Kids Across the Caucasus

OPEN SOCIETY FOUNDATIONS

Kids Across the Caucasus

Integrating Vulnerable Children and At-Risk Youth in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and the North Caucasus Region of Russia

Education Cooperation Across the Caucasus
An Initiative of the Open Society Foundations
Education Support Program

September 2010

ISBN: 978 1 936133 31 4

Published by

Open Society Foundations
400 West 59th Street
New York, NY 10019 USA
www.soros.org

For more information, contact:

Education Support Program
Open Society Institute–Budapest
Október 6 Street 12
H–1051 Budapest, Hungary
Tel: (+36 1) 882-3100
Fax: (+36 1) 235-6147
Email: espassistance@osi.hu
www.soros.org/initiatives/esp

Cover photo: David Trilling
Photos: Maxim Marmur | North Caucasus region of the Russian Federation
David Trilling | Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia
Union Beryllus | photos on pages 4 and 142
Author: Natasha Yefimov
Editor: Katherine Lapham

Design and layout by Judit Kovács | Createch Ltd.
Printed in Hungary | 2010

Contents

The Caucasus has been a center of exchange and confrontation since the days of the Russian Empire: today, over fifty ethnic groups with distinct languages, histories and customs inhabit the region. Events since the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union have led to social dislocation with decidedly negative consequences for well-being of the region's children. UNHCR estimates that 8 percent of the population in Azerbaijan and 5 percent in Georgia is internally displaced. Many more throughout the region are suffering the physically and psychologically disabling effects of violence. The large proportion of internally displaced, conflict-affected, and disabled children in the region will confound hopes for stability in the region as these vulnerable children grow into marginalized adults. This is all the more serious because the region has a young population.*

How well governments provide meaningful access to education for the most vulnerable is also a powerful marker of open society in the Caucasus region. Education institutions form the context of children's first relationship with society outside their families. In addition to teaching basic skills in reading and math, schools and non-formal education institutions teach children about social relationships and interactions, including transparency or corruption, tolerance and empowerment or discrimination, and respect for individual rights and responsibilities. Children who have experienced the trauma of conflict and displacement are in even greater need of schools and social services that support positive relationships among children, their peers, and society.

Helping national and local governments in the region provide education and social services for vulnerable children is essential to the long-term economic development and political stability of the region. Maintaining stability and fostering economic development in the Caucasus is, in turn, essential to energy security and social cohesion in Europe because the region is a vital transit corridor for newly found energy supplies in the Caspian Basin. This

* Population under 15 years of age: 23 percent in Azerbaijan, 18 percent in Armenia, and 16 percent in Georgia. An estimated 30 percent of the population of the conflict-affected areas of the North Caucasus are under 18 years of age.

perspective transforms the plight of vulnerable children from a humanitarian or human rights issue into a question of long-term economic development, political stability, and European energy security.

There is also significant reason for optimism if we begin to seriously address the threats children face. Local civil society organizations have taken up the challenge of developing models of education and social services for the most vulnerable children that could be incorporated into government programs with minimal investment and technical assistance from the international community. The stories in this book show that caring and commonsense efforts to help children recover from crisis yield results.

International Response

Unfortunately, existing donor assistance, including EU funding programs, are not creating adequate incentives for a shift to joint government and civil society partnerships. On paper the EU's focus on direct budget support through the European Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) is geared toward host government ownership. However, in practice support is often focused at the national level. Too often ENPI takes its cues from national governments and line ministries that are pushing responsibility for education and social services to the local level. In some cases national governments are pursuing different priorities, so they decentralize responsibility without appropriate funding provisions. In other cases, they feel ill-equipped to address the challenges of social service provision because needs can vary within countries.

On the other hand, grant and project-based funding provides vital support to civil society, but often places the responsibility for ensuring sustainability through local government budget support on the shoulders of implementing NGOs. Local governments themselves are struggling to provide access to vital social services, such as education, and are often happy to provide permission or administrative support for projects. However, this approach does not encourage adoption of models or services because it does not build capacity in local governments to scale up successful models of service provision or help advocate for national-level budgetary support.

Importantly, international donor funding also lacks specific focus on vulnerable children. By focusing almost exclusively on questions of human rights and economic development, donor funding is working to address the symptoms of marginalization without addressing the root causes. It is important to provide support for business development, vocational training, and legal advocacy for those at risk. However, such support must work in tandem with support for schools and non-formal education programs. These programs will never achieve their desired effect if we allow a second generation of children to grow up deprived of education experiences that make them feel like participants in a caring, thriving community.

Key Policy Recommendations

- Modify existing funding mechanisms within the European Neighborhood Partnership Instrument to create opportunities for local governments and civil society organizations to apply for EU funding aimed at addressing issues of vulnerable children, including IDPs, children with disabilities, and children affected by conflict.
- Since ensuring that all children, and vulnerable children in particular, have meaningful access to education is vital for protection of human rights, long term security, and economic development, the EU should include a specific focus on supporting vulnerable children as an objective of human rights, security and economic development portfolios.
- Use direct support mechanisms to encourage national governments to replicate, scale up and institutionalize existing, successful models for providing essential education and social services for vulnerable children.
- In addition to the project approach of the NSA/LA funding instrument, consider direct budget support to local governments, instead of or in concert to direct budget support to national governments in areas where local governments are making demonstrated efforts to provide necessary social services.

Katherine Lapham
Senior Program Manager
Education Support Program

Introduction

In the autumn of 2004, for a few weeks, international media showed images of small children, scores of them, dark-haired and fair-skinned, crumpled, blood-spattered, wearing little more than their underclothes, fleeing or being carried from a brick school. The building was an ex-building—exploded, burning, collapsed. A three-day hostage-taking at the start of the school year had ended with more than 300 civilians killed, officially 186 of them kids.

The city and region in the news coverage had been unknown to most audiences: Beslan, North Ossetia. The only familiar name was Russia, the country hit. But the city of Beslan

and School No. 1 stand in a place that extends far beyond Russia's borders—a rugged swath of the former Soviet Union called the Caucasus.

In Russian literature, the Caucasus is romantic and dangerous. In the press, it is "troubled" and "restive." On a map, it is a mountain chain—the east–west spine of a narrow land bridge between the Caspian and Black seas—and the hills and plains that flank it on either side. The Caucasus includes more than 40 ethnic groups and, since the Soviet collapse, four countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia, in their entirety, plus the North Caucasus republics of Russia—all together, an area about the size of Japan.

This relatively small region is famously full of paradoxes. In the words of the historian Charles Knight, the Caucasus is "a part of the world … where acts of selfless hospitality and unspeakable cruelty seem to be two sides of the same cultural coin." Children have not been exempted from this duality: Traditionally, throughout much of the region, they are an object of adoration; at the same time, they have been suffering cruel surprise attacks on a regular basis ever since the Iron Curtain started ripping. In Beslan, the assailants were gun-wielding paramilitaries, a spillover from an Islamist insurgency in nearby Chechnya, so the cameras were rolling. But since 1988, successive generations of kids across the region have been ravaged by at least seven major armed conflicts, natural disaster, systemic post-Soviet poverty, internecine strife, and the churning displacement of more than a million people. They have been subjected en masse to trauma, want and neglect.

Pupils from School No. 34 in Vladikavkaz

Hundreds of thousands of them have lost access to education. This suffering and neglect has not grabbed many headlines.

This report sheds light on half a dozen innovative, locally conceived projects that have succeeded in helping vulnerable children and young people in the region. Each effort manages to weave at-risk youth into the social, cultural, and economic fabric of their communities, and to safeguard them, for a time at least, against further isolation and injustice. The nonprofit organizations spearheading this work receive some of their support from national Soros foundations, and the projects described have gotten funding through an initiative called Education Cooperation Across the Caucasus, launched in 2007 by the Open Society Institute's (OSI) Education Support Program.

The groups profiled here function on a small scale. But the models they've developed—on the ground, by trial and error, sometimes in the harshest of circumstances—hold great promise precisely because they can be built upon or replicated, both

This report sheds light on half a dozen innovative, locally conceived projects that have succeeded in helping vulnerable children and young people in the region

in their countries of origin and in other parts of the Caucasus. The accomplishments of these projects include:

- Addressing the paucity of counseling services in the region by providing traumatized children and their parents with professional, individualized psychological counseling that helps them overcome aggression, anxieties, depression, phobias, and other psychological conditions that disrupt their lives;
- providing children who are refugees, internally displaced or otherwise socioeconomically marginalized with academic support, extracurricular activities and/or effective vocational training;

They have been subjected en masse to trauma, want and neglect. Hundreds of thousands of them have lost access to education. This suffering and neglect has not grabbed many headlines.

- integrating physically and mentally disabled children into mainstream schools;
- designing models of integration and rehabilitation that can be adopted and propagated by local governments;

The Doverie center in Vladikavkaz

- providing basic aid, such as food and clothing, to children living in poverty;
- helping the indigent and undereducated sign up for social welfare programs;
- helping parents re-enter the work force;
- giving parents and other caregivers an opportunity to network and form civic alliances;
- modifying families' attitudes to better equip them to overcome their children's difficulties;
- helping families to get beyond a focus on physical survival and to stimulate and challenge their children at a higher level.

Stability is elusive and less enduring if traumatized, vulnerable children are left, without help, to grow into marginalized adults.

Given the multiple issues and regions vying for the attention and resources of donors, what makes efforts to help vulnerable children in the Caucasus worth furthering?

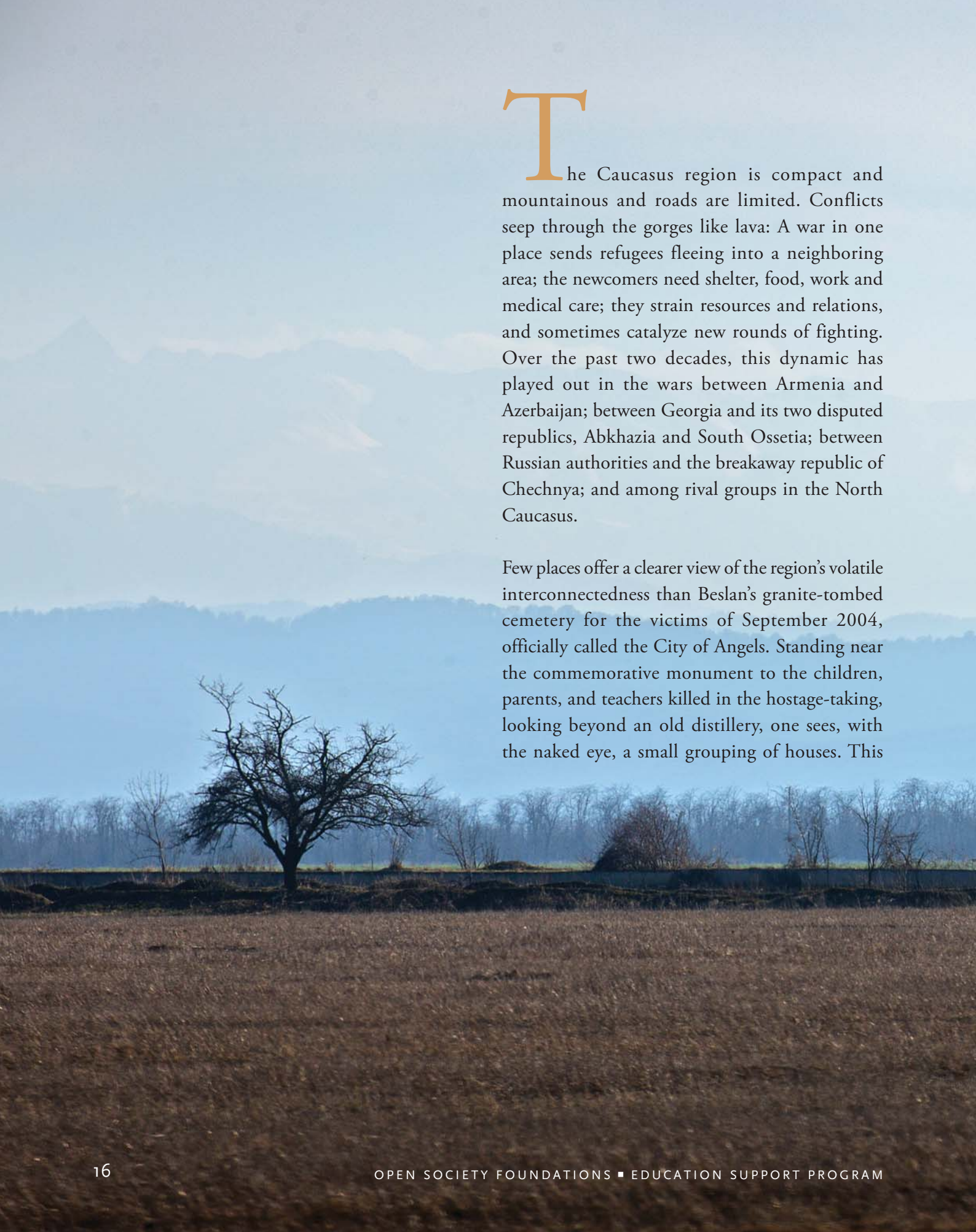
One reason draws on the same beliefs that have motivated people to help children in Beslan or war-ravaged Darfur or quake-stricken Haiti: a belief that children shouldn't be plagued by violence or hunger or suffering; that they shouldn't be tortured, or incapacitated by fear; that they shouldn't have to beg or sleep in the street; that they shouldn't become outcasts because they "talk funny" or walk with a limp; that they shouldn't grow up in tent camps or abandoned factories, forced from their homes by war or natural disaster.

Another reason to get involved is more specific to the Caucasus: The entire region is small enough, poor enough and, for now, stable enough so that a little investment can still go a long way. The projects described here, for example, function on budgets only in the tens of thousands of dollars. Moreover, a network of experienced indigenous nonprofit groups already exists, so implementing new or expanded programs would require neither exorbitant start-up costs nor labor-intensive recruitment efforts.

A third set of reasons falls under the category of "geostrategic security concerns." While the Caucasus is now most often seen as a fringe of the Russian empire and the former Soviet Union,

Classroom at a school in Tsotsy-Yurt, 150 km from the Chechen capital, Grozny

historically the region had an equally significant geographic identity at the juncture of two other former empires, the Persian and the Ottoman. The Caucasus' physical proximity to the successor countries of those past empires, Iran and Turkey, hasn't changed, and relations with both play an increasingly important role in trade and foreign policy. Moreover, particularly in the north, the region has spawned small hotbeds of radicalism whose adherents have cooperated in the past with international terrorism networks; under unhappy circumstances, these networks could grow into a powerful source of armed violence beyond the region's confines. The Caucasus is also a hub and transit route for significant oil and gas pipelines—not to mention, the de facto the site of the 2014 Winter Olympics. For the international community, all of these factors make stability in the region an important goal. But stability becomes more elusive and less enduring if traumatized, marginalized children are left, without help, to grow into traumatized, marginalized adults.



The Caucasus region is compact and mountainous and roads are limited. Conflicts seep through the gorges like lava: A war in one place sends refugees fleeing into a neighboring area; the newcomers need shelter, food, work and medical care; they strain resources and relations, and sometimes catalyze new rounds of fighting. Over the past two decades, this dynamic has played out in the wars between Armenia and Azerbaijan; between Georgia and its two disputed republics, Abkhazia and South Ossetia; between Russian authorities and the breakaway republic of Chechnya; and among rival groups in the North Caucasus.

Few places offer a clearer view of the region's volatile interconnectedness than Beslan's granite-tombed cemetery for the victims of September 2004, officially called the City of Angels. Standing near the commemorative monument to the children, parents, and teachers killed in the hostage-taking, looking beyond an old distillery, one sees, with the naked eye, a small grouping of houses. This

is neighboring Ingushetia, Russia's tiniest region, due east of North Ossetia. In 1992, the two fought a brief, bitter war, which has left as many as 18,000 internally displaced persons, or IDPs, still stranded in Ingushetia, now the country's poorest region and one of its most violence-plagued.

Look south from the cemetery, and you see the picturesque snow-capped peaks of the Caucasus mountains. Just beyond them lies Georgia. Right before the North Ossetians' conflict with Ingushetia, Georgia had fought its first war with South Ossetia, which is populated by the North Ossetians' ethnic cousins, and the two bouts of violence are strongly linked: The fighting in Georgia pushed thousands of refugees north, through the mountain passes, across the border, into Russia. Upon their arrival in North Ossetia, demand for housing soared, ethnic tensions smoldered and, with resources scant, a 35-year-old property dispute between the Ossetians and the Ingush ignited into more war.

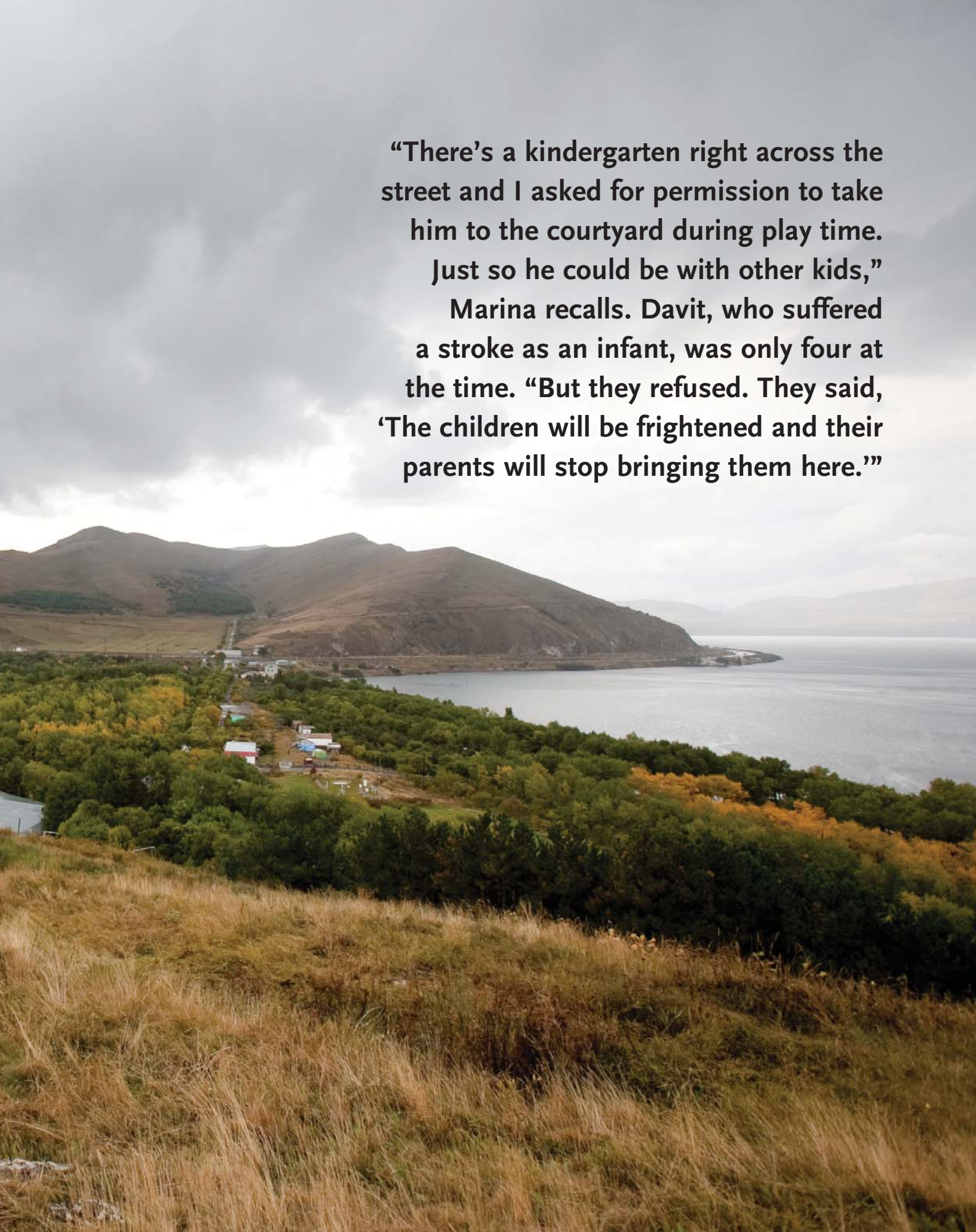
The Caucasus teems with generations-old feuds, inter-ethnic grievances and bids for autonomy, some successful, others doomed to fail. Poverty and corruption are widespread, while employment is all too scarce—and often contingent more on personal connections than on personal merit, national prosperity or government policy. Without extra effort and help, new children will keep getting pulled into old cycles of abuse and destitution.

