



“FOR THE SAKE OF THE FAMILY”: CONTEMPORARY GEORGIAN MIGRATION IN THE USA

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The *purpose* of the research is to examine the current emigration trends from Georgia to the United States through exploration of transnational migrant households with a special focus on the experiences of labor migrants, as well as migrants' motivation for staying in the country of destination (USA) for a given period of time. This paper pays much attention to how geographically and socially new environments influence the way in which Georgian immigrants come to establish themselves and be accepted by the host communities. This paper mainly is based on discourse analysis and interviews with Georgian citizens in the USA. Our approach was to get in touch with our compatriots of both genders, who moved to the US with almost the same migration strategies -- officially tourists in search of jobs through violation of visa. By using multiple methods of investigation -- in-depth interviews, online questionnaires and secondary statistical data, we examine in what ways and spheres do emigration and transnational exchanges shape and affect the Georgian family. For interviews only labor migrants were invited, while online respondents are natives with different background. Our endeavor is among the first to explore Georgian immigration and the immigration experience in the US. What distinguishes the study from all others is that we have interviewed migrants, the main actors of the process in the direct place of their current job, the United States, unlike others that researched in Georgia either with return migrants or with relatives and family members left behind. As our respondents' impressions are fresh we consider that it would lead to a better quality of the research. The paper puts the great emphasis on the vital necessity of having the migration policy in Georgia.

Keywords: Georgia, USA, Transnational labor migration, Family, Undocumented migrants.

Introduction

The demise of the Soviet empire and fall of the border barriers shaped Georgia into a state of net emigration. Right after the switch of the country from a planned economy to a market economy it was

facing dramatic social, political, and economic changes. Very soon labor migration became the most important component of Georgian exodus.¹

Surprisingly, many Eastern European and Former Soviet countries began the post-Cold War era with great optimism, hopes about the future as independent nation states, as well as new hope for the democracy and prosperity of these new societies.² Almost no one thought that the transition would be so painful, unclear, long, and difficult. When the responsibility suddenly shifted from the state to the people, who had no experience of self-reliance and initiative, adaptation to the new reality became the key problem for many individuals. The social-economic and political changes have radically altered the ways of life, and resulted in a sharp rise of women in social and economic activities.³ In many cases migration for the purpose of seeking long-term employment became very common.

The process of globalization with its changing political, economic, and social conditions concerns families as well, reshaping their geographical location, structure, direction of development, duties and obligations, as well as relations among the household members. In turn, globalization led to a so-called transnationalism, "behavior or institutions which simultaneously affect more than one state."⁴ This issue has been actively researched as a phenomenon over the last two decades,⁵ where the family members are stretched between the two or more nation states with the aim of finding better job opportunities than in the home country, remitting earnings back, with almost every day virtual connections with their families, and the ultimate view of returning.⁶ Having more than one place of work or residence is not their preference, but rather because of having no other alternative.⁷

The transnationalism is a dynamic process based on expanding of the kinship net, mostly for unskilled migrants in order to maximize the opportunities for their family members, relatives, and friends.

¹ Revaz Gachechiladze, *Population Migration in Georgia and Its Socio-Economic Consequences* (Tbilisi: UNDP-Georgia, 1997); *Labour Migration from Georgia* (International Organization for Migration and Association For Economic Education, 2003); Giorgi Meladze, "Dynamics of Natural Movements of Population in Southern Caucasian Countries," *Caucasian Geographical Review*, no. 3 (2003): 82-84 (in Georgian); Mikheil Toqmazishvili, "Socio-Economic and Institutional Aspects of Labor Market Development in Georgia," *Georgian Economic Trends*, Quarterly review, July (2007): 49-57; Merab Kakulia, "Labour Migrants' Remittances to Georgia: Volume, Structure and Socio-Economic Effect," *Georgian Economic Trends*, Quarterly review, October (2007): 49-57; *Migration in Georgia: A country profile* (International Organization for Migration, 2008); Irina Badurashvili, *Integration of Migrants From Georgia in Countries of Temporary Residence and Upon Return to Georgia: What Differences do Georgian Migrants Face in the Process of Adaptation to a New Social Environment, Research report*, (CARIM-East – Consortium for Applied Research on International Migration, 2012), <http://www.carim-east.eu/media/CARIM-East-2012-RR-39.pdf>; Natia Chelidze, *Readmission, Return and Reintegration in Georgia*, *CARIM-East Explanatory Note 13/25*, (CARIM-East – Consortium for Applied Research on International Migration, 2013), http://www.carim-east.eu/media/exno/Explanatory%20Notes_2013-25.pdf.

