneva talks are the sole format of dialogue between Abkhaz leaders and Georgian Government representatives and second – there is an opportunity to raise the issue on the international level. Geneva talks are co-chaired by the representatives of EU, UN and OSCE, whilst the representatives of Georgia, the United States, Russia, Tskhinvali and Sokhumi are also present.

The issue of restriction of education in native language has been the main topic of several last negotiation rounds. On 18 February 2015, to prepare the 31<sup>st</sup> round of the negotiations and to study the existing situation, the co-chairs of Geneva talks visited Gali district. The issue of studying Georgian language in Gali district was of special interest to them; diplomats first met with the Head of the Administration of Gali district and then visited Tagiloni and Nabakevi schools.<sup>96 97</sup>

<sup>96</sup> *Представители сопредседателей Женевских дискуссий в Галском районе*. YouTube. 19 February 2015. Web.

<sup>97</sup> *Сопредседатели Женевских дискуссий посетили школы Гальского района*. YouTube. 21 February 2015. Web.



The issue of restriction of education in native language in Gali is often raised by Georgian diplomats at international tribunals.<sup>98</sup> From May 2015, the MFA of Georgia has been processing and publishing weekly reports on the human rights situation on the occupied territories.<sup>99</sup>

Overall, the activities carried out by the MFA of Georgia and Office of the State Minister of Georgia for Reconciliation and Civic Equality with the aim of mainstreaming the issue are adequate. We believe that:

- **Consultations with EU, its Special Representative in South Caucasus and other co-chairs of Geneva talks should be continued with the aim of putting pressure on the Abkhaz and Russian sides;**
- **Continue raising the issue at every possible tribune (UN General Assembly and Committees, Council of Europe, OSCE etc.)**
- **Ministry of Foreign Affairs should ask the High Commissioner of OSCE on National Minorities to study and evaluate the situation directly on the territory of Gali district (through a visit or a separate report of the HR, as in Moldova case - *The Moldovan-Administered Latin-Script Schools in Transdnistria; Background, Current Situation, Analysis and Recommendations*);**
- **MFA should ask the respective institutions of UN to study and evaluate the situation directly on the territory of Gali district;**
- **MFA should do its best to reflect the situation in Abkhazia in the resolution of the European Parliament (desirably, as a separate document, as in Moldova case - *Right to education in the Transnistrian region*);**
- **MFA should provide for an adequate reflection of the issue of restriction of education in native language in Gali district in the reports of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe concerning the Human Rights Situation on the Occupied Territories of Georgia;**
- **MFA should ask international human rights protection organizations (*Human Rights Watch; International Crisis Group; Amnesty International etc.*) to study and evaluate the situation directly on the territory of Gali district;**
- **Discuss the legal ways of solving the problem.**

## Parliament of Georgia

Temporary Commission on Territorial Integrity has existed in the Parliament of Georgia for several years and its aim has been to evaluate and coordinate actions aimed at restoring the territorial integrity and to establish a parliamentary control over them.

The commission is actively engaged in the discussion of the events taking place on the occupied territories. However, it should sadly be admitted that the last meeting of the temporary commission concerning the

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<sup>98</sup> Interview with Elene Agladze.

<sup>99</sup> Quarterly reports of the MFA of Georgia on the human rights situation on the occupied territories of Georgia. Webpage of MFA of Georgia.



condition of the educational institutions on the occupied territories took place almost two years ago, on 19 February 2014.<sup>100</sup>

Raising the issue of the restriction of Georgian on the territory of Gali district by the MPs during plenary sessions and committee meetings is rare. Even more, the given issue has not been reflected in any resolution, directive or statement of the Parliament. Therefore, considering its mandate, the Parliament should:

- **Necessarily ask international human rights protection organizations (Human Rights Watch; International Crisis Group; Amnesty International etc.) to study and evaluate the situation directly on the territory of Gali district;**
- **Necessarily arrange a meeting of the Temporary Commission for Restoring Territorial Integrity on the issue of restricting the native language in Gali district;**
- **Desirably respond to the restriction of native language in Gali district with a statement or a resolution.**

### Public Ombudsman of Georgia

Human rights situation in the conflict-affected regions was a separate chapter in the Public Ombudsman's 2014 Annual Report. One of its the sub-chapters concerned the right to receiving education in native language in the occupied territories.<sup>101</sup> Moreover, in November 2015, the Public Ombudsman published a special report on the human rights issues in Gali district. The report reviews several cases of violating the right and availability of receiving education in native language since the war period until today and the respective legal assessment.<sup>102</sup>

Availability of unbiased and correct information on the legal situation of ethnic Georgians in Gali district is a crucial issue. The activity of the Public Ombudsman of Georgia in this regard is necessary and worth a positive appraisal. Therefore, we conclude that the Public Ombudsman should:

- **Necessarily continue describing the human rights situation in the conflict-affected regions in the annual reports and consider publishing the special report on a regular basis;**
- **Necessarily ask international human rights protection organizations (Human Rights Watch; International Crisis Group; Amnesty International etc.) to study and evaluate the situation directly on the territory of Gali district;**
- **Desirably support initiatives for legal solution of the problem.**

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<sup>100</sup> Webpage of the Parliament of Georgia. Unified transcript #33 of the meeting between the Temporary Commission for Restoring Territorial Integrity and the committees of Education, Science, Culture and Diaspora and Caucasus Affairs.