Beslan's School No. 1 is now a memorial, with portraits of the dead, charred rafters and very pale blood stains on the lumpy floorboards of the gymnasium. Most of the armed men and women who carried out the attack—who corralled the hostages, wired the explosives, kept children without water for three days—came from Chechnya, just a few hours' drive away. It is no coincidence that when Chechnya's own ferocious post-Soviet war began in 1994, full of indiscriminate killing and torture witnessed by entire communities, many of those who attacked Beslan ten years later had themselves been children.

Memorial in Beslan cemetery

Beslan School No. 1.


Armenia



“There’s a kindergarten right across the street and I asked for permission to take him to the courtyard during play time. Just so he could be with other kids,” Marina recalls. Davit, who suffered a stroke as an infant, was only four at the time. “But they refused. They said, ‘The children will be frightened and their parents will stop bringing them here.’”

Davit (11), with his mother Marina Ayvazyan

"Before, he would ask me to read to him, now he wants to try himself."

At the age of 10, Davit Shakhpazyan had trouble opening the doors inside his family's apartment. The lever-type handles needed to be pressed down in a motion that his parents and grandmother seemed to execute effortlessly. But Davit could not replicate it. As a tiny infant, less than six weeks after he was born, Davit suffered a stroke that partially paralyzed the left half of his body and damaged his brain. So the door-opening task confounded him both physically and mentally. Then, suddenly, he had a small breakthrough: Davit's three-year-old brother, Ruben, grew tall enough to open the doors; Davit watched him closely and, within days, figured out how to do the same.

"It's good for him to see other children," says Davit's mother, Marina Ayvazyan, who gave birth to a third son in 2009. "He sees them doing something, running around, and he wants to do it too."

Davit, who lives in Armenia's capital, Yerevan, has been getting physical therapy his entire life and speech therapy since he was a toddler. He began walking unassisted when he was five and learned to eat with a spoon when he was about seven. He cycled in and out of various special-education programs and Marina saw that he learned more when he was with other children. But like so many parents whose kids have physical deformities or lag behind their peers in mental development, Marina was turned away by regular schools over and over—often on the grounds that Davit's presence would hurt the institutions' prestige and, by extension, their pocket-books.

"Before, he didn't want to play with other children, now he's with them, he observes them, he can sit still longer, like the others do."

"There's a kindergarten right across the street and I asked for permission to take him to the courtyard during play time. Just so he could be with other kids," Marina recalls. Davit was only four at the time. "But they refused. They said, 'The children will be frightened and their parents will stop bringing them here.'"

Davit drags his foot a little when he walks and one hand droops at an awkward angle from his wrist. Sometimes he drools. Many of his behaviors and symptoms resemble a severe case of autism. When upset, Davit calms himself with repetitive actions like rocking back and forth or moving books, one at a time, from one neat stack to another. All over his small hands, grayish bruises mark the spots where he has bitten himself, distraught or overexcited.

To say that interacting with other children has always been hard for Davit would be a gross understatement. And with no practice, particularly as he got older, he grew increasingly glum around strangers. By the summer of 2009, when he was 11, Davit spoke less than he had at preschool age.

But then, at a conference she was attending for work, Marina met someone who told her about Bridge of Hope, a Yerevan-based nonprofit that has led a 14-year crusade to integrate children with disabilities into Armenia's mainstream schools. With the group's help, in September 2009, Davit enrolled in School No. 20, where 17 of the 550 students have special educational needs. He went daily, accompanied by his nanny, beginning with one class a day and quickly working his way up to two.

"It's only been three weeks, and we already feel the difference," Marina told a parent-teacher meeting at the start of the school year. "Before, at home, he was saying only six or seven words, but now he's speaking more, repeating the things he hears."

Later, in their living room, Marina continued to enumerate the benefits: Davit used to get up late in the day, but now he wakes up early and enjoys the process of getting ready for school. "Before, he would ask me to read to him, now he wants to try himself. Before, he didn't want to play with other children," she goes on, "now he's with them, he observes them, he can sit still longer, like the others do." He's become more patient, and doesn't hurt himself as often. Marina finally summed up the changes she sees in her eldest child: "Before, we measured progress in years; now, we're measuring it in days."

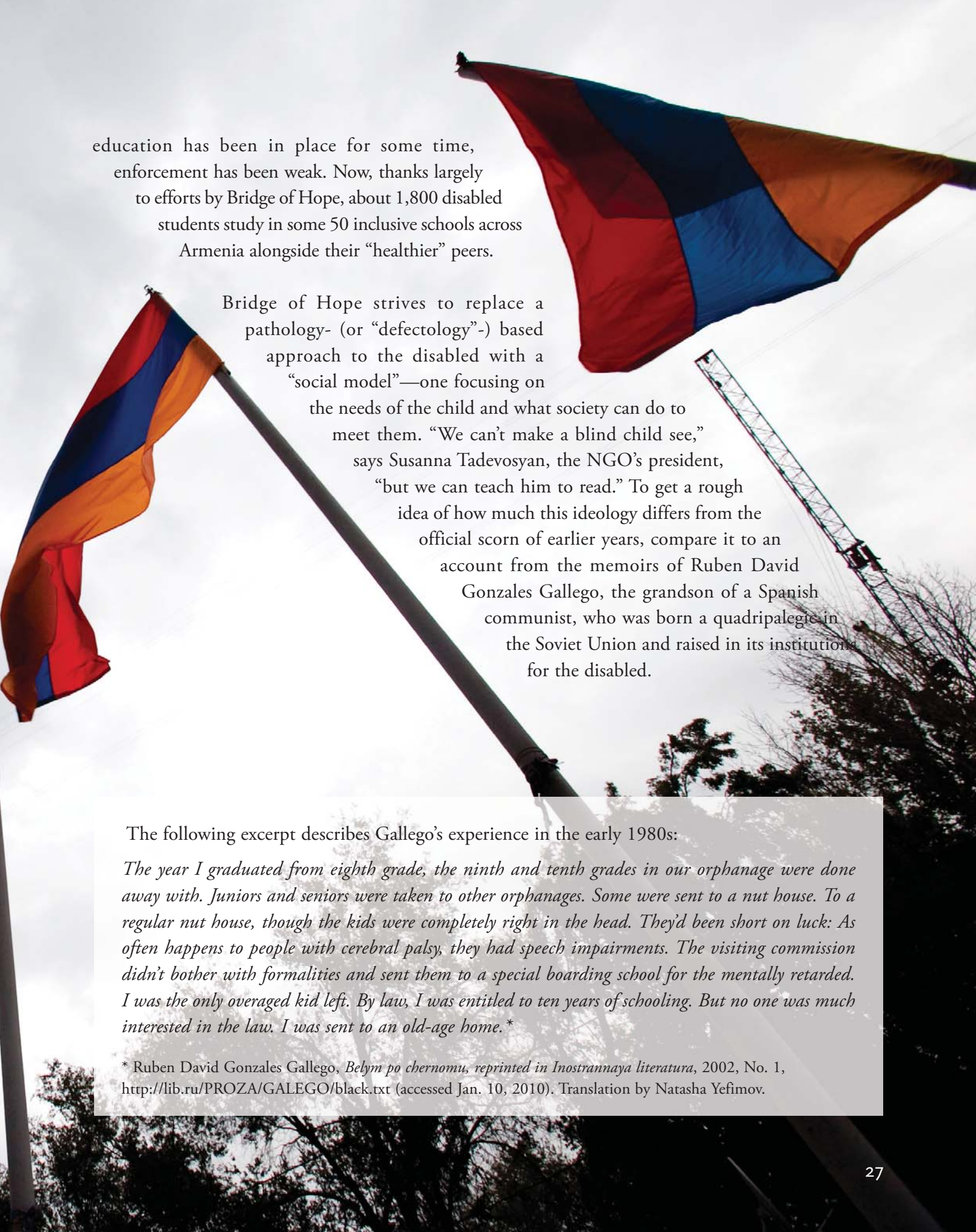
"Before, we measured progress in years; now, we're measuring it in days."

Just 25 years ago, Davit's successes would have been unimaginable. In the Soviet Union, physical and mental disabilities were deeply, systemically stigmatized. In one campaign soon after World War II, maimed soldiers who had lost limbs on the frontlines were deported to a remote island near Finland, deemed too deficient to be seen in public. Likewise, throughout the 20th century, "invalids" were tucked away in closed facilities, hidden from view. Though advocacy groups active in the former Soviet Union since the 1990s have mitigated negative stereotypes somewhat, perceptions of the disabled as useless persist to this day.

In Soviet Armenia, that worldview was abruptly challenged in December 1988—not by policy, but by nature. The so-called Spitak earthquake ripped through the northwest of the republic, imploding shoddily built schools and apartment buildings and overtaxing the ill-equipped emergency services. The quake killed an estimated 25,000 people and left about a million homeless. The Soviet leader at the time, Mikhail Gorbachev, cut short a historic trip to the United States and asked the West, for the first time since World War II, for humanitarian aid.

The tragedy had at least two effects on the lives of the disabled in Armenia. First, physical impairments became, for a while at least, reframed in the public consciousness: While still seen by many as freakish or pitiful, they also turned into "something that could happen to anyone." Second, foreign aid groups set up major relief operations, creating models for indigenous spin-offs. The creation of Bridge of Hope, helped along by an impassioned visiting OXFAM representative, was inspired by one such effort—a U.S. program called Project Hope, which came to Armenia to rehabilitate some of the countless children injured by the quake, and treated other disabled kids as well.

Since its inception in 1996, Bridge of Hope has become an incredibly effective advocacy group for those with disabilities, both physical and mental. UNICEF estimates that there are up to 10,000 special-needs children in Armenia, and while legislation on their right to an



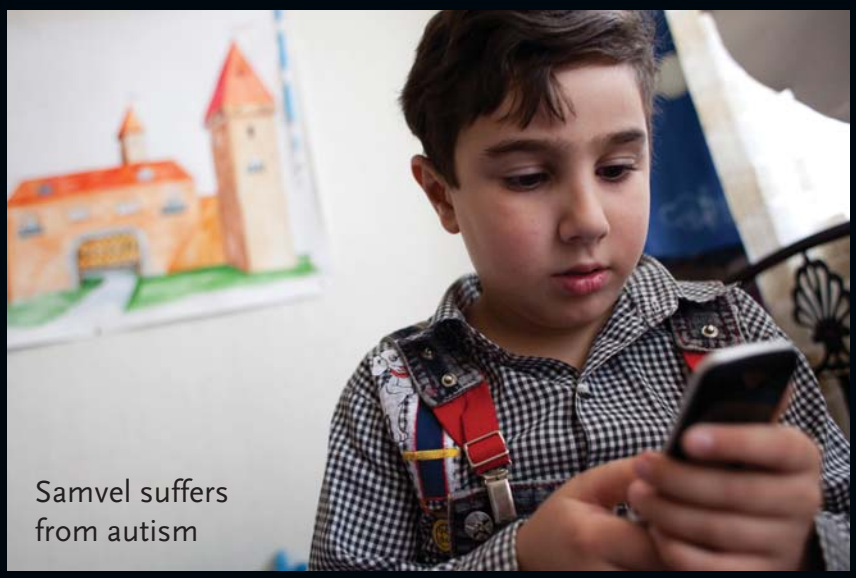
education has been in place for some time, enforcement has been weak. Now, thanks largely to efforts by Bridge of Hope, about 1,800 disabled students study in some 50 inclusive schools across Armenia alongside their "healthier" peers.

Bridge of Hope strives to replace a pathology- (or "defectology"-) based approach to the disabled with a "social model"—one focusing on the needs of the child and what society can do to meet them. "We can't make a blind child see," says Susanna Tadevosyan, the NGO's president, "but we can teach him to read." To get a rough idea of how much this ideology differs from the official scorn of earlier years, compare it to an account from the memoirs of Ruben David Gonzales Gallego, the grandson of a Spanish communist, who was born a quadripalegic in the Soviet Union and raised in its institutions for the disabled.

The following excerpt describes Gallego's experience in the early 1980s:

*The year I graduated from eighth grade, the ninth and tenth grades in our orphanage were done away with. Juniors and seniors were taken to other orphanages. Some were sent to a nut house. To a regular nut house, though the kids were completely right in the head. They'd been short on luck: As often happens to people with cerebral palsy, they had speech impairments. The visiting commission didn't bother with formalities and sent them to a special boarding school for the mentally retarded. I was the only overaged kid left. By law, I was entitled to ten years of schooling. But no one was much interested in the law. I was sent to an old-age home.**

* Ruben David Gonzales Gallego, *Belym po chernomu, reprinted in Inostrannaya literatura*, 2002, No. 1, http://lib.ru/PROZA/GALEGO/black.txt (accessed Jan. 10, 2010). Translation by Natasha Yefimov.



Samvel suffers from autism

Taken together, 8-year-old Siranush and her wheelchair weigh five kilograms more than her mom, Mary Papyan. Mary, petite and sinewy, has a good feel for the weight because every day she pulls her daughter, afflicted since infancy with cerebral palsy, to and from the fifth-story walk-up apartment where they live with her younger son, Samvel, who is autistic. Mary spent 16 years as a teacher and wanted her children to benefit from the challenges, discipline and socialization of daily classes. When she tried to enroll them at the elite private school where she worked, the school refused, saying that other students and parents could be scared off. Today, both kids attend an inclusive city school, where they study at grade level. Mary sits in the hallway to help when she's needed. "In this school, my child is on equal footing with everyone," she says. "No one sticks the label 'sick' on her."


Artak

"The main thing is for a child to find himself and become a good person ... that's what's most important."

Artak Davtyan is a bright, good-natured 12-year-old boy born with cerebral palsy. The condition slurs his speech a bit (though he has no problem exclaiming his age, distinctly, in English), but what jumps out at a casual observer is that it drastically impairs his motor skills, including the ability to walk. Climbing a set of stairs can take Artak ten minutes to a healthy boy's one.

For physical support, Artak relies on a rickety metal walker, procured long ago through the Red Cross, and on his mom, Varduhi, who carries a wrench in her handbag to tighten the often loose screws. Right now, says Varduhi, Artak is in "the best physical condition of his life." In part, she attributes this to his high morale and self-esteem, both buoyed by going to school. When Artak was still small, Varduhi recalls, "school seemed like an afterthought. I just wanted him to walk." But when Artak was five and about to have an operation, "the doctor said, 'You definitely need to send him to school at the regular age. Go to Bridge of Hope.' I promised that I would. So I did."

Artak, as you have likely guessed, is neither in a mental institution nor an old-age home. He is in the seventh grade and goes to the same school as the other kids in his building, including his cousins (who are also his roommates). Their school was one of the first of five inclusive schools in Yerevan, thanks largely to lobbying by Bridge of Hope. By luck, it happened to be the closest to the family's house. Among his subjects, Artak particularly likes the history of the Armenian church and math, though not geometry. Because his fine motor skills lag behind average, Artak writes slowly; he skips the spelling exercises that involve dictation. The first time Artak wrote out an entire word on his own, the whole class celebrated.

Artak and Varduhi live with her parents and siblings in a one-bedroom apartment that is home to ten people. Artak's dad left the family when Artak wasn't yet two. But Varduhi is not one to dwell on past troubles. She has just embarked on her first full-time job since Artak was born, confident that he is much more self-sufficient now than she had once expected.

"He has changed from 'I won't go! I can't walk!' to striving to do things himself. He eats on his own, goes to the bathroom on his own. Dresses by himself," says Varduhi. Artak's mobility is diminished somewhat outside, because the ground

Artak Davtyan (12) and mother Varduhi Aramyan

is too dirty to lie down, the way he would indoors, for extra maneuvering, but close to home he traverses well-known routes by himself—trips to the local internet cafe are a favorite.

The transformation in Artak is matched by a revolution in Varduhi as well. "Don't ask me about his diagnosis," she says defiantly. "Ask me what challenges he faces." That is where society's focus should lie, she believes. Varduhi has embraced the idea that she and her child have rights. She is active in the parent-teacher group for special-needs kids at Artak's school and praises the networking as a crucial resource: "Parents learn a great deal from each other, teach each other," says Varduhi. Under the guidance of those with more experience, parents "start feeling differently about [their] own kids."

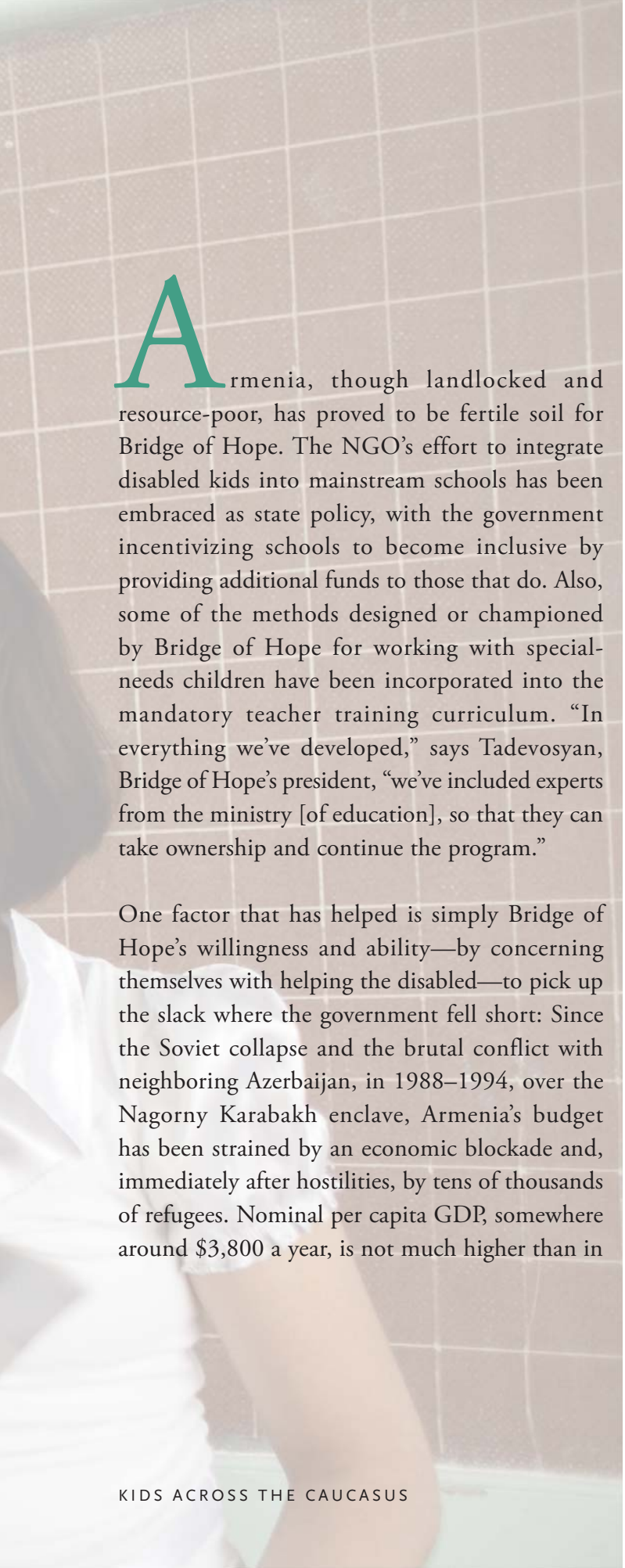
This sense of community can bring some very concrete results. Recently, Varduhi rallied neighbors to install a ramp in their building—a benefit not only to her and Artak, but to anyone with a shopping cart or a stroller.

Seeing the way that socializing with other children, in a warm, supportive environment, has helped her son, Varduhi no longer harbors the disdain that she once had for school: "That's where our life started," she says, gesturing at Artak. "Traits of his that only we [at home] had known about started becoming evident to others. He made friends."

"Now I know," she adds, "the main thing is for a child to find himself and become a good person. That's what's most important."

“He has changed from ‘I won’t go! I can’t walk!’ to striving to do things himself. He eats on his own, goes to the bathroom on his own, dresses by himself.”

Georgy Gevorgyan (12) dreams of driving a car. But soon after he was born, Goga, as he's called by family and friends, got a shot, meant to prevent sepsis, that left him nearly deaf. At his first school, for kids with severely impaired hearing, the teachers taught only sign language. "Children who have the potential to speak, shouldn't be locked in to sign language," says Georgy's mother, Angelina. Now Goga is in 7th grade at School No. 100, a regular city school that has integrated children with disabilities, thanks to Bridge of Hope. Seda Galstyan, a special-ed teacher proficient in sign language, helps him master phonics. And Goga feels challenged: In his old school, he says, holding the palms of his hands close together, "they taught us like little kids; here"—he draws his hands far apart—"they teach us like big kids." With the ability to speak and a good hearing aid, Goga's dream of getting a driver's license could very well come true.



Armenia, though landlocked and resource-poor, has proved to be fertile soil for Bridge of Hope. The NGO's effort to integrate disabled kids into mainstream schools has been embraced as state policy, with the government incentivizing schools to become inclusive by providing additional funds to those that do. Also, some of the methods designed or championed by Bridge of Hope for working with special-needs children have been incorporated into the mandatory teacher training curriculum. "In everything we've developed," says Tadevosyan, Bridge of Hope's president, "we've included experts from the ministry [of education], so that they can take ownership and continue the program."

One factor that has helped is simply Bridge of Hope's willingness and ability—by concerning themselves with helping the disabled—to pick up the slack where the government fell short: Since the Soviet collapse and the brutal conflict with neighboring Azerbaijan, in 1988–1994, over the Nagorny Karabakh enclave, Armenia's budget has been strained by an economic blockade and, immediately after hostilities, by tens of thousands of refugees. Nominal per capita GDP, somewhere around $3,800 a year, is not much higher than in neighboring Georgia, which has the lowest average rate of the four Caucasus countries. Spending on disabled children had not been a top priority.

Bridge of Hope has also been effective because Armenia is extremely compact. A single government agency oversees all schools' adherence to laws and bylaws. In terms of surface area, Armenia was the tiniest of the 15 Soviet republics; it is smaller than Belgium and comparable in size to the U.S. state of Connecticut. It is a manageable space in which to implement reform, particularly when reform-minded NGOs are allowed to operate and hedge in favor of sustainability by including the authorities in their work.

The largest proportion of special-needs kids at a Yerevan public school can be found at School No. 100, where 52 of 360 pupils have some sort of disability. The school has been inclusive for eight years. In part, the extra money from the state went toward assembling a team of young specialists: two psychologists, a special education teacher, a sign-language teacher, a speech therapist, a social worker, and a coordinator who makes sure that children have access to all of the above. These educators work with students outside their regular

School No. 100

"You must rely on kindness. That is the axis."

Hayk Ziroyan (15) with his grandmother Laura at School No. 100

School No. 100

classes, so many of the kids, particularly those with severe conditions, are accompanied in school, and often in class, by mothers or other caregivers.

Success in integrating special-needs children into regular schools cannot be achieved from the top down, says the principal, Arega Oganyan: "You must rely on kindness. That is the axis." The resistance Oganyan encounters to her school's inclusive approach most often comes from parents whose children don't have a disability. But she says she wins over doubters with diplomacy, psychology, and appeals to the heart: "I say to them, 'I am really asking you to help. None of us knows what kind of kids we might have, or grandkids.' It's very sensitive."

According to Oganyan, there are two great benefits to inclusive education. One is that it cultivates empathy and kindness toward the disabled among their healthier peers. "A child raised in our school will perceive them as equals in adulthood as well," she says. The other key advantage of the inclusive approach is that it nourishes self-respect in disabled students and their families because they are no longer treated as second-rate.

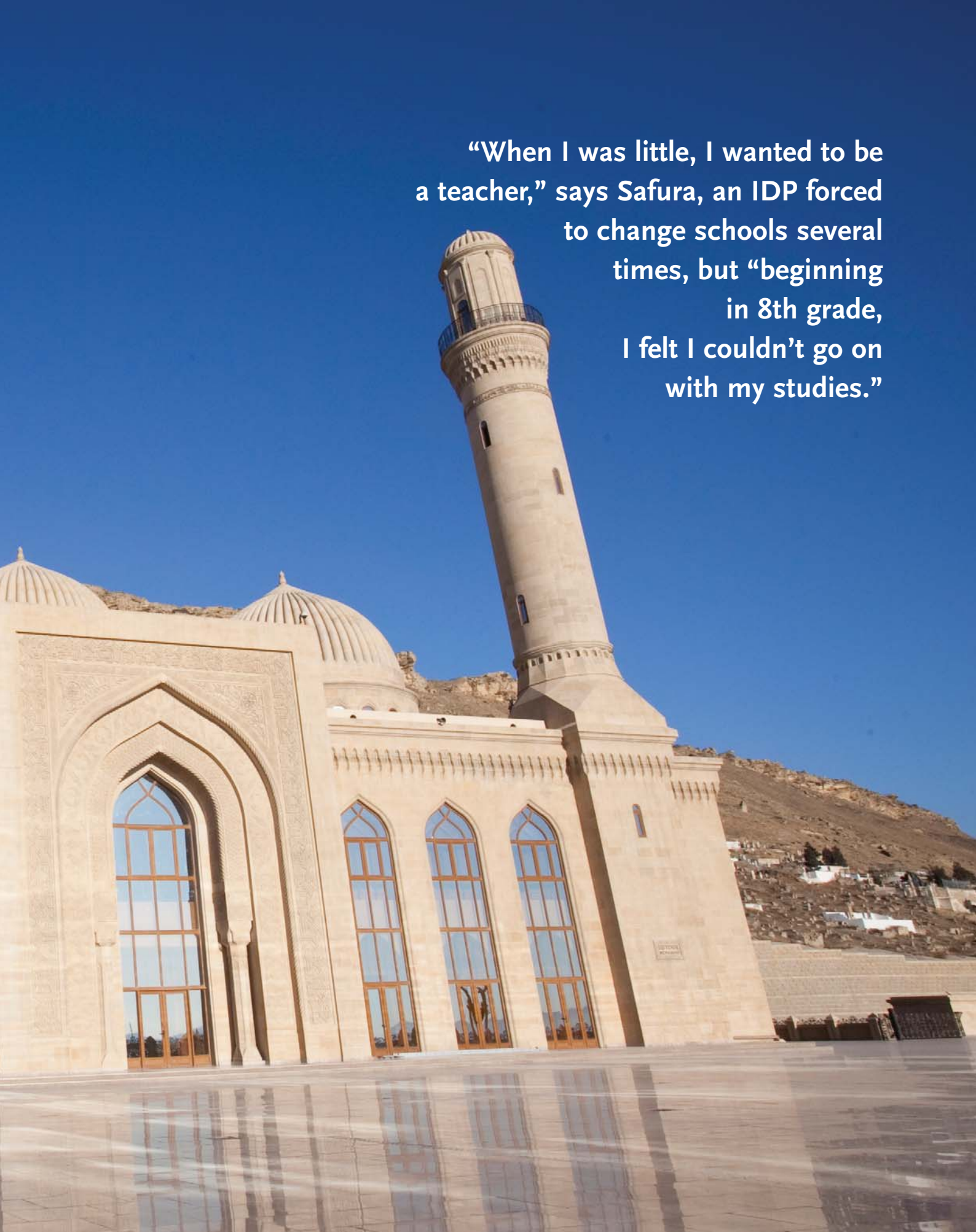
"In other places, in public, people point their fingers at us," says Elmira, whose 14-year-old son, Marat, exhibits significant developmental delays. Marat was expelled from three schools that couldn't accommodate his disability, but at School No. 100, where he entered 7th grade in

“He stopped feeling deficient. He’s become calm, obedient, cheerful.”

2009, people “really welcomed us,” says his mom. “He stopped feeling deficient.” Sitting on a bench in the lobby while Marat ran a relay race with other 7th-graders outside the school building, Elmira added: “He’s become calm, obedient, cheerful. Before he used to be aggressive and fought a lot, now he’s relaxed. Even when he’s sick, he wants to go to school.”

Marat (14)


Azerbaijan



“When I was little, I wanted to be a teacher,” says Safura, an IDP forced to change schools several times, but “beginning in 8th grade, I felt I couldn’t go on with my studies.”


Tunzala

Tunzala Sadygova is a springy, soft-spoken 31-year-old with sinewy arms. She spends her work day bouncing around a boxy pink room with one big mirror and one black swivel chair: There she coiffes, colors, and otherwise beautifies dozens of women and girls per week. The ceiling hangs low above her streaked hair, but Tunzala maneuvers lithely in the squished space, slim hips ploughing past a rack of wedding gowns (to rent or buy) near the back wall. On a sunny Sunday morning, she conjures over two brunettes in a row, bridesmaid and bride, breathing in clouds of sticky aerosol as she pulls, twirls, and pins up every tress of their elaborate up-do's. Three serious-faced teenage girls squeeze in around the swivel chair, helping, all eyes on Tunzala's quick hands.

Today, Tunzala is her own boss and lives in a three-room house made of the same materials as her salon—limestone blocks and mortar. This feels markedly like progress: For nearly 13 of the past 15 years, her family, now eight people, resided in the garage of a concrete plant. Even then, the Sadygovs felt lucky because they, at least, had their own nook. Nearby there was a tent camp housing thousands of families. All of them were displaced and many, like Tunzala's, had been forced out of

Tunzala's apprentice Safura finishes styling for a wedding

Tunzala with an apprentice in her beauty salon

Most of the residents hail from farms, so the plots around the homes blaze with greenery and flowers, but the land around the settlements is barren, mocking the low irrigation pipes stretched across its undulate, sandy-beige expanse.

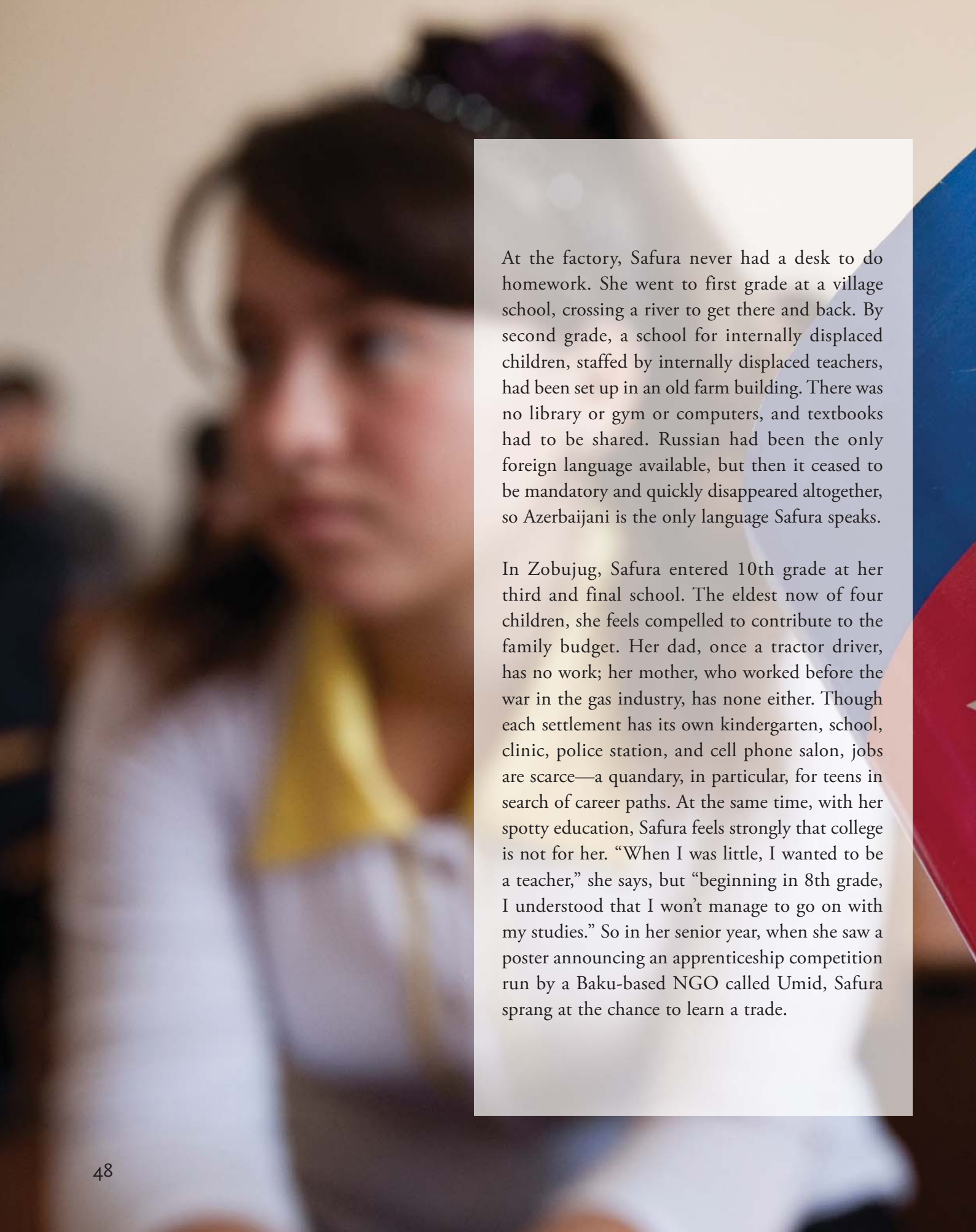
Azerbaijan's rural Fizuli district in 1993 amid a political implosion in the capital, Baku, and war with neighboring Armenia over the Nagorny Karabakh enclave.

Being from Fizuli, and becoming semihomeless for more than a decade as a result—these are biographical details Tunzala has in common with her apprentices and clients. All of them now live in an agglomerate of five new, state-funded mini-towns for the displaced—2,100 houses, painted in soothing pastels, habitable since late 2007. The settlements, numbered one through five and collectively called Zobujug (zo-boo-JOOG), are scattered on dry hills more than 150 miles

Zobujug Settlement No. 3 in Fizuli

southwest of Baku, in the small part of the Fizuli district still controlled by Azerbaijan; they lie less than five miles from what people here call "the front line"—Armenian-held territory bordering Nagorny Karabakh—and perhaps eight miles from Iran, across the Aras River, to the south. Most of the residents hail from farms, so the plots around the homes blaze with greenery and flowers, but the land around the settlements is barren, mocking the low irrigation pipes stretched across its undulate, sandy-beige expanse.

The construction materials used in Zobujug leave plenty to be desired—the doors already stray from their frames, the window panes are warped—and indoor plumbing is a luxury, paid for by residents themselves. But each house has enough space for the people who live there and, at the least, an outhouse and a water faucet in the yard. For 18-year-old Safura Surkhayeva, one of Tunzala's eager students, even this is a huge improvement: For the 14 years before they moved here, Safura, together with her parents and first one, then two younger sisters, lived in a poultry factory, sharing a single room, cooking on a jerry-rigged hot plate and bringing water from afar. Food had to be bought at the market—far more costly than growing the tomatoes, corn, cucumbers, herbs, and watermelons the family now has in its garden patch.



At the factory, Safura never had a desk to do homework. She went to first grade at a village school, crossing a river to get there and back. By second grade, a school for internally displaced children, staffed by internally displaced teachers, had been set up in an old farm building. There was no library or gym or computers, and textbooks had to be shared. Russian had been the only foreign language available, but then it ceased to be mandatory and quickly disappeared altogether, so Azerbaijani is the only language Safura speaks.

In Zobujug, Safura entered 10th grade at her third and final school. The eldest now of four children, she feels compelled to contribute to the family budget. Her dad, once a tractor driver, has no work; her mother, who worked before the war in the gas industry, has none either. Though each settlement has its own kindergarten, school, clinic, police station, and cell phone salon, jobs are scarce—a quandary, in particular, for teens in search of career paths. At the same time, with her spotty education, Safura feels strongly that college is not for her. "When I was little, I wanted to be a teacher," she says, but "beginning in 8th grade, I understood that I won't manage to go on with my studies." So in her senior year, when she saw a poster announcing an apprenticeship competition run by a Baku-based NGO called Umid, Safura sprang at the chance to learn a trade.

A school for internally displaced children, staffed by internally displaced teachers had been set up in an old farm building.

In all, measured against census figures, this human deluge equaled more than one-tenth of the country's prewar population.