<sup>101</sup> Report on the Condition of Protection of Human Rights and Freedoms in Georgia; 2014. Public Ombudsman of Georgia. Tbilisi. 2014.

<sup>102</sup> *Special Report of the Public Ombudsman of Georgia, Right to Education in Gali District: News of the 2015-2016 Academic Year and Related Novelties.* Tbilisi. 2015

## Recommendations

Even though the Government of Georgia is unable to control Gali district, the analysis of Georgian legal and institutional framework reveals that the activities carried out by the Government are adequate to the challenges caused by the restriction of Georgian language on the territory of Gali district.

The Government of Georgia does its best to respectively mainstream the problem both internationally and locally and mitigate the negative consequences stemming from the forceful and spontaneous transfer of the education process to Russian language. Nevertheless, we believe that by improving the existing activities and adopting new initiatives, the Government will undertake much more efficient policy. Therefore, we offer the following recommendations to the:

### **Government at large**

At least, illustrate the mechanisms and programs in the Action Plan of Engagement Strategy that Georgia implements and/or should implement in order to provide the ethnic Georgians across the dividing line with quality education in the native language.

### **Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia**

Develop a special formula for determining the financial aid that will, on the one hand, reserve the basic fixed aid with the existing amount for all and, on the other hand, will fairly consider, to the extent possible, teachers' professional qualification and work experience when determining bonuses above the fixed amount.

Continue and broaden the subprogram – Training of Teachers and Preparing Entrants for Unified National Exams in Gali District – so that it includes more entrants and, together with entrants, the pupils from lower classes, as well; the six-month cycle of the program should be implemented twice in a year.

Include all 31 schools of Gali district in both components (school textbooks and auxiliary literature) of the Providing Pupils with Textbooks program.

Provide dormitory not only to the students arriving in Tbilisi, but those enrolled in other cities' universities in Georgia.

Address the Administration of the President of Georgia to form a scholarship program for the school pupils living on the occupied territory, with a special priority on those who study pedagogics (with the condition that the university graduates will spend some time in Gali).

Discuss the possibility of establishing a special program that will allow the pupils of final grades (XII) in Gali district to spend the last year of their secondary school in schools on the Georgian-controlled territory and live there, too.

Provide for a maximal involvement of pupils and students from Gali district in all other general and higher education programs;

Form a strategy for training new teachers in Gali together with the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia and the Office of the State Minister of Georgia for Reconciliation and Civic Equality.

### **Ministry of Education and Culture of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia (in Exile)**

It is necessary to formulate a unified action plan for the education policy towards the occupied territories, together with the Ministry of Education of Georgia;

It is necessary to establish promotion and awarding mechanisms of Gali district teachers;

Financial Aid to the Preschool Tutors, Art School Teachers and Administrative-Technical Staff in Gali District subprogram must continue and funds must be raised to even the financial aid of kindergarten tutors and administration representatives to the standards existing in other kindergartens in Georgia;

It is desirable to find ways and funds to provide Gali district kindergartens with children's literature and children's films in Georgian;

It is desirable to increase budgetary funding to the Gali Educational Resource-Center so that the latter could independently and regularly conduct trainings, seminars and other events in accordance with needs of the teachers and pupils;

It is desirable to establish a scholarship program for the successful students with a special priority on those who study pedagogics (with the condition that the university graduates will spend some time in Gali).

### **Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia and Office of the State Minister of Georgia for Reconciliation and Civic Equality**

Consultations with EU, its Special Representative in South Caucasus and other co-chairs of Geneva talks should be continued with the aim of putting pressure on the Abkhaz and Russian sides;

Continue raising the issue at every possible tribune (UN General Assembly and Committees, Council of Europe, OSCE etc.)

MFA should ask the High Commissioner of OSCE on National Minorities to study and evaluate the situation directly on the territory of Gali district (through a visit or a separate report of the HR, as in Moldova case - The Moldovan-Administered Latin-Script Schools in Transdnistria; Background, Current Situation, Analysis and Recommendations);

MFA should ask the respective institutions of UN to study and evaluate the situation directly on the territory of Gali district;

MFA should do its best to reflect the situation in Abkhazia in the resolution of the European Parliament (desirably, as a separate document, as in Moldova case - Right to education in the Transnistrian region);

MFA should provide for an adequate reflection of the issue of restriction of education in native language in Gali district in the reports of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe concerning the Human Rights Situation on the Occupied Territories of Georgia;

MFA should ask international human rights protection organizations (Human Rights Watch; International Crisis Group; Amnesty International etc.) to study and evaluate the situation directly on the territory of Gali district.

Discuss the legal ways of solving the problem.

### **Parliament of Georgia**

Ask international human rights protection organizations (Human Rights Watch; International Crisis Group; Amnesty International etc.) to study and evaluate the situation directly on the territory of Gali district;

Arrange a meeting of the Temporary Commission for Restoring Territorial Integrity on the issue of restricting the native language in Gali district;

Respond to the restriction of native language in Gali district with a statement or a resolution.

### **Public Ombudsman of Georgia**

Continue describing the human rights situation in the conflict-affected regions in the annual reports and consider publishing the special report on a regular basis;

Ask international human rights protection organizations (Human Rights Watch; International Crisis Group; Amnesty International etc.) to study and evaluate the situation directly on the territory of Gali district;

Desirably support initiatives for legal solution of the problem.