Umid began in 1997, three years after Azerbaijan's cease-fire with Armenia, as a humanitarian aid organization, helping those driven from their homes by the fighting. At that time, the needs of the displaced had mounted to enormous proportions. By the most reliable estimates, the number of refugees and IDPs flooding the country, in two waves, between 1988 and 1994—from Armenia, Nagorny Karabakh and seven occupied regions bordering the disputed enclave—totaled about 700,000 people; besides them, 50,000 Meskhetian Turk refugees fled to

Azerbaijan from Central Asia.* In all, measured against census figures, this human deluge equaled more than one-tenth of the country's prewar population. For the most part, the IDPs lived in squalid camps or makeshift accommodations like schools, factories, and railway cars. Health problems and traumatic disorders ran rampant. Azerbaijan, impoverished by the Soviet collapse and bled dry by the military conflict with its neighbor, had too few resources to house and feed the displaced or give them adequate medical care, much less to integrate them into its larger socioeconomic system through education or job programs.

That same year, the Danish Refugee Council, very active in helping Azerbaijan's IDPs, began proposing projects for income generation among the displaced. Umid's founders liked the idea, but rather than adopt a standard model, where 20 to 30 students sit in a class getting theoretical knowledge about a practical skill, Umid embarked

* Thomas de Waal, *Black Garden: Armenia and Azerbaijan Through Peace and War* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2003), p. 285. Citing the work of Arif Yunusov.

on an effort it believed would be smaller-scale but much more effective: a competitive apprenticeship program that selected young people between the ages of 16 and 35 and matched them up with "masters"—skilled professionals capable of teaching their craft to a student, hands-on.

"The search for teachers is tough," says Zohrab Zohrabov, Umid's pointman for the Zobujug settlements and himself an IDP from the occupied Aghdam district. "Many small businesspeople aren't registered as tax payers"—a prerequisite for the program—"others don't have the space or clientele or temperament to take on apprentices. We don't limit kids' ability to choose a profession: [in 2009] there were requests for welder, furniture maker, men's barber, computer repair. There's lots of demand, but often no one to teach the students, no qualified professionals nearby."

The problem Zohrabov describes is most acute in remote areas like Zobujug. But nationwide, more than 500 apprentices have gone through the program since it began in 1998 and up to 80 percent of them find employment afterwards, according to Fazil Hasanov, Umid's field officer in the faded industrial city of Sumgayit, one of the program's first sites and still home to nearly 50,000 IDPs. Boys and young men tend to become

Mechanic apprenticeship project

Many small businesspeople aren't registered as tax payers, others don't have the space or clientele or temperament to take on apprentices.

mechanics and repairmen, while girls usually opt for hairdresser or seamstress. Those accepted to the program—typically fewer than 10 percent of applicants—also get training in writing a business plan and other entrepreneurial skills, and the most promising students win grants of $300–$500 to buy tools and supplies to jump-start their own businesses.

For a sheltered girl like Safura, this sort of support, mixed with the business smarts she's absorbed from her teacher, have sparked just the entrepreneurial spirit she needs to start earning her own living and helping her family. While Umid's program obligates apprentices to study

with their instructors three times a week, Safura shows up at the salon in Settlement No. 2 almost every day. Tunzala chose the location because it's geographically more central and has more human traffic than Settlement No. 1, where she lives. Safura is already thinking in similar terms: "There's no salon in Settlement No. 3, as far as I know," she says with a smile; once her studies are complete, she adds, she would like to set up shop there. Three months into the four-month apprenticeship, Tunzala trusts Safura to blow dry and style hair, apply make-up, give facials and pluck eyebrows. And Safura says she practices the cuts from the salon on her mother, sisters and neighbors—"free, for now."

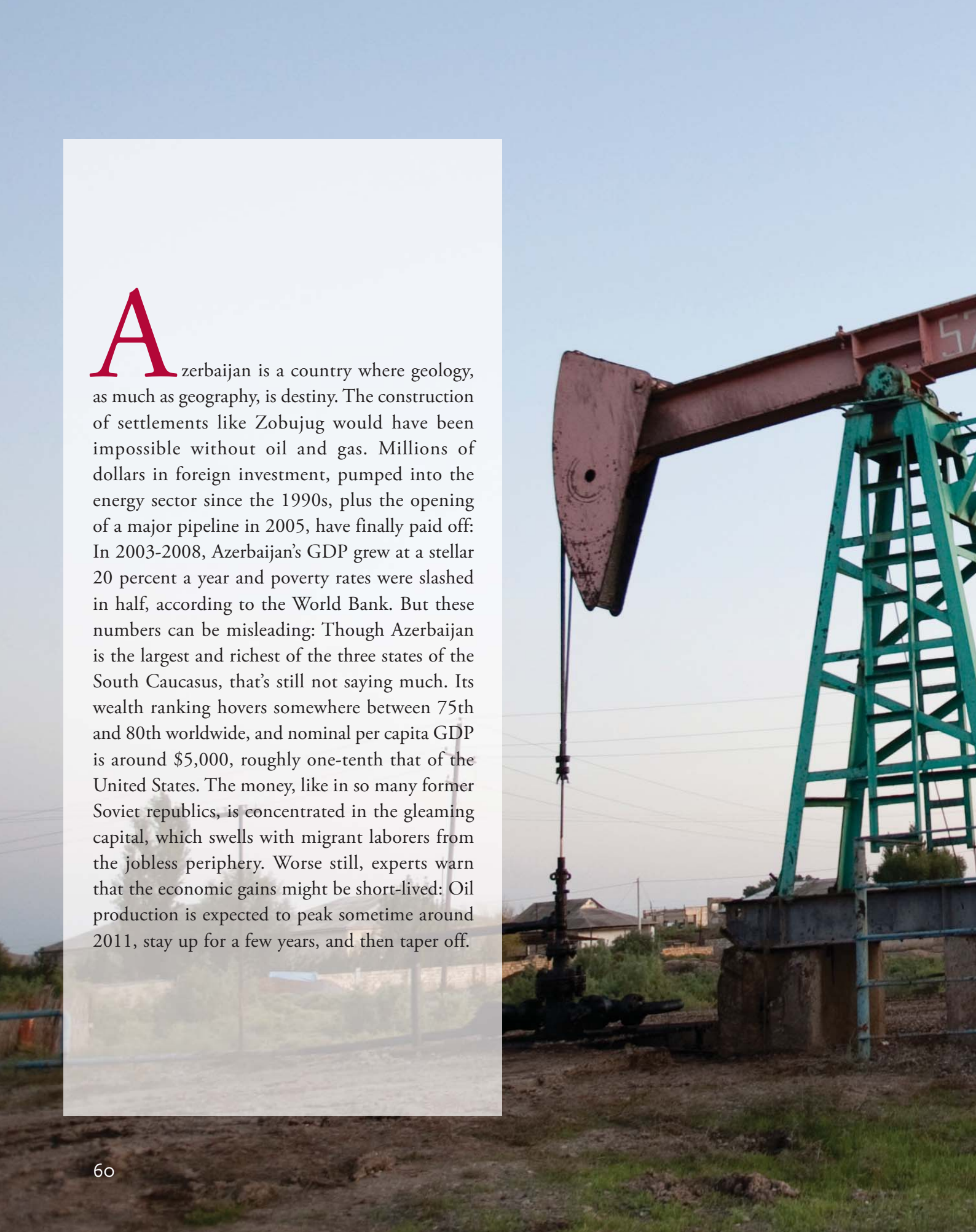
We don't limit kids' ability to choose a profession: [in 2009] there were requests for welder, furniture maker, men's barber, computer repair. There's lots of demand, but often no one to teach the students, no qualified professionals nearby.

Boys and young men tend to become mechanics and repairmen, while girls usually opt for hairdresser or seamstress.

As for Tunzala, Umid's program gives her both material incentives and a sense of personal fulfillment. She receives about $50 per month per student, which offsets the costs of taxes, electricity, and other expenses. Plus, to protect her equipment from wear and tear, Umid has purchased everything used by the girls: a hairdryer, scissors, combs and brushes, hairsprays, cosmetics, smocks, and towels. Tunzala decided to enter the beauty business a decade ago; were it not for an uncle in Baku who put her up for nearly two years while she studied, she would never have mastered the trade. "They also have a need for this," she says softly of her apprentices. "I want them to have it as good as I did."

Shirinova Malak, an IDP from Fuzuli region, took up dressmaking eight years ago to support her children. Her husband works in Russia to help the family make ends meet. She works with Umid to provide apprenticeships to three girls who want to learn the secrets of design, patternmaking and sewing.

Azerbaijan is a country where geology, as much as geography, is destiny. The construction of settlements like Zobujug would have been impossible without oil and gas. Millions of dollars in foreign investment, pumped into the energy sector since the 1990s, plus the opening of a major pipeline in 2005, have finally paid off: In 2003-2008, Azerbaijan's GDP grew at a stellar 20 percent a year and poverty rates were slashed in half, according to the World Bank. But these numbers can be misleading: Though Azerbaijan is the largest and richest of the three states of the South Caucasus, that's still not saying much. Its wealth ranking hovers somewhere between 75th and 80th worldwide, and nominal per capita GDP is around $5,000, roughly one-tenth that of the United States. The money, like in so many former Soviet republics, is concentrated in the gleaming capital, which swells with migrant laborers from the jobless periphery. Worse still, experts warn that the economic gains might be short-lived: Oil production is expected to peak sometime around 2011, stay up for a few years, and then taper off.



School No. 33 in Fizuli region

In the meantime, Azerbaijan continues to have an enormous IDP population. The political stalemate over Nagorny Karabakh goes on, with Armenia controlling fully five and partly two regions bordering the enclave. People driven from those areas have been living in limbo for more than 15 years—long enough for a new generation of IDPs to be born. As of April 2008, over half a million people were classified by Azerbaijan's government as displaced, more than a third of them children.

As petro-dollars started trickling down through the economy, the government took on a massive effort to remedy the worst of the IDPs' housing problems. In December 2007, it shut down the last of twelve degraded and degrading emergency camps, where families had crowded together for as long as 14 years, slowly trading up from tents to mud-and-brick hovels. Nearly 50,000 residents were relocated to newly built settlements like the five that make up Zobujug. Yet about half the country's IDPs continue to live in improvised housing and thousands live in deplorable conditions in the cities.

The more complex and daunting task at hand is to integrate the displaced into Azerbaijani society through jobs and schools. In 2006, the Committee for the Rights of the Child recommended that the state "ensure that refugee and displaced children

School No. 33 in Fizuli region

are placed in schools in the local communities in order to facilitate their integration."* But IDP schoolchildren remain largely segregated. The government has argued that having their own schools helps them preserve social cohesion and will make it easier for displaced communities to rebuild upon returning to their native lands. This logic certainly has some credibility. But when (or whether) IDPs will be able to return is unclear. And, for the time being, children who are IDPs often get poorer schooling than their peers, in part because they and their teachers have been set back—whether physically, psychologically, professionally or some combination of the three—by years of rootlessness and insecurity.

The schools in Zobujug offer a paradoxical insight. On one hand, children there don't feel like aliens or outcasts, as some of them did when attending regular schools; they've all grown up as IDPs, they share the same baggage. On the other hand, their segregation as IDPs cements their identity as "refugees": Their families come from occupied

* Committee for the Rights of the Child, Concluding Observations on Azerbaijan, 17 March 2006, CRC/C/AZE/CO/2, para. 58. Cited in report of Walter Kälin, Representative of the UN Secretary General on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons, Mission to Azerbaijan: http://www.brookings.edu/~/media/Files/Projects/IDP/UN%20Reports/Mission%20Reports/2007_rpt_Azerbaijan_AE.pdf (accessed Feb. 14, 2010)

School No. 4

parts of Fizuli and speak at length of their love and longing for their native land; school lobbies are adorned with maps marking Armenian-held regions with fiery symbols of war; posters with dates of battles shout "Don't forget!" in capital letters. Nargiz Mehtiyeva, a 17-year-old with a long, dark braid and sad, light eyes, lives now in Settlement No. 3. Before 2008, she and her family lived for three years in a tent camp and for twelve more in a classroom. She recalls going to a city school where other kids didn't call her by her name, just "refugee girl." Here in Zobujug, she wrote a poem that ends: "We live now in a place / where we hear the sound of enemy fire / but hearing that is better / than hearing the word 'refugee.'"

"We live now in a place where we hear the sound of enemy fire, but hearing that is better than hearing the word 'refugee.'"

The drive to Fizuli from Baku takes hours. First, the smooth highway glides past a state-of-the-art oil terminal and sprawling malls just outside the city. Then the scenery quickly gives way to rural ruggedness. Some 30 miles from the capital, weather-beaten men stand along the shoulder, selling boiled corn from blackened pots to make ends meet. Shepherds tend their flocks. One of them shoves a putrid sack into a ditch with his walking stick—disposing of road kill in a place where garbage trucks don't stop. A few sleepy towns roll past, lonely produce stands here and there. A pile of dung patties (cheap fuel) absorbs the sunshine underneath a plastic sheet... Finally, in clouds of dust, bumping past a dry riverbed, which fills with water only in the spring, the road enters Zobujug, the five settlements, about 400 to 600 families each, linked by empty roads arching over arid mounds of light-colored earth.

Corn on the cob, for sale
on the main highway crossing Azerbaijan


TBILISI
GANCA
KURDAMIR
HACIQABUL

“These settlements are new. They combined people from different IDP camps,” explains Matanat. “The kids were very inhibited; they didn’t know each other.”

Despite the summery weekend, not many children are outside. The mini-towns have soccer fields but offer little else in the way of recreation. Besides, the fields draw boys only; girls in this rural, conservative milieu spend most of their free time at home.

But inside one of the white-washed school buildings, about a dozen kids mill around a classroom, debating vigorously, then sit in groups of three and four, clusters of intent faces lit up by computer screens. What’s astounding is the object of the children’s attention: competing designs for city parks, which they’ve created, to propose to local authorities.

“The kids did it all themselves. No teachers helped,” says Matanat Guliyeva, smiling proudly. She is an educator with Buta—a second Baku-based NGO, which partners with Umid in the settlements—who has been braving the round trip to Zobujug with unenviable regularity.

Since the beginning of 2009, Buta, founded as a children's humanitarian organization 15 years earlier, has sent a two-person team to Zobujug three weekends a month. And if Umid focuses on young people who have crossed college off their list of options, Buta casts its net more widely. The activities and assignments the group devises are meant to stimulate kids intellectually and to expose them to a world beyond their isolated existence. (The schools have computers, but no Internet.)

"These settlements are new. They combined people from different [IDP] camps," explains Matanat. "The kids were very inhibited; they didn't know each other."

The schoolchildren in Zobujug had practically never lived in houses before: They were either born in temporary shelters, like the muddy tent camps, or spirited from their native villages as infants. Some lost loved ones en route or in the

violence; all have lived their brief lives in poverty and uncertainty, with no true sense of home. To help mend the social fabric torn by war and displacement, Buta designs projects that let kids relax and open up, and also foster civic-mindedness and a sense of community. A favorite among the children is the group's brain-teaser competitions, which mingle kids from different settlements. A student-run newspaper also works to unite the three schools where Buta works.

As for the miniature city planners finalizing their park designs, they're wrapping up a summer-long research project. It's the kind of academic exercise found in Baku, not in schools outside the big city. A second group of Buta's children has been mining the history and folklore of their native Fizuli district, interviewing sources from grandparents to truck drivers, mapping historical sites and near-forgotten villages. At the third school where the NGO works, kids learn and practice polling techniques; they surveyed neighbors to find out what they felt was missing in the settlements and then, armed with data, wrote appeals for improvements.

Many of Zobujug's children "hadn't had much experience with school," says Taleh Kurbanov, a 29-year-old teacher of Azerbaijani language and literature in Settlement No. 3. "We spent the first six months [of the year] just on rules, not on education: singing the anthem, morning exercises, how to sit, how to stand."

And teachers here—themselves uprooted, traumatized, without access to further training—worry that they can't offer their students enough. Taleh's native village came under attack when he was 13. He remembers losing his parents in the chaos, then spotting each other, luckily but accidentally, in a crowd; he remembers, after relocating, getting trampled underfoot in a bread line and cursed by locals as a "gypsy" for his shabby clothes. His family lived for two years in a tent camp and for a dozen more in a school. And though Taleh studied in Baku, he sometimes feels woefully underprepared: "We, at least, as teachers should have knowledge, but the level..." His voice trails off as his eyes drop to the floor and he shakes his head.

Of the 14 seniors in Settlement No. 3 in the 2008–2009 school year, eleven passed the standardized tests to graduate. "We were elated," says Ulkar Huseynova, a celebrated principal transferred to the school from a neighboring settlement to help it improve.

In addition to its work with children, Buta has pulled together parent-teacher associations to get adults acquainted with one another and more involved with the schools. One of the NGO's founders, Nazeem Ibadov, points out that the Soviet legacy of a paternalistic state makes the task of rallying parents, particularly from a rural background, extremely challenging: "In the USSR, we were told, 'You just give birth to your kids; we'll make good people out of them.' Parents over-rely on the system, on government. They're passive."

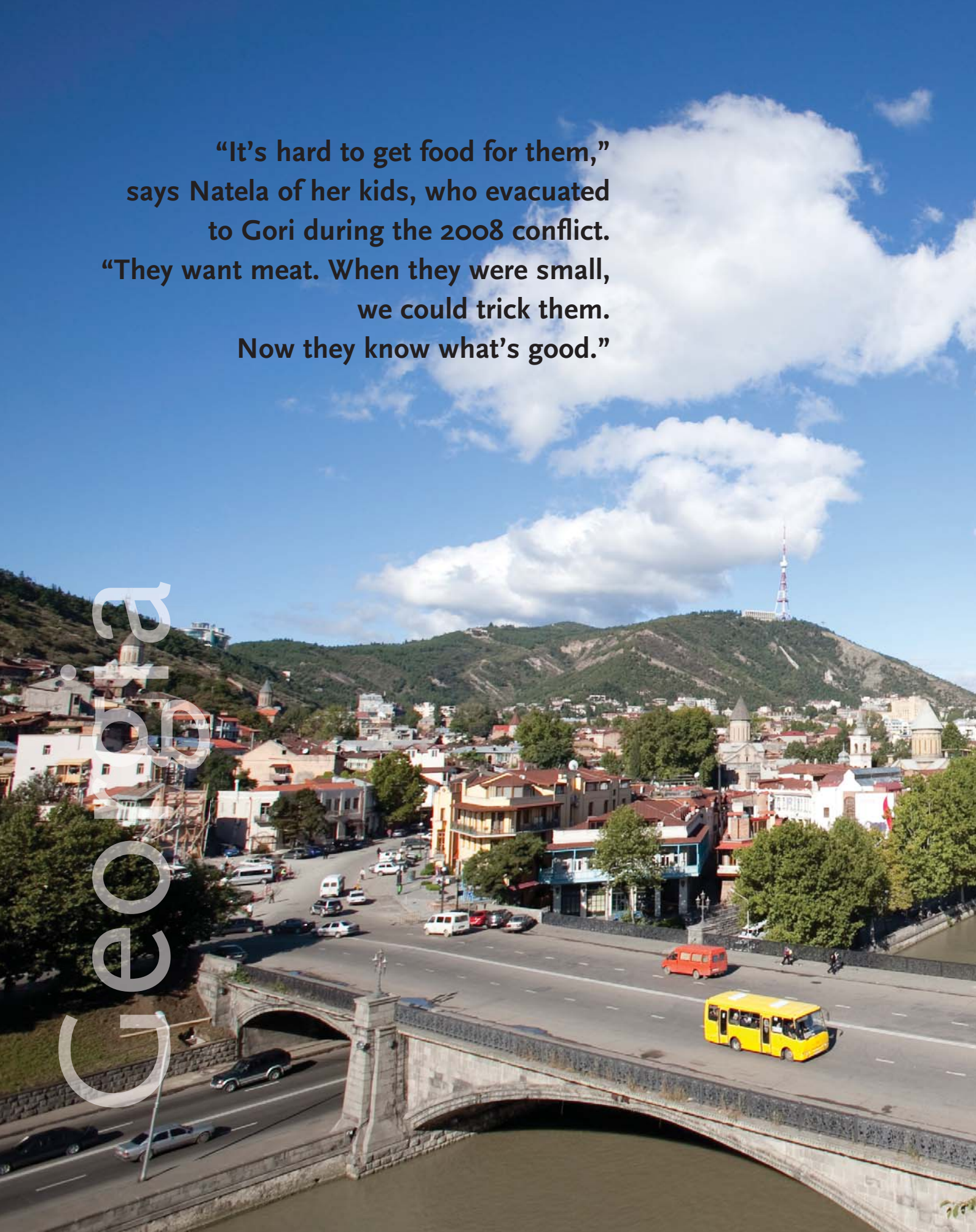
Sadly, that legacy has been compounded by the IDPs' current plight. International organizations monitoring the situation in Azerbaijan have noted repeatedly that a lack of integration has made the displaced complacent, unmotivated, and

The schoolchildren in Zobujug had practically never lived in houses before: They were either born in temporary shelters, like the muddy tent camps, or spirited from their native villages as infants.

too dependent on hand-outs; in 2007, a special United Nations representative expressed concern "that a significant part of rural IDPs seemed to suffer from a dependency syndrome, which in itself now diminished their prospects to become self-sufficient."*

Watching their children, though, one gets the distinct sense that passivity is more nurture than nature: As the kids talk excitedly of the tiny villages they've unearthed, or earnestly proclaim the top five needs of their community, or drag cursors to create trash bins near their virtual park benches, it's clear that the younger generation still has the energy, will, and desire to grab life's reins and dash forward.

* Report of Walter Kälin, Representative of the UN Secretary General on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons, Mission to Azerbaijan: http://www.brookings.edu/~/media/Files/Projects/IDP/UN%20Reports/Mission%20Reports/2007_rpt_Azerbaijan_AE.pdf (accessed Feb. 14, 2010)



"It's hard to get food for them," says Natela of her kids, who evacuated to Gori during the 2008 conflict. "They want meat. When they were small, we could trick them. Now they know what's good."

Georgia

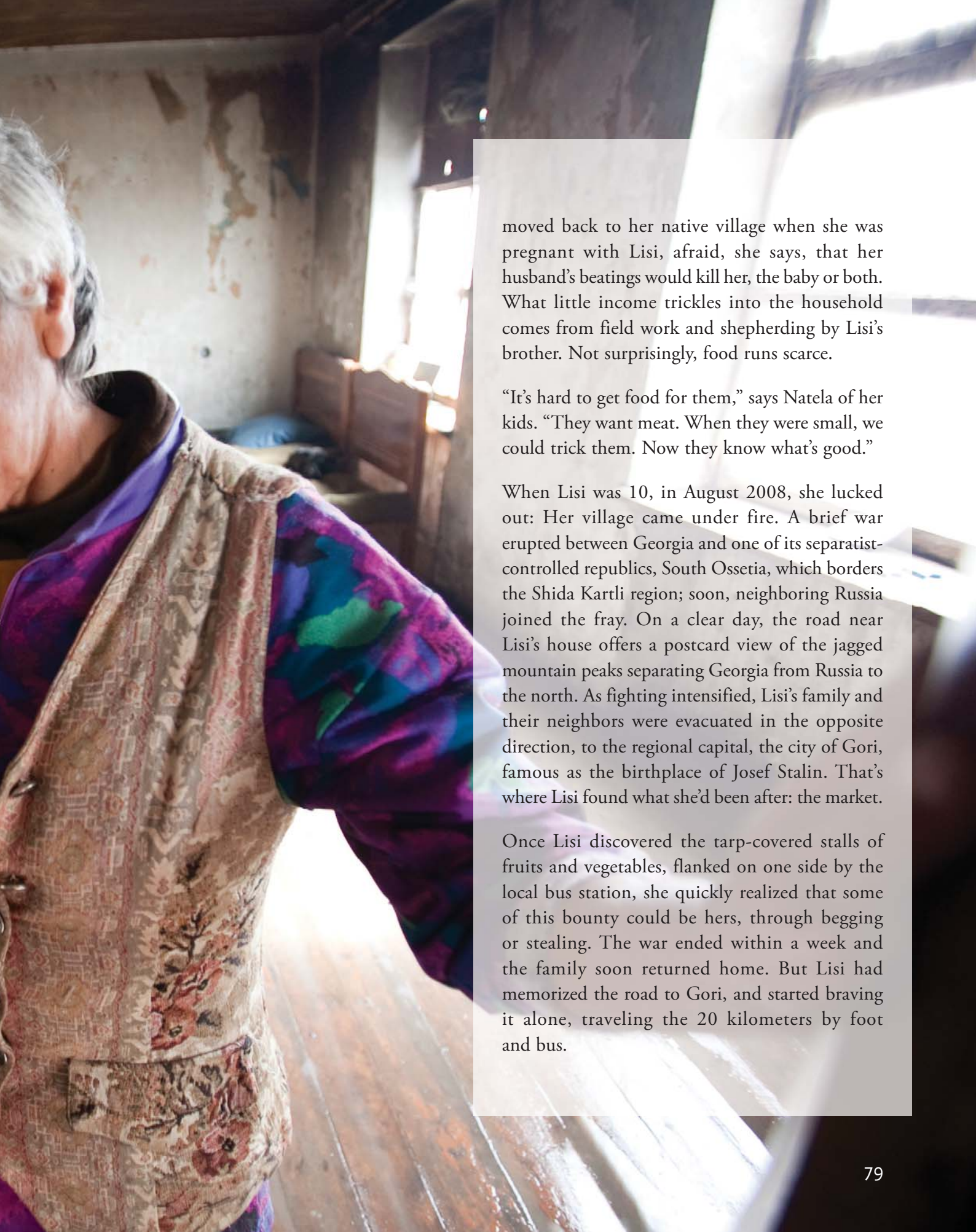
Lisi Kvinikadze is a thin, tan-faced 11-year-old, with eyes as big and brown as chestnuts and a deep-seated wariness of strangers. She lives in a village in rural Shida Kartli, the poorest region in Georgia.

The place Lisi calls home is an all but bare room on the second floor of a brick-and-stucco house. To get to it, she climbs a skeleton of stairs, more rebar than concrete, along an outside wall. The landing at the top is not to be stepped on—a few loose sheets of rust-brown metal, eaten-through in spots, as if with acid. Inside, the paneless windows are covered with murky plastic and a mild but persistent smell of human excrement hovers in the air, holding aloft a few lazy flies. Lisi lives here with her 15-year-old brother and their heavy-drinking mother. They have no kitchen or outhouse of their own, but a neighbor lets them use hers. A sagging cot stands near the door; not long ago, it was the family's shared bed, the only piece of furniture in the room.

The house had once belonged to Lisi's uncle, and her mother, Natela, grew up in this village, where many people still rely on subsistence farming. The neighbors say she'd been "a good girl." But Natela married and moved away right as Georgia's economy went into a post-Soviet freefall. Her husband couldn't find work. He started drinking. Natela joined him. Soon she was hooked. She

Lisi at home with her mother Natela in Shindisi village

When Skhivi's staff first encountered Lisi, her hair was long and girlish. She insisted that it be cut short after spending a month on the streets, when she disappeared from both home and the center and was finally found with the help of police. Asked why she wanted her hair cut, Lisi said that "a bad man" was out to hurt her mother and looking like a boy would help her provide some protection. Skhivi's psychologists fear that, in fact, it was Lisi who had been hurt or threatened during her month on the streets and the boyish haircut was her means of defending herself against further abuse.



moved back to her native village when she was pregnant with Lisi, afraid, she says, that her husband's beatings would kill her, the baby or both. What little income trickles into the household comes from field work and shepherding by Lisi's brother. Not surprisingly, food runs scarce.

"It's hard to get food for them," says Natela of her kids. "They want meat. When they were small, we could trick them. Now they know what's good."

When Lisi was 10, in August 2008, she lucked out: Her village came under fire. A brief war erupted between Georgia and one of its separatist-controlled republics, South Ossetia, which borders the Shida Kartli region; soon, neighboring Russia joined the fray. On a clear day, the road near Lisi's house offers a postcard view of the jagged mountain peaks separating Georgia from Russia to the north. As fighting intensified, Lisi's family and their neighbors were evacuated in the opposite direction, to the regional capital, the city of Gori, famous as the birthplace of Josef Stalin. That's where Lisi found what she'd been after: the market.

Once Lisi discovered the tarp-covered stalls of fruits and vegetables, flanked on one side by the local bus station, she quickly realized that some of this bounty could be hers, through begging or stealing. The war ended within a week and the family soon returned home. But Lisi had memorized the road to Gori, and started braving it alone, traveling the 20 kilometers by foot and bus.

"When we reached the center, we looked back and there she was, peeking in from the door. After that, she started coming every day."

Though food had been her main pursuit (even now, asked about possible future occupations, Lisi says she'd like to be "someone who cooks or bakes"), Lisi needed much more than calories. She did not go to school. Like her mother and brother, she could not read or write. She had no habit of washing her hands or blowing her nose. And even at the age of 10, she did not know the names of colors. Perhaps worst of all, Lisi had no one to help her work through pent-up fears and anger, and no refuge from the squalor or tensions of home.

Then Lisi met Manana Beridze, a teacher and social worker with a local children's aid organization called Society Biliki.

"When we first saw her," says Manana, "we watched for a while and then came over and asked why she was begging. She said, 'Because I want *hachapoori*'"—a cheese-filled bread and a staple of the Georgian diet.

That day, Manana and two colleagues had been combing the market, as they did three times a week, searching for kids who looked hungry, unkempt or otherwise in need of help. They told Lisi about Skhivi, their children's center at the edge of the market, where kids not only ate but played, painted, studied school subjects, and mastered handicrafts. Lisi shook her head: "Not interested."

"We asked why: Not in games? Not in new friends?" recalls Manana. "She said no. We didn't insist."

Manana's team walked back to the shabby, boxy building where Skhivi—Georgian for "ray of light"—occupies two sunny back rooms on the second floor. Cautiously, quiet as dust motes, Lisi had been following them: "When we reached the center, we looked back and there she was, peeking in from the door. After that, she started coming every day."

Gori's bazaar in the center of town

Children had been uprooted and were growing up without the traditional family networks so vital to survival and prosperity in the Caucasus. "The most impoverished people worked at the market," said Mari Mgebrishvili, director of Society Biliki.

Society Biliki, the nonprofit group that founded Skhivi, came into being in 1997 and Gori's city market was its natural birthplace. The "bazaar," as it's sometimes called here, fans out from the foot of Gori's highest hill, a sheer rampart crowned with a crumbling medieval fortress, smack in the middle of town. Beside the stalls, watermelons get hawked from trucks; cut flowers jut from plastic buckets; sacks bulge with candy, nuts and spices; vegetable oil comes in 5-liter plastic bottles; make-up, clothes and linens lie heaped on folding tables; a dozen cheap fishing rods form a flimsy picket fence. The broad assortment has a

certain historical logic: Throughout the 1990s, as the Soviet planned economy fell apart and families scrambled to make ends meet, the market became a magnet for people trying to earn a living selling whatever they could. Newly minted vendors came here after losing their jobs at shuttered factories or from distant villages where collective farms no longer had money to pay them. And with more adults than before forced out of the home to hunt for income, many of those who came to the market had no choice but to drag along their kids.

Biliki started out as a group of seven young volunteers, a few of whom had worked for Western aid groups. Their goal was to feed 15 hungry children who spent their days, and sometimes nights, at the market. A restaurant owner donated soup; a state-run bakery gave bread; the volunteers managed to collect some second-hand clothing. But quickly they saw that the children needed much more.

"We started realizing just how isolated they were," says Mari Mgebrishvili, Biliki's director and one of its founders. Many of the kids milling around the market had come to Gori as economic migrants from the countryside or IDPs fleeing Georgia's 1991–1992 civil war in nearby South Ossetia, formally still part of the Shida Kartli region. Quite a lot of them didn't go to school; they begged or tried to sell whatever trifles they got their hands on. Worse still, children had been uprooted and

Biliki's Skhivi center in the Gori bazaar

were growing up without the traditional family networks so vital to survival and prosperity in the Caucasus. With the economy in shambles, the anemic social services couldn't keep up with people's needs. "Their lists back then didn't reflect reality," recalls Mgebrishvili. "The most impoverished people worked at the market," she says, but the newly independent state of Georgia—depleted by armed conflict, chaotic corruption, and chronic power shortages—could do little to keep track of them, much less to help them.

To fill the gaps left by the government, even if just a little, Biliki started adding classes and activities to its humanitarian offerings. Initially, this went on ad hoc, depending on the skills and availability of volunteers: guitar lessons, reading and writing, excursions. Today, more than a decade later, Biliki provides socioeconomically vulnerable and marginalized children with a coordinated, comprehensive set of services unmatched by state agencies: professional psychological support, poverty relief, educational programs from literacy training to dance troupes. Biliki strives to ensure that at-risk kids don't fall through the cracks of the official social safety net.

"What can the municipality of Gori do?" says Nino Tatiashvili, senior specialist at the city's department of education and culture. "Because of the economic and political situation, it's difficult to look after these children. There's a huge load borne entirely by Biliki. It's a substitute for something the municipality should be able to do, but can't for now."

Biliki's strengths lie in its combination of good fund-raising and highly individualized attention to each child or family who benefits from its services. Using grants, mostly from Western donors, the group attracts dedicated, highly qualified teachers with its competitive salaries. Collectively, Biliki's staff develop support programs specific to each beneficiary and then assign one person as case manager—a role that involves visiting families at home, as well as working with children at Biliki or Skhivi, the daycare center at the market.

Under Manana's oversight, for example, Lisi has mastered the ornate Georgian alphabet well enough to write her own name, do simple spelling exercises, and sound out basic words. She gets regular psychological counseling to help her cope with aggression and sadness. Her family's living conditions have been vastly improved with two new beds, linens and blankets, a desk and chair, clothes for Lisi, and regular food aid. Moreover, to provide some lasting relief, Biliki staff have spent nearly a year collecting and processing

Biliki started out as a group of seven young volunteers, a few of whom had worked for Western aid groups. Their goal was to feed 15 hungry children who spent their days, and sometimes nights, at the market. Today, more than a decade later, Biliki provides socioeconomically vulnerable and marginalized children with a coordinated, comprehensive set of services unmatched by state agencies.


CORN
POTATO
TOMATO
CABBAGE

paperwork—Lisi had no birth certificate because she was born at home—to get the family enrolled in the state poverty relief program. Most tellingly, when Lisi goes to Biliki or Skhivi, she sometimes smiles—a phenomenon rarely seen at home.

Biliki now serves more than a hundred children and still manages to maintain the sense of a big family—for some kids, the only one they've got. But case managers are working at full capacity. "We want Biliki to become larger," says Tatiashvili, the education official. "They've got the experience. They're just small."

Apart from valuing Biliki's work, local authorities try to cooperate with the group as closely as possible, both in identifying children who could benefit from its services and in adopting its best practices. "Biliki had psychologists when none of the schools had them," recalls Tatiashvili, who had been a school principal when her relationship with Biliki began. "When we saw how important psychologists were for a school, we decided to cooperate with Biliki. We turned to them. Biliki put together a schedule; a psychologist went around to different schools and worked with children and parents." Schools didn't start getting their own psychologists until 2007, she added, and many still don't have them.

Giorgi (17) fixing shoes.
Giorgi's father taught him shoemaking from an early age so that he could earn income to help support his family.
Now 17, he works in the bazaar to support himself and to provide his younger brother and sisters with food, clothes and school supplies. He also comes to Skhivi to supplement his schooling, learn woodcarving and play sports with other boys his age.


MESSI
bwin
IRINKA

Tamriko Shavdatuashvili decided to create a cooking class for children working with Biliki after her own child benefited from the center's classes. Girls from 6 to 16 years old take part in the twice-weekly class, which serves two purposes: giving children marketable vocational skills and involving parents in Biliki's work. Biliki's teachers and other children are also fans of the class because they get to eat the final products.

One child who benefited from Biliki's cooperative relationship with the local school system was Gaga Dzabakhidze, an 8-year-old second-grader at Gori's School No. 6.

Unlike Lisi, who found unexpected opportunities from the war of August 2008, Gaga only suffered from it. When he started first grade that fall, there were nearly 30 children in his class. Soon, more than half of them left. Like Gaga, they hailed from the "buffer zone" between Gori and South Ossetia's capital, Tskhinvali, less than a hundred kilometers away, and had wound up in the city temporarily, after fleeing their towns and villages during the fighting. Once things calmed down, they returned home. But Gaga couldn't.

The problem was not security per se: The bombs had stopped falling; buildings and orchards were burnt but not burning; marauders no longer looted from house to house. But when Gaga got back to his village a couple of months after the brief war, the problems that had surfaced during the family's escape got many times worse. Nightmares woke him, crying and shaking, and a new stutter got so bad that he couldn't speak.


Сарра

A school in Gori

"Gaga's very sensitive," says his mother, 27-year-old Zhuzhuna Taruashvili. "He always has been." During their journey, by foot, to escape the fighting, Gaga's younger brother, Georgy, "focused on the different things he saw, like cars, trucks, cows. He was focusing on that. Gaga was looking into my eyes and watching how I was feeling."

The shelling had started at night, after she'd put the boys to bed.

"I turned up the TV, so the kids wouldn't hear," she recalls. "The shooting was constant."

Early the next morning, she took them and set out on foot. The din of mortars followed close behind. Her husband, Koba, had stayed in the village hoping to protect their home. That night, Zhuzhuna and the boys slept in the woods.

"The whole village was there with us," Zhuzhuna remembers. "Around four in the morning we saw planes coming. There was some sort of antenna"—possibly a military installation—"nearby."

Eventually, she and the boys reached the town of Kareli where Koba, who joined them ten days later, had an aunt. After a month there, the family moved to Gori and lived for a couple of weeks in a school together with other IDPs.

A new IDP resettlement camp on the Gori–Tbilisi road

"There were lots of people there," says Zhuzhuna in her quiet, rhythmic voice. "Everyone kept talking about the war, non-stop. That affected Gaga. We went and stayed for a few days with relatives, but there were lots of people there too. To this day, the kids can't deal with it when there are lots of people. It upsets them."

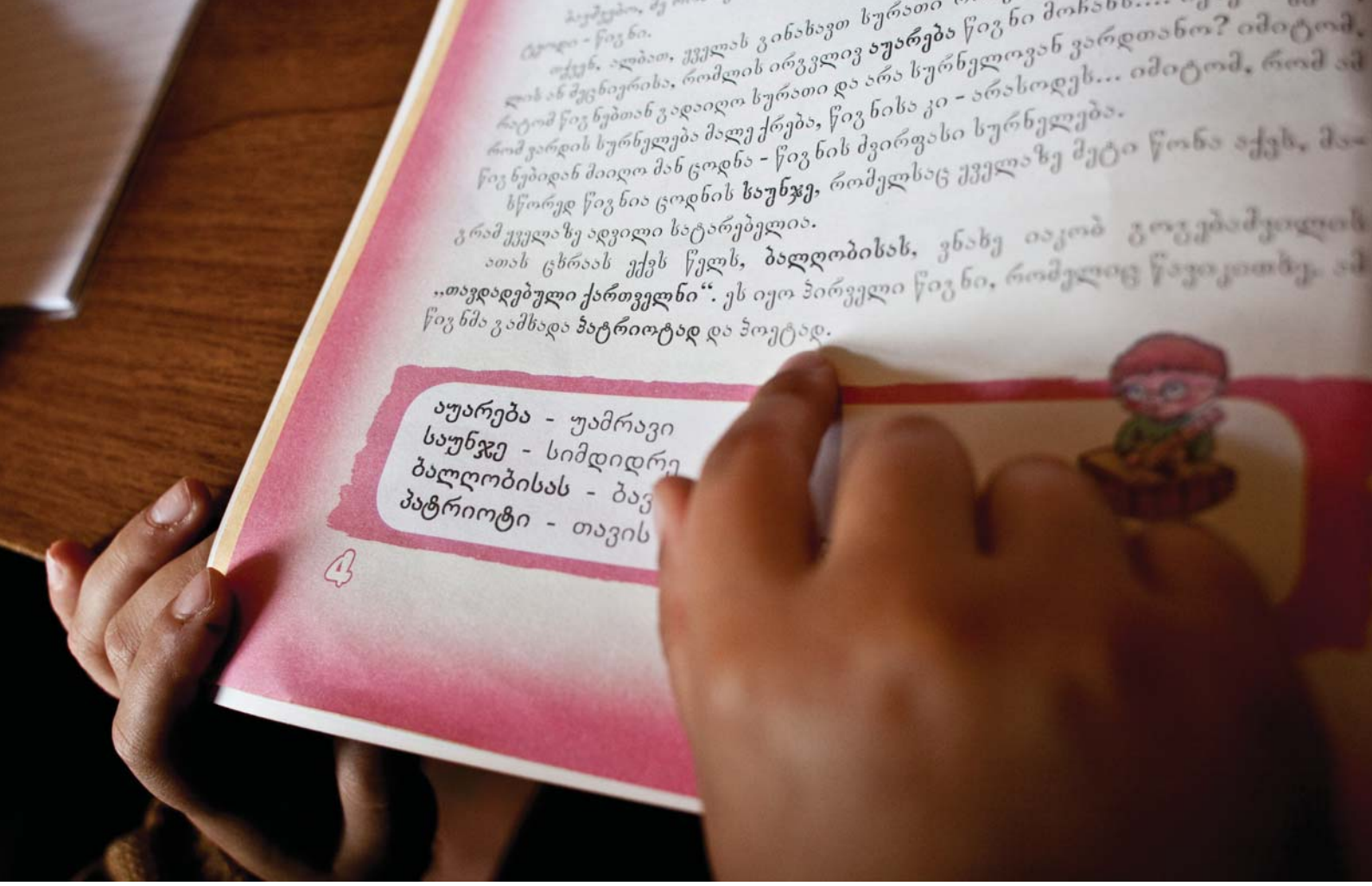
By early fall, Gaga was in school and liking it. A kind-hearted speech therapist worked with him three times a week, at home, charging three laris per session instead of the standard five. But Koba's construction job, building homes for the displaced, would soon end and the family would not be able to afford rent in Gori. They weren't eligible to move into the neat, red-roofed houses for IDPs springing up with impressive speed across Georgia because their village was technically safe. So they went home for a visit, and Gaga's gentle nerves gave in.

They weren't eligible to move into the neat, red-roofed houses for IDPs because their village was technically safe.

Then, one of Gaga's teachers told Zhuzhuna about Biliki.

For Biliki, the August 2008 war added about 40 kids from internally displaced families like Gaga's to the organization's rolls. On paper, their situation looks better than that of the refugees of the 1990s. The latest round of fighting drove at least 127,000 ethnic Georgians from their homes, but fewer than 30,000 of them permanently. Also, with nearly $4 billion in foreign aid, Georgia managed to resettle the displaced quickly. Their living conditions, on average, are a great improvement over those of the earlier IDPs—more than 200,000 people still scraping by since the ethno-political wars nearly 20 years ago, with South Ossetia and Georgia's other still-disputed region, Abkhazia.

On top of its human toll, the 2008 war had a major economic impact on Georgia, and economists worried, rightly, that those who were already poor would be driven further into poverty. In 2007, economic growth had peaked at 12.5 percent; in 2008, after the fighting, it weighed in at a scrawny 3.5 percent. Since the so-called Rose Revolution of 2003, Georgians' standard of living has improved in many ways, including better access to health care, education, and public



"When Gaga is asked about Marika, the psychologist, his eyes light up and replies, stressing the second word: 'I love Marika.'"

services such as electricity and well-paved roads. Average earnings have also risen. But none of this has significantly reduced poverty. Nominal per capita GDP is the lowest in the South Caucasus at under $3,000 a year, and official unemployment rates mask rampant underemployment.

Moreover, poverty continues to be concentrated in rural areas like Shida Kartli, where Biliki does its work. According to the World Bank, average monetary income in the region fell by 24 percent in 2003–2007, and nearly 60 percent of the region's residents live in poverty, more than half in "extreme poverty." A much smaller percentage of people, however, receive benefits through the state welfare program.

In helping the children and families who turn to them, Biliki focuses on multiple factors such as livelihood, mental health, and sustainability. In Gaga's case, Biliki began by finding his father a well-paying job (with a Norwegian demining project), which let the family stay in Gori rather than force Gaga back to the village. Biliki also introduced Gaga to Marika Gochiashvili, their veteran psychologist.

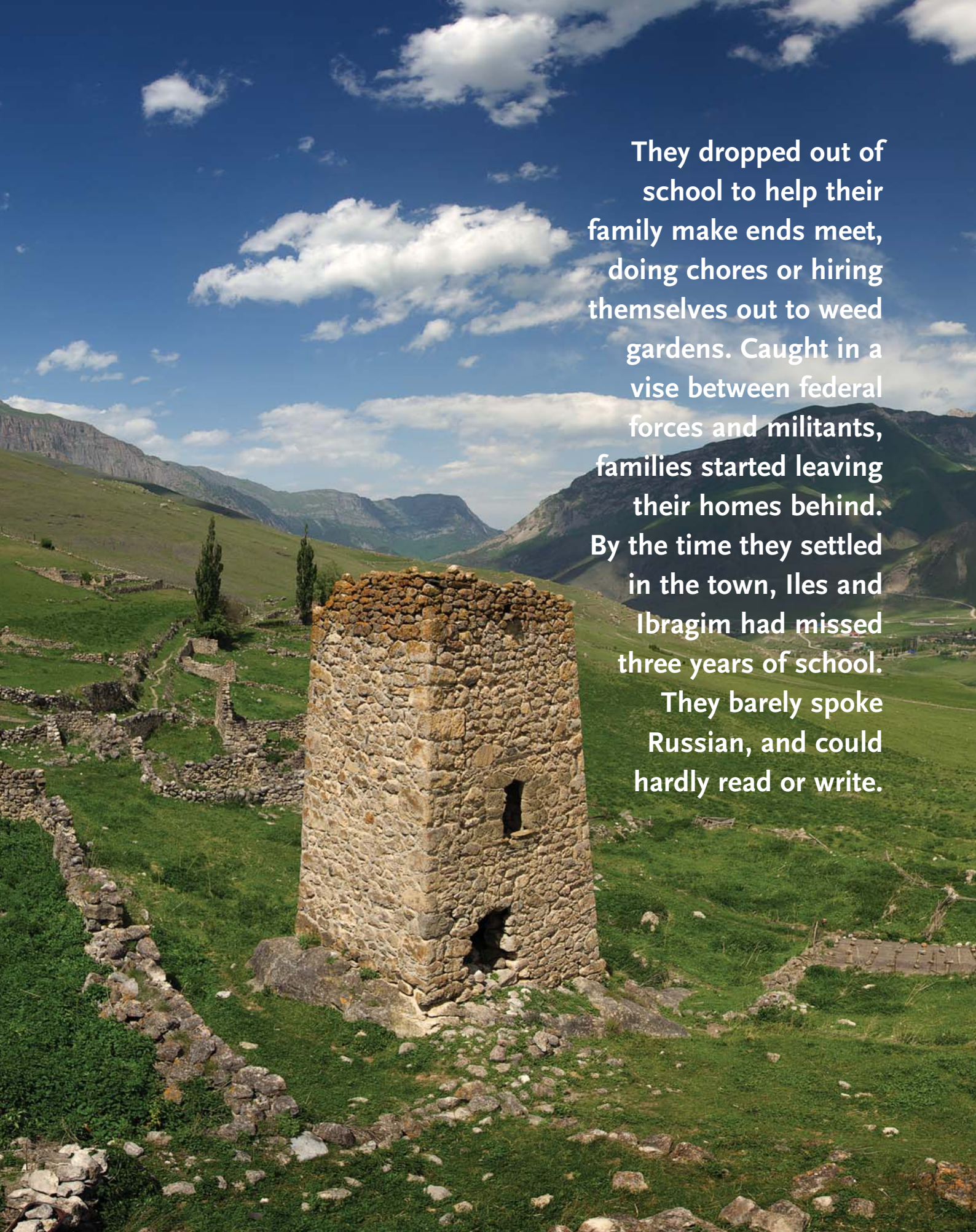
"I'm grateful," says Zhuzhuna, who has often turned to Gochiashvili herself for parenting advice and literature on childhood trauma. "Gaga was closed in on himself. He didn't want to share his feelings. Marika started working with him, got him to open up. Things he won't tell me, he'll tell her. For example, when he'd wake up at night crying."

Gaga's nightmares are now at bay. The speech therapist has ratcheted their sessions down to two a week, praising Gaga's progress. Though Zhuzhuna compares her older son to the sea, "sometimes calm, sometimes stormy," Gaga's almond eyes often crinkle at the corners with smiles. Asked about Biliki, he cracks a little one and says, "Yes, I like going there."; asked about *hinkali*, the meaty soup dumplings he adores, he smiles wider and nods, "Yes, I like them."; but when he is asked about Marika, the psychologist, Gaga's eyes light up and he replies, stressing the second word: "I love Marika."

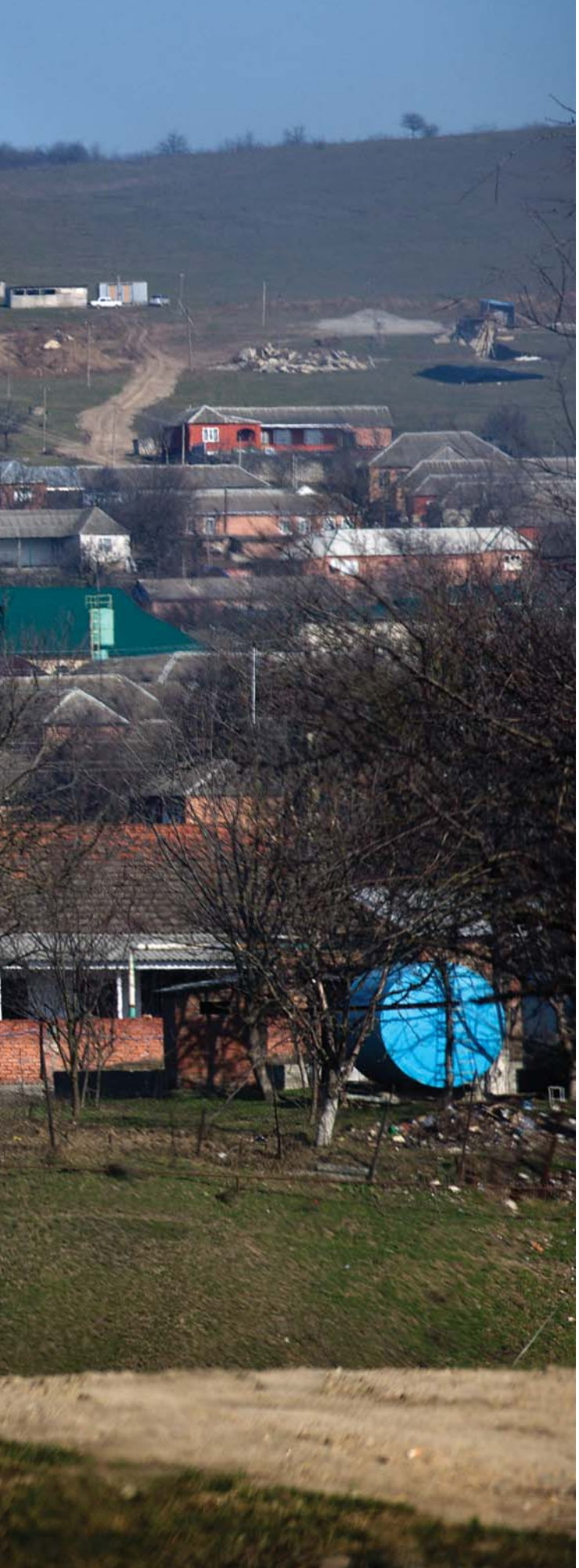
"What can the municipality of Gori do?" says Nino Tatiashvili, senior specialist at the city's department of education and culture. "Because of the economic and political situation, it's difficult to look after these children. There's a huge load borne entirely by Biliki. It's a substitute for something the municipality should be able to do, but can't for now."

Gori locals and IDPs affected by the 2008 war with Russia, in the Gori district near the Kombinat


North Caucasus



They dropped out of school to help their family make ends meet, doing chores or hiring themselves out to weed gardens. Caught in a vise between federal forces and militants, families started leaving their homes behind. By the time they settled in the town, Iles and Ibragim had missed three years of school. They barely spoke Russian, and could hardly read or write.



Iles and Ibragim, twin brothers, were born in 1990, just before the Soviet Union fell apart. They lived with their parents and five siblings in a small village in the thickly wooded mountains of southern Chechnya. From 1994 to 1996, the tiny republic, a constituent territory of Russia, fought a devastating war with federal troops. The family survived. Like their neighbors, they hid in basements during bombing raids and walked with caution, wary of unexploded mines. They had a garden and cows and sheep to feed them. But their real source of livelihood was the roaring, gurgling, craggy-toothed chainsaw that the boys' father used to make piles of firewood to sell. When not in use, the cherished instrument stayed in the shed, carefully shielded from the elements.

When Iles and Ibragim were nine, a new round of fighting began—the so-called second Chechen war—again pitting Russian federal troops against local militants, who, from spring to fall, could hide in the dense greenery around villages like the one where the boys lived. Soon after the conflict flared back to life, in early autumn, a group of soldiers came to the family's house as part of a "sweep"—a search for militants hiding among civilians. In both of the post-Soviet Chechen wars, federal soldiers, often under-fed and ill-equipped, had difficulty distinguishing fighters from non-combatants; sometimes, they didn't try. When the troops, during their search, came upon the chainsaw, they wanted it for themselves. Iles

Because of lack of classrooms, classes are often held in teachers' homes

In June 2002, Russia's then-president, Vladimir Putin, called the turmoil in Chechnya a "tragedy" and said the sweeps "must be stopped." But for thousands, it was too late.

and Ibragim's father refused. With his wife and children watching, he was taken away, together with his chainsaw, and the family has not seen either since.

Not knowing the fate of a loved one, the lack of what psychologists call "closure," traumatizes children: "It's a wound that doesn't heal," says Mansur, a teacher who's worked with the boys. "It's constant stress. Imagine: They've cooked something delicious and they're sitting down together eating; they can't help but wonder, 'And what's papa eating now?'" According to official statistics, 2,700 Chechens disappeared between

A classroom in Tsotsy-Yurt

September 1999 and April 2006 and remain unaccounted for; the Russian human rights group Memorial puts the number between 3,000 and 5,000.

That fall, Iles and Ibragim did not return to school for third grade. They dropped out to help their beheaded family make ends meet, doing chores or hiring themselves out to weed gardens. But people in Chechnya's mountain villages found themselves caught in a vise: On one hand, the bombing and sweeps by federal forces continued; on the other hand, militants came at night, brandishing their assault rifles, demanding food, water or shelter. Refusal meant subjecting your family to vengeance; acquiescence risked retribution from the military for collaborating with insurgents. Gradually, squeezed from all sides, families started leaving their homes behind and moving to the plains below.

In June 2002, Russia's then-president, Vladimir Putin, called the turmoil in Chechnya a "tragedy" and said the sweeps "must be stopped." But for thousands, it was too late. That same year, one small rural town near the foot of the mountains absorbed, by some estimates, about 1,500 displaced villagers—Iles and Ibragim's family among them.

Many of the homes they'd abandoned were soon destroyed, some by air raids, others burned down or wrecked at ground level—an effort to make sure that the militants couldn't use the empty buildings to hide or rest.

By the time they settled in the town, Iles and Ibragim had missed three years of school. They barely spoke Russian, the primary language of instruction, and could hardly read or write. The boys were going on 13, and even war and displacement don't cancel out adolescence: They were self-conscious; they refused to go to school, ashamed to be seen as penniless bumpkin dunces. Then Iles and Ibragim met Mansur, a man old enough to be their grandfather. Perhaps because Chechen society, particularly in the countryside, hinged for so long on respect for one's elders, Mansur managed to convince them to attend his classes—discreet catch-up for children just like them.

NOTE:
Because the situation in Chechnya remains precarious and human rights violations continue to be documented there, the names of the Chechen boys and their teacher, profiled above, have been changed to protect them and their families. The name of the boys' native village and the town to which they moved have been omitted for the same reason.


Y 3

"We found 25 illiterate kids," says Mansur, recalling the year he met Iles and Ibragim. "They'd moved down to the plains. They lagged far behind. Their schooling had been interrupted constantly."

Mansur "found" the children because he had been looking for them. His efforts rose from the bottom up. It was an improvised response by a dedicated teacher to a need that he clearly saw among the waves of displaced families flooding the area where he worked. Between 1994 and 2000, as many as 200,000 children in Chechnya—a number equal to about one-fifth of the republic's entire population—suffered long-term disruptions in their schooling. Assessing the situation in 2001–2002, UNICEF found that out of just over 400 schools, "38 had been completely destroyed, 50 needed major repairs, 231 required serious rehabilitation work and 60 needed minor repairs, with only 2 schools being still intact."*

Mansur's classes involved all the instructional and healing elements he could think of, from basic literacy and numeracy to art therapy. Many of the kids showed signs of post-traumatic stress disorder and an acute attention deficit: "They don't study well," Mansur says, "they cry easily." As part of his

* UNICEF report cited by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Center: http://www.internal-displacement.org/idmc/website/countries.nsf/(httpEnvelopes)/844BA5439C49138E802570B8005AAE25?OpenDocument (accessed February 13, 2010).

A teacher cleans a classroom in a school in Tsotsy-Yurt

work with the children, he tried to get them to open up and communicate more: They broke up in pairs and interviewed each other; they played "telephone," whispering in each other's ears; they had a farewell ritual. "When people talk things through, they unburden themselves emotionally," says Mansur. Gradually, the kids "started laughing, helping each other with hints." Because skill levels differed, those who were more advanced would help the weaker students and, "by teaching, would themselves learn."

Together with like-minded teachers, Mansur decided to scale up the approach and to add an ounce of prevention by taking it into the highland villages that still had residents. Thus began a three-year hunt for funding.

"Donors felt education was a prerogative of the State, and initially were reluctant to fund our program," says Lilya Yusupova, a teacher and head of the nonprofit, nongovernmental organization Creation, based in the Chechen city of Gudermes. "But in fact, we were talking about children who weren't studying in schools. They had fallen out of the educational system."

Since winning some financial support in 2006, Creation has led the program and graduated ten classes. It now runs two classes, each for 20 children, with its OSI–ESP grant and a few

A teacher holds her nephew during a lesson at the school

more classes with grants from other donors. The majority of kids range from the ages of 12 to 18, with some exceptions as old as 22. Classes are held five days a week, for three hours, with two breaks for stretching and relaxing. In the first four months, the children get to a second-grade level of reading and math; in the following four, they reach a fourth-grade level. Mansur estimates that about 80 percent of the students go on to a regular school, sometimes entering as high as the eighth grade.

The project has retained its bottom-up principle: A village is selected for participation if it has passionate, talented, conscientious teachers eager to take up the challenge. Such teachers are found through networking by pedagogues cut from the same cloth. One of the two classes run with the OSI–ESP grant operates out of a teacher's home. In another village, a teacher works double time for single pay in order to accommodate girls, who aren't allowed out in the evening, and boys, who often work during the day. Inevitably, the teachers also become counselors to parents, giving them tips on ways to help their children, for example, by setting aside a separate space in the home where they can keep their things, or by engaging withdrawn kids with small tasks and encouraging them with incremental successes.

Paradoxically, though, many of the teachers also need counseling. They have been as deeply wounded by a decade of war and impunity in Chechnya as any other group of civilians. "Our ideal," says Lilya, "would be to conduct some sort of rehabilitation for the teachers. Working while traumatized is very hard."

As Chechnya stabilizes politically, it has made improvements to the educational sector, but much remains to be done. In recent years, the republic has been rebuilding and schools have been part of the construction frenzy. In 2009, UNICEF noted that out of 437 available schools, 142 are being rehabilitated and refurbished. But teacher–student ratios remain high, opportunities for teachers to upgrade their skills are inadequate and methodological materials scarce. As in much of the North Caucasus, schools don't offer students hot meals—a problem noted even by Russia's president, Dmitry Medvedev. For the time being, learning opportunities for children maimed by the years of fighting also seem woefully lacking. According to Chechnya's ministry of labor, employment, and social welfare, the republic has more than 40,000 disabled children, the majority of them victims of warfare, and only one rehabilitation center, with a capacity of 300–350 patients per year. Moreover, some noble intentions have been stymied by corruption: A recent criminal case involved the embezzlement of 3.5 million rubles (more than $115,000) in funding for the construction of a boarding school for deaf and hearing-impaired children in Grozny, Chechnya's capital.

"They're very motivated, raring to go," says Yusupova of the four-grades-in-eight months pace of the program. "They want to be 'ordinary,' like everybody."

Despite all the obstacles to learning for children affected by war, one thing that Creation doesn't have to worry about is apathy among the kids who enroll in its classes. "They're very motivated, raring to go," says Yusupova of the four-grades-in-eight-months pace of the program. "They want to be 'ordinary,' like everybody. We've got no discipline problems. … We wouldn't be able to do this with ordinary children."

Mansur remembers very well how Iles and Ibragim changed before his eyes: "They started demanding much more of themselves," he says. "The courses helped them get their bearings, grow more confident."

In 2008, the boys graduated from 11th grade and found work; with construction booming, Iles learned masonry, while Ibragim started installing metal gates. That same year, their older brother, who had been a teenager when their father was taken away and had not gone through any sort of reintegration program like the Creation classes, went off to join the militants in the woods.

Many children starting Creation classes do not speak Russian, the primary language of instruction


РУССКИЙ
ЯЗЫК

Iles and Ibragim's older brother was not alone. Prosecutors in Chechnya have told human rights advocates that more than a thousand young men aged 16 to 30 "went off to the woods" in 2007–2008. By some counts, this influx tripled the number of active insurgents and, as of January 2009, it put the average age of the "radical underground" at 20–25. At the start of Chechnya's first war, in 1994, these boys turned militants would have been between five and ten years old.

Children traumatized by violence and insecurity exhibit all sorts of belligerent behaviors: "They can be aggressive, don't speak, and quarrel over toys," a psychologist working with war-afflicted Chechen children at an IDP camp in Ingushetia told the Red Cross.

Over the past half dozen years, the armed conflict in Chechnya has quieted down, with the federal "KTO" (counter-terrorist operation) officially terminated in the spring of 2009. But the long-running fight against authority—first nationalist, then Islamic in ideology—has spread tentacles, with firearms, into neighboring republics. In June 2004, dozens of policemen, intelligence officers, and border guards were killed in a massive, coordinated attack in Ingushetia's provincial capital, Nazran. The following year, a similar raid by more than a hundred armed men befell Nalchik, the sleepy, leafy capital of Kabardino-Balkaria. In 2005 and 2006, the republic of Dagestan—home to a long segment of the Baku–Novorossiisk oil pipeline—registered more than a hundred "terrorist incidents," including the

assassination of one local government official and attempts on several others.

The upsurge in violence dovetails with deeply ingrained socioeconomic problems. The republics of the North Caucasus rely heavily on subsidies from Moscow (in 2006, 58 to 89 percent of their budgets came from the capital); high unemployment figures mask the biggest per capita "shadow" economy in the country; corruption pervades all spheres where money is involved; and the justice system can, at best, be described as unreliable. Moreover, some local trends like clannishness along family or ethnic lines and semi-tolerated practices of kidnapping, ransom and blood vengeance, severely hinder development.

By late 2009, the situation rose to the top of the Kremlin's agenda in a fundamentally new way. Speaking before parliament in a state-of-the-nation address, President Medvedev called the situation in the North Caucasus "the most serious domestic problem of our country" but supplemented the usual talk of security measures with an emphasis on sustainable development. "It is obvious," he said, "that the roots of many problems lie, first and foremost, in economic backwardness and the absence, for a majority of people living in the region, of normal prospects" for the future. At the start of 2010, Moscow created a separate North Caucasus Federal District made up of seven regions—six of them with ethnic majorities of non-Russians, five predominantly Muslim—and appointed a new deputy prime minister with a

strong managerial background to oversee their rehabilitation.

In his address, President Medvedev said it would be particularly important to carry out "systemic work with families and schools," and a key reason that policies to stabilize and uplift the region must focus on young people is its so-called youth bulge. While Russia as a whole has been losing about a million people a year to low birth rates and short life spans, birth rates in the North Caucasus have outpaced the national average. This could bode ill for peace: A recent comparative study by European scholars showed that societies with a large proportion of people aged 15 to 24 face a higher risk that poverty will lead to conflict. Frustrated young men with limited opportunities for personal advancement have little motivation to uphold the status quo, and are more likely to engage in violence than their peers in societies with greater upward mobility and a generally older population. In an attempt to reduce potential youth-bulge volatility, at least two North Caucasus republics, Dagestan and North Ossetia, have passed child-curfew legislation, forbidding minors to be outside between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. without an adult guardian.

The peoples of the North Caucasus, like their neighbors south of the mountain range, bear a heavy legacy of ethnic strife, political manipulation, and past injustices. One cataclysm lodged deep in the collective memory struck in 1944—lethal mass deportations orchestrated by Stalin at the end of World War II that were based on ethnicity and presumptions about loyalties. The Chechens fell victim, as did their ethnic cousins the Ingush, plus two Turkic-language groups, the Balkars of Kabardino-Balkaria and the Karachai of Karachayevo-Cherkessia. As described by a director of the Carter Center's Conflict Resolution Program, Hrair Balian, these peoples:

*…were accused of collaboration with the enemy [Nazi Germany] based on mostly unfounded charges. They were rounded up with extraordinary speed, loaded into tens of thousands of cattle wagons, and transferred to Central Asia and Siberia. They lived in extremely harsh conditions in their places of deportation, some in dugouts or in the open, under hard labor, with little food, and without schooling for their children. Thus, one quarter of the Chechen and one third of the Karachai died during the deportation.**

By 1957, a year after the start of "de-Stalinization," the surviving deportees were allowed to return. In many cases, their former homes had been occupied by new migrants or old neighbors, and the seeds of future conflict were sown.

* "Armed Conflict in Chechnya: Its Impact on Children. Case Study for the United Nations Study on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children," November 1995, http://repository.forcedmigration.org/pdf/?pid=fmo:3781 (accessed February 13, 2010).


“Our ideal would be to conduct some sort of rehabilitation for the teachers. Working while traumatized is very hard.”


Georgy

Georgy expected grades and lectures—the same things that vexed him in regular classes. He got neither. A child's first contact with Doverie builds exactly what the name means: trust.

When the momentous occasion of starting first grade rolled around, 6-year-old Georgy Gogluyev hadn't been too anxious. He was a bright-eyed, energetic, confident boy. Besides, he knew the turf: He had lived in his neighborhood on the outskirts of North Ossetia's capital, Vladikavkaz, all his life. And his mother taught at School No. 34, which he'd be attending. So when trouble slapped him from behind in the very first week of September, Georgy sank into shock. The problem was simple: He understood very little of what the teachers tried to tell him; and they understood even less of what he said in response. He'd become deaf and mute.

Georgy was born in 2001, and he was born a refugee. Ten years earlier, his mother, Giuli, had scrambled across the mountains from neighboring Georgia, where South Ossetia's bid for sovereignty had ignited a war that would rage for 18 months. Giuli and her parents were among more than 60,000 ethnic Ossetians who fled the fighting and came to North Ossetia, a part of Russia where fellow Ossetians made up over half the population.

Students from refugee families made up more than half of the school's total population of 800. It was clear that the teachers would need professional support.

For a few years, they lived with a relative; then, they were moved to a small, unheated wooden house at a camping site, a Soviet-era relic that once accommodated skiers, hikers, and climbers drawn to the breath-taking mountains.

At home, Giuli and her parents spoke their native Ossetian, a language with Persian roots that bears little similarity to Russian. Soon Ossetian became not just their chief mode of communication but their bread-winner too: Giuli found a job teaching it at a local school. When Georgy was born, the family, naturally, continued to speak Ossetian at home, as did many of their neighbors, also refugees from the war over South Ossetia.

We come to them and say, "Let's play! You're going to get to know yourselves and each other better."

But at Georgy's school, the main language of instruction was Russian. When Georgy entered first grade in 2007, he was at a loss. Giuli hadn't foreseen that her son would suddenly feel so powerless and isolated, nor could she have guessed what the shock would do to him. Very quickly, both with teachers and with other kids, Georgy changed from a friendly, fun-loving child into an angry, aggressive, impulsive boy: "Right away he'd take offense, right away he'd cry, right away he'd fight," recalls Giuli. She was beside herself.

The school, based in a poor, once-industrial neighborhood, had no specialists of its own to tackle such problems. But students from refugee families made up more than half of the school's total population of 800—it was clear that the teachers would need professional support. The education system's inability to accommodate multilingualism was yet another burden for the children to bear because their families had been displaced by war. When the city's child psychology center, Doverie (Russian for "trust"), got the chance for outside funding to expand its work, School No. 34 was a top priority. Georgy, thanks to his mom, was one of the first kids to sign up: "When I heard about the psychologists and speech therapists," recalls Giuli, "I took him right away."

Many of the schools where Doverie works are based in poor neighborhoods, and have no specialists of their own to tackle problems of traumatized refugee children. Northern Ossetian schools have few teachers trained to support second-language learners, no speech therapists, no programs for children with special needs or mild developmental delays, and few psychologists.

Doverie had been working with refugee and IDP children since the early 1990s, when their number in the city shot up.

"Language problems we see, especially for the little ones," says Zalina Gusova, one of the center's veteran psychologists. Also often seen are low motivation, aggressiveness, and trouble building relationships. Some children contend with symptoms like sleeplessness, anxiety or debilitating fear. Many stumble in their studies, at times with disorders like dysgraphia.

Helping children clear these hurdles is both a science and an art. And regular schools in North Ossetia aren't equipped to do it. They have no teachers trained to support second-language learners, no speech therapists, no programs for children with special needs or mild developmental delays, and few psychologists. Doverie's experts must get children to open up, but their methods have little in common with the psychoanalysis depicted in Hollywood movies. There is no couch and there are no questions about the past. (On the contrary, intrusive questioning can re-open old wounds and re-traumatize children.) Moreover, kids in the Caucasus aren't chatty, particularly with adults they don't know. Schoolchildren here rise from their chairs and nod hello when grown-ups

Kids work with a teacher at the Doverie center in Vladikavkaz

To the kids, sessions with Doverie mean games and drawing and fun; in fact, the activities all boost self-awareness, self-confidence and self-control, reduce stress, and improve communication skills.

enter the room. Talking about oneself and one's feelings isn't customary, especially for boys, who feel a social pressure to be strong and silent. And some children have just grown wary: Where there's been violence, trust is bound to be a casualty.

When Georgy arrived at his first session with "the psychologists," as Doverie's staff is collectively known in School No. 34, he expected grades and lectures—the same things that vexed him in regular classes. He got neither. A child's first contact with Doverie builds exactly what the name means: trust. Introductory meetings with an adult from the center—predominantly women—can last up to 40 minutes. "We come to them and say, 'Let's play! You're going to get to know yourselves and each other better,'" says Lyudmila Kaytukova, a psychologist who's been with the center for nearly 20 years.

To the kids, sessions with Doverie mean games and drawing and fun; in fact, the sugar's packed with medicine. The dozens of different activities all have an agenda: to boost self-awareness, self-confidence and self-control, to reduce stress, to improve communication skills. Children go around in a circle, introducing themselves not just with a name but with a personality trait. Or they create their own coat of arms, where each element says something about the author. Overcoming fear can involve drawing a picture of the things that scare you, packing it away in an envelope, and tearing it up. A favorite game is to stand in a circle, arms stretched out to the sides, holding pencils between each pair of neighboring index fingers; then the kids must raise and lower their arms in unison without dropping any pencils. The effort fosters a sense of cooperation and togetherness.

Doverie means trust. And that is exactly what sessions there build. Through play, children begin to open up and get to know themselves and each other better.

Before, not a day went by without a fight. Now they're more sociable, and if new kids come, they take them under their wing.

The kids don't necessarily notice that. But their teachers do.

"They've calmed down a lot," says Anna Vodoleikina, a pert, young teacher of Russian, of her sixth graders. "Before, not a day went by without a fight. Now they're more sociable, and if new kids come, they take them under their wing."

Doverie was originally meant to be a standard Soviet recreation center for young people. But it was founded in the late 1980s, during perestroika, a time of innovation and experimentation. The Youth Communist League official in charge of the center was progressive and decided to survey local kids to learn about their preferences. He was

Soslan Gogichayev (12) was in South Ossetia visiting relatives when violence flared between Russia and Georgia in 2008

surprised by what he heard: the children wanted not just after-school clubs but a telephone hotline for advice and support. A few years later, the Soviet Union disintegrated; North Ossetia was overrun by refugees from Georgia; and in 1992, when war broke out with Ingushetia, the republic became the first site of post-Soviet armed conflict on Russian territory, with thousands of people displaced. Predictably, the need for psychological support skyrocketed.

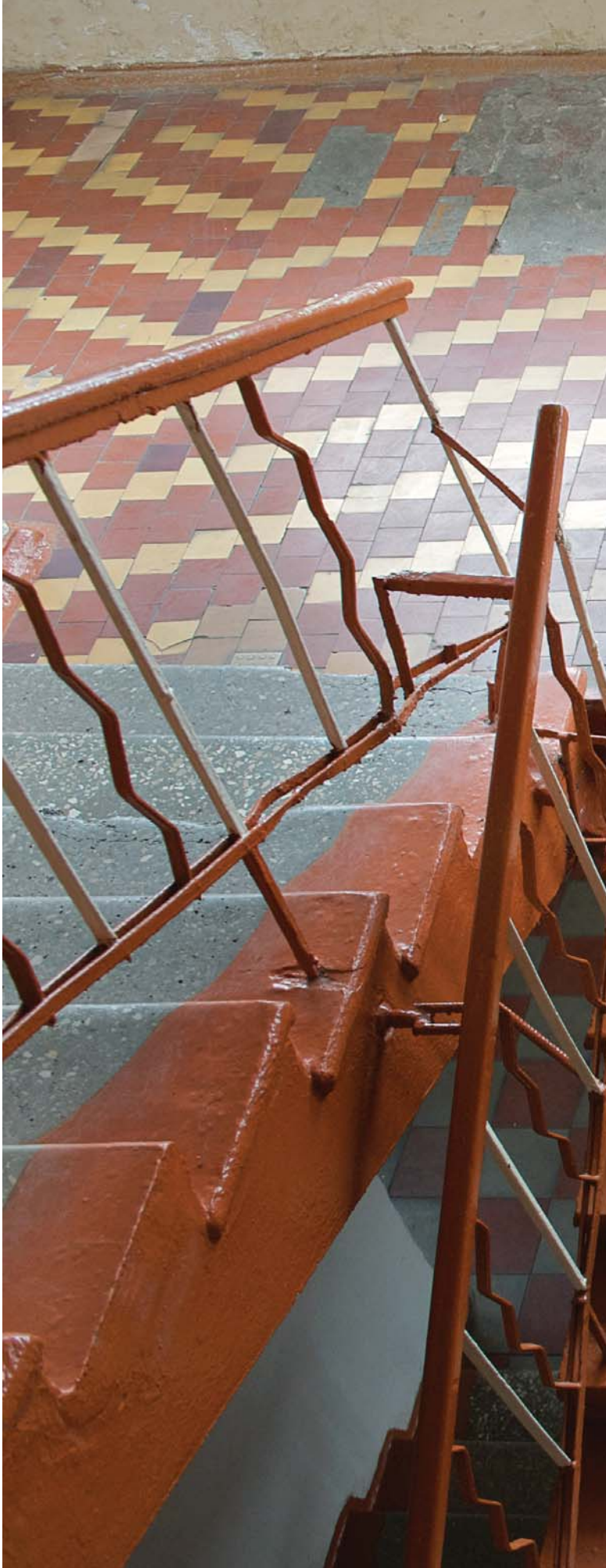
In the Caucasus, the necessity of helping children cope with stress and violence crops up with a sad consistency, even in a relatively peaceful place like North Ossetia. The tragedy at Beslan's School No. 1 was the starkest example by far, and Doverie's specialists worked with survivors round the clock (Lyudmila still gets regular phone calls from "my Beslan kids"). But even the 2008 flare-up over South Ossetia, involving Georgia and Russia, sent specters of old wars to haunt new generations of children. Many of the refugee families in North Ossetia send their kids to stay with relatives "down south" for the summer and the August war caught them there. "Everyone kept saying we were being attacked. Everyone was so anxious," recalls 12-year-old Soslan Gogichayev, who escaped the fighting, together with his mother and sister, thanks to an acquaintance with a car. Afterwards, he withdrew into brooding fear and apathy. But the psychologists and social pedagogues from Doverie have helped restore Soslan Gogichayev's

former inquisitiveness and enthusiasm. “If I could come to these sessions more often,” he says, “I would.”

Georgy’s transformation after working with Doverie was even more radical than Soslan’s. “Everything became interesting to him,” says Giuli. “His grades got better. His pronunciation got better. His thinking got better. He isn’t so embarrassed [by his speech] anymore. If someone doesn’t understand him, he’ll repeat himself.” Most importantly, Georgy’s reined in the impulsive outbursts that had caused him and his mother so much grief. Now, she says, if some remark or action seems hurtful, “he’ll stop, and think about it, and won’t take offense.”

Demand for Doverie’s work is great. The program funded by the OSI–ESP grant was intended to serve 80 children in four schools with high numbers of refugees. But it’s expanded to more than 260. “We don’t turn anyone away,” says Lyudmila, the psychologist. Apart from the refugee project, which is administered by a local NGO called Civil Initiative, the center continues to fulfill its duties as the city’s hub for child psychology. In the space of a year, Doverie tests and diagnoses about 1,800 children, works regularly with more than 450 and individually with close to 700. Because Doverie is officially a municipal institution, public school teachers are well-informed about its work and contact the center when problems arise.

For children living in a place as small as the Caucasus, says Lyudmila, “we have a vested interest in giving them a boost; otherwise, things will be bad for everyone. The more we invest in children, the healthier society will be.”



"Everything became interesting to him," says his mother. "His grades got better. His thinking got better. He isn't so embarrassed anymore. If someone doesn't understand him, he'll repeat himself."


Best

Local Partners and Projects

Defining Challenges and Finding Solutions

In 2007 OSI commissioned needs assessments in the North and South Caucasus to look at the scope and type of education and social challenges facing IDPs, conflict-affected and disabled children in the region. We found that the Caucasus mirrors the education development issues throughout the post-Soviet region, including a mismatch between curriculum and outcomes, antiquated teaching/learning methods, a lack of professional development opportunities for teachers, increasing private costs of education, lack of access to preschool education, widespread corruption, and deteriorating school infrastructure. However, the depth and breadth of these problems is far more pronounced for children in this region than other regions because poverty and intermittent conflict in the Caucasus conspire to deny education and vital services to the children who need them most.

The Caucasus also faces region-specific education challenges, such as post-conflict trauma and interrupted schooling for many children, which local schools and even education systems are ill-equipped to address. The North Caucasus suffered from poor education indicators even in Soviet times. Transition has not addressed this and the region continues to fall further behind in terms of investment in education. For example, per capita education spending in Chechnya is ¼ of the average for the Russian Federation. In Georgia and Azerbaijan, segregated school systems with inferior education quality keep internally displaced children apart from the general population. This further entrenches inequality and ethnic tensions in a region with a young population.

Communities providing services for vulnerable children

In response, OSI's Education Support Program and national Open Society Foundations made a commitment to support small-scale demonstration projects addressing meaningful access to education and social services for conflict-affected and internally displaced children in 2008. In addition to offering immediate assistance to children in need, OSI hoped to discover and document models of service provision that local or national governments could replicate on a large scale. The 17 civil society organizations selected for funding have demonstrated that local projects working to address the individual needs of vulnerable children can make a huge difference in the lives of these children but NGOs do not have access to the political or financial resources necessary to extend services to all children in need. They face a variety of barriers to advocating for better services for their constituency. These include the legacy of conflict between regions which diminishes political openness to solutions from neighboring territories, lack of time and other resources for the additional work that advocacy requires, and local governments facing growing decentralization of responsibility for services without sufficient budget support.

In presenting the projects below, we hope to provide a framework for replication that shifts the responsibility for taking initiative from civil society to a government working in partnership with civil society.

Armenia

Bridge of Hope, Armenia

From Capacity Building towards Better Inclusion of Children with Disabilities

www.bridgeofhope.am

Bridge of Hope works to protect the rights of children and young people with special educational needs. This is achieved both through advocating for the implementation of Armenia's existing inclusive education policies, and working with schools to find concrete approaches for including all children in their communities, including the development of organizational standards for inclusive schools that could become a blueprint for national policy. Within the framework of this project, Bridge of Hope is supporting teachers in 31 schools across Armenia to include children with special educational needs through improved classroom practices and community engagement based on the social model of disability.

Orran, Armenia

www.orran.am

Orran, which means "haven" in Armenian, was established in Yerevan in April 2000. The Center started with 16 children, but within six months, it had grown to embrace more than 26 at-risk elderly and 40 socially vulnerable children, some of whom were orphans. The number of these beneficiaries keeps increasing, and Orran now has centers in two other cities of Armenia serving 100 elderly and more than 300 children, ranging in age from five to sixteen years old. Orran's mission is to divert children from the streets help families in crisis by engaging them in academic, cultural, and extra-curricular activities. To accomplish this mission, the staff at the Center provides the children and elderly with food, clothes, academic, medical and psychological assistance; social services and cultural programs.

Arevamanuk, Armenia

www.arevamanuk.am

Since 2004 Arevamanuk has been providing financial, humanitarian and social assistance to needy individuals and their families, social institutions, and educational, cultural, and athletic organizations. The organization focuses on social integration of disabled and vulnerable children by supporting their educational and cultural development. Arevamanuk also provides assistance to young people who have been in the care of the juvenile justice system.

Azerbaijan

Center for Innovations in Education (CIE), Azerbaijan

IDP Schools as Efficient, Effective and Active Members of the Society

www.cie.az

The Center for Innovations in Education is a spin-off organization of the Education Support Program of the Open Society Institute–Assistance Foundation/Azerbaijan with the mission of assisting educators, institutions, policy-makers, advocacy groups, researchers and civil society in improving the quality and efficiency of the education system. In the Gubadly district of Nagorno Karabakh CIE has piloted a model of social inclusion that connects seven schools for internally displaced children to mainstream schools. The model strengthens the secondary schools involved and substantially decreases the isolation of internally displaced children studying in segregated schools. Approximately 30 teachers and 200 students will benefit from this pilot project, which breaks down stereotypes about IDPs by providing a framework for segregated IDP schools to integrate students into mainstream education.

«Umid-98» Humanitarian and Social Support Center, Azerbaijan

Initiative for Providing High Quality Educational Opportunities for Young IDPs

www.umid-hsdm.com

Umid-98 seeks to foster solutions to the social, economic and education problems of vulnerable youth by returning internally displaced children in the Zobujug settlements of the Fizuli district who have left school to the education system. Interest in education among participating children is reinforced through extracurricular activities that include training and hands-on internships with local businesses, business training and career counseling, and promoting parent involvement in the process of returning children to school.

Educational Center for Youth, Azerbaijan

Student Development Committees

www.ecy-az-org

The Education Center for Youth (ECY) builds students' interest in education by involving them in school activities. One successful strategy is the creation of Student Development Committees by internally displaced children aged 13–17 from 11 schools in the Qayidish settlement of Fizuli district. As a result of participation in school governance, various interest clubs for improving educational opportunities, creative activities, trainings, intellectual contests, etc., while learning the skills necessary for active citizenship, students develop a greater sense of belonging to the school community and are inspired to become active members of civil society. ECY estimates that up to 1,000 schoolchildren will benefit from project activities and hopes that project results will inspire similar practices elsewhere in the region.

Azerbaijan Children's Union

Solving Problems of Children without Parental Care/Street Children

The main mission of Azerbaijan Children's Union is to help children be prepared for independent life and grow up as worthy citizens of their country. ACU achieves this with programs aimed at the protection of children's social and legal rights, support of holistic development, helping children see and develop their special talents and skills, and providing leisure activities. Since January 2008, Azerbaijan Children's Union has been providing education and social services to 403 street children in Baku. The organization has trained a group of outreach workers and volunteers to work with children from this group at risk both in the shelter and on the street.

Georgia

Beryllus, Georgia

www.beryllus.ge

Beryllus provides extracurricular opportunities for 80 disabled and disadvantaged 11–16 year-olds in order to help them develop the skills to find employment in the future. The segregated institutions where these children study are not able to provide adequate education, and as a result many find themselves on the streets, in juvenile detention centers, or trafficked to other countries as laborers or sex workers. Beryllus hopes to reverse these trends by teaching young people marketable professional skills, developing their sense of dignity, and countering negative stereotypes of these children. The project also supports young people through job placements and has already secured a job offer for one of the children studying photography.

Association Liberta

Summer Camp "Chito-Gvrito"

Association Liberta organized at summer camp for 35 young people from Shida Kartli who fled their homes during the August 2008 war and settled in the village of Shaumiani in the Marneuli district. Some of these children did not know how to read or write; suffered from low self-esteem and had problems in relationships with their peers. They lacked skills necessary for social adaptation and integration with the local community and included young people from different ethnic groups.

Puppetry Club, Georgia

Puppet Theatre in Khurvaleti

Open Society Georgia Foundation has supported the establishment of a puppet theatre in the village of Khurvaleti to benefit local residents and young people from Shida Kartli who were internally displaced during the August 2008 war. Local residents together with IDP youth designed puppets, drafted scripts and staged performances for younger children. These activities helped build a close relationship between IDP youth and local residents, as well as supporting the self-esteem of IDP youth by providing them with a way to contribute to the community. Within the framework of this project the Puppetry Club also conducted a series of discussions on human rights, children's rights and conflict management for teachers and young people.

Civic Development Institute, Georgia

Second Chance Opportunities

www.cdi.org.ge

The Civic Development Institute (CDI) piloted a model of second chance education opportunities for young people at risk by developing a flexible curriculum framework that allows them to complete primary school requirements with their peers as well as providing vocational skills so that they can be successful in the job market. CDI also plans an advocacy campaign focused on an analysis of the costs of returning a child to school versus losing a child to the streets. Specifically, project activities target 90 disadvantaged children from the Social Adaptation Center, the Momavlis Saxli orphanage and vulnerable young people from the surrounding community in Tbilisi.

Society Biliki, Georgia

Youth and their Future Life

www.biliki.ge

Society Biliki seeks to help every child reach his or her full potential in stable families and communities. Biliki has funding from the Education Support Program to support the integration of 60 street children and 70 young people from the surrounding community into the local education system. This includes intensive work with parents/caregivers, teachers and community representatives to equip them with the appropriate skills to work effectively with displaced children. Located in the Shida Kartli district (which includes the conflict zone of South Ossetia and thus suffers from high unemployment, poverty, and large populations of IDPs), Society Biliki remains the only NGO in the district that offers education, psychological, social, and medical support to vulnerable children. The strategies and curriculum developed through this project could be adapted by other civil society organizations to address similar problems in other areas. TheOpen Society Georgia Foundation has provided additional funding so that Biliki could organize a range of extracurricular sports and cultural activities for 56 interested children.

North Caucasus Republics, Russian Federation

Creation NGO, Gudermes, Chechen Republic

Elimination of Illiteracy in Mountain Rural Areas

Gudermes is piloting a second chance education program for 40 children aged 12–19 from two villages who have dropped out of school and are unable to read or write. This educational program includes work with parents to encourage children to return to the education system and the teaching of skills (basic literacy, math and Russian language) that are essential for children to complete secondary school. In addition, Gudermes offers children art therapy to help them deal with the psychological trauma of years of conflict in Chechnya.

Civil Initiative, North Ossetia

Assistance

The number of school-age children in North Ossetia who are internally displaced due to conflict could be as high as 11,700 to 16,800. These children often have difficulty in school due to interrupted education and emotional trauma. As a result, they are frequently marginalized in the classroom because of poor academic performance, truancy and anti-social behavior. Civil Initiative provides professional development workshops for teachers and parents as well as extracurricular activities for eighty children focusing on reading, math, Russian language and computer skills, thus supporting giving all groups in developing the capacity to work together successfully in the classroom.

Friendship—Kislovodsk, Russia

Expansion of Educational Opportunities for At-Risk Children through Raising Teachers' Pedagogical Competence

Many teachers in the North Caucasus are poorly prepared to support children who have experienced open conflict in their communities. Friendship provides training for twenty teachers and psychologists form Chechnya, North Ossetia and Dagestan in order to improve their skills in working with these children. After a series of intensive training workshops, teachers have shared their newly acquired knowledge with approximately 500 of their colleagues. In addition to improving outcomes for the students in project schools, Friendship believes that the model of in-service teacher training developed through the project could be scaled up in the North Caucasus. In 2010 Friendship will produce an important manual for teachers to guide them through the workshop material and support lesson planning.

Institute of Pedagogy and Psychology of Development NGO, Krasnoyarsk, Russia

Inter-regional Camp for Children from the North Caucasus

The Institute's project brings together 70 high school students through an annual inter-regional summer camp where children explore tolerance, conflict resolution, effective communication, and critical thinking skills. This initiative provides an important precedent of cross border collaboration among the republics in the North Caucasus in a region where such exchange is rare, contributing to greater tolerance and better understanding of other cultures among the children who participate.

Intercenter, Moscow, Russia

Cross-cultural understanding and peace in North Caucasus

This partnership between Intercenter and the Institute of Pedagogy and Psychology of Development from Krasnoyarsk, Russia consolidates the experience of the British Council in creating a cross-cultural school ethos and prevention of violence and bullying in schools. The project worked in 2008–09 with schools in North Ossetia, Kabardino-Balkaria and Ingushetia, then transferred this expertise into schools in Dagestan, Adygea, and Karachaevo-Cherkessia. In addition to addressing the root problems of conflict and school violence, this projected has also developed a model of school-based professional development for teachers. Specific measures schools have introduced as a result of training include anti-bullying policies to support migrant children and other vulnerable groups, setting up school ombudsman governing boards and providing extra curricular activities for children in need of life skills.

Bibliography

Books

Busygina, I. and A. Heinemann-Grüder, eds. *Federalizm i etnicheskoye raznoobrazie v Rossii: Sbornik statei* (*Federalism and Ethnic Diversity in Russia: Collected Papers*). Moscow: Rosspen, 2010.

de Waal, Thomas. *Black Garden: Armenia and Azerbaijan Through Peace and War*. New York and London: New York University Press, 2004.

King, Charles. *The Ghost of Freedom: A History of the Caucasus*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Tsutsiyev, Artur. *Atlas etnopoliticheskoi istorii Kavkaza, 1774–2004* (*Atlas of Ethno-Political History of the Caucasus, 1774–2004*). Moscow: Yevropa, 2006.

Reports, Papers, Articles

"Azerbaijan Closes Last of Emergency Camps." UNHCR, February 7, 2008: http://www.unhcr.org/47aaf6734.html (accessed January 2010).

Balian, Hrair. "Armed Conflict in Chechnya: Its Impact on Children. Case Study for the United Nations Study on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children," November 1995.

Estemirova, Natalia and Yelena Milashina. "Chechnya: Voina pokolenii" ("Chechnya: War of Generations"). *Novaya Gazeta*, January 14, 2009: http://www.novayagazeta.ru/data/2009/002/00.html (accessed September 2009).

"Georgia–Russia: Still Insecure and Dangerous," International Crisis Group, *Europe Briefing* No. 53, June 22, 2009. http://www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/europe/caucasus/b53_georgia_russia___still_insecure_and_dangerous.pdf (accessed August 2009).

"Georgia: Summary of Joint Needs Assessment Findings." United Nations and World Bank. Prepared for Donors' Conference of October 22, 2008 in Brussels: http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTGEORGIA/Resources/301645-1224598099977/GEJNA2008.pdf (accessed August 2009).

Hamidova, Hijran. "Fate of Megabucks-3." Investigative Journalists Network, Azerbaijan, Spring/Summer 2008: http://www.revenuewatch.org/images/FateofMegabucks_azer_eng.pdf (accessed January 2010).

Littell, Jonathan. "Chechnya, Year III." *London Review of Books*, Vol. 31, No. 22 (2009): 3–10.

Malashenko, Alexey. "The Two Faces of Chechnya." Carnegie Moscow Center Briefing, Vol. 9, No. 3, July 2007.

Sagramoso, Domitilla. "Violence and conflict in the Russian North Caucasus." *International Affairs*, Vol. 83, No. 4 (2007): 681–705.

"Skolko lyudei propalo bez vesti v Chechne" ("How Many People Have Disappeared in Chechnya"), *Kommersant*, July 28, 2006: http://www.kommersant.ru/doc.aspx?DocsID=693482 (accessed February 13, 2010).

Websites

Caucasian Knot: http://www.kavkaz-uzel.ru/

EurasiaNet: http://eurasianet.org/

Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre: http://www.internal-displacement.org/

UNICEF: http://www.unicef.org/

World Bank: http://www.worldbank.org/

"Stability becomes more elusive and less enduring if traumatized, marginalized children are left, without help, to grow into traumatized, marginalized adults."

•

Active in more than 70 countries, the **Open Society Foundations** work to build vibrant and tolerant democracies whose governments are accountable to their citizens. Working with local communities, the Open Society Foundations support justice and human rights, freedom of expression, and access to public health and education.

The **Education Support Program** (ESP) supports education reform in countries in transition, combining best practice and policy to strengthen open society values. ESP works to facilitate change in education and national policy development. Support is focused in Central Asia, the Caucasus, Europe, the Middle East, Russia, South Asia and Southern Africa.

The mission of the Education Support Program is to support justice in education, aiming to strengthen advocacy, innovation, and activism in three interconnected areas:

- Combating social exclusion to provide equal access to quality education for low income families and full inclusion of children from minority groups and children with special education needs.
- Openness and accountability in education systems and education reforms to ensure transparent, equitable and efficient state expenditures on education through accountable governance and management.
- Promoting open society values in education, including social justice and social action, diversity and pluralism, and critical thinking.

OPEN SOCIETY FOUNDATIONS