² Stephen Castles and Mark J. Miller, *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World*, 3rd ed. (New York London: The Guilford press, 2003), 1.

³ Nino Durglishvili, *Social Change and the Georgian Family* (Tbilisi: UNDP-Georgia, 1997), 6.

⁴ Castles and Miller, *The Age of Migration*, 1.

⁵ Paul L. Knox, and Sallie A. Martson, *Places and Regions in Global Context: Human Geography*, 3rd ed. (Pearson Education, Inc. New Jersey, 2004); Elaine Lynn-Ee Ho, "'Flexible Citizenship' or Familial Ties that Bind? Singaporean Transmigrants in London," *International Migration* 46, no. 4 (2008): 145-175; Shirlena Huang, Brenda S.A. Yeoh and Teodora Lam, "Asian Transitional Families in Transition: The Liminality of Simultaneity," *International Migration* 46, no. 4 (2008): 3-15; Elsie Ho and Richard Bedford, "Asian Transnational Families in New Zealand: Dynamics and Challenges," *International Migration* 46, no. 4 (2008): 41-61; Carmen Voigt-Graf, "Migration and Transnational Families in Fiji: Comparing Two Ethnic Groups," *International Migration* 46, no. 4 (2008): 15-40; Allan Bartley and Paul Spoonley, "Intergenerational Transnationalism: 1.5 Generation Asian Migrants in New Zealand," *International Migration* 46, no. 4 (2008): 63-84.

⁶ Shirlena Huang, Brenda S.A. Yeoh and Teodora Lam, "Asian Transitional Families in Transition: The Liminality of Simultaneity," *International Migration* 46, no. 4 (2008): 5.

⁷ Elsie Ho and Richard Bedford, "Asian Transnational Families in New Zealand: Dynamics and Challenges," *International Migration* 46, no. 4 (2008): 55.

That is why some experts call this social movement “chain migration,”⁸ while according to Marcus the whole net is the “transnational corporation of kin.”⁹ Such transnational moves “for the sake of the family”¹⁰ pay much attention to interrelationships between the migrant as an individual decision-maker, her/his family, the host, and home countries, as well as mobility status and migration policies.

Problem Description and the Research Methodology

The *purpose* of the research is to examine the current emigration trends from Georgia to the United States through exploration of transnational migrant households with a special focus on the experiences of labor migrants, as well as migrants’ motivation for staying in the country of destination (USA) for a given period of time. This paper pays much attention to how geographically and socially new environments influence the way in which Georgian immigrants come to establish themselves and be accepted by the host communities.

This paper is mainly based on discourse analysis and interviews with Georgian citizens in the USA. Our approach was to get in touch with our compatriots of both genders, who moved to the USA with almost the same migration strategies - officially tourists in search of jobs through violation of a visa. Today, they hold different statuses - the vast majority of them are still undocumented migrants, while some others managed to obtain a legal emigrant status, mostly via green card lotteries. The interview conversations were concerned with their migration strategies, their international mobility (period of time for stay and return) and their sentiments toward Georgia and overseas citizens.

The main *subjects* of the survey are the geographically dispersed family members of the Georgian transnational household, a new type of a family “that has adopted a deliberate strategy of living two or more countries in order to maximize opportunities”¹¹ for the welfare of their household and extended family members.

Multiple *methods* of investigation were used. The mobility histories of 21 families were provided through in-depth interviews. The majority of them were conducted in Monroe (NY) where the respondents live, in addition to 1 online interview and 8 interviews in a Greek Orthodox Church (New-York, Brooklyn), where the Georgian community periodically congregates. With support of the local Georgian priest Father Alexander, after the Sunday service we announced our intentions and distributed a cover letter among the Georgian parish members asking volunteers for face-to face individual interviews. The interviews were conducted in Georgian and transcribed into English by the authors. Alongside the recorded interviews, we collected 159 valid online 17- item questionnaires (from 237 total) that we posted on www.babajana.com and using secondary statistical data, we examined in what ways and spheres do emigration and transnational exchanges shape and affect the Georgian family.

In our research we followed the ‘snowballing’ method. This means, with support of relatives and friends who had lived in the USA for several years, Georgian labor migrants referred additional available respondents to us. They usually help the new-comers and have a mutual trust.

The *subjects* of our survey are Georgian immigrants (residents of Georgian nationality) in the USA. We surveyed both women and men 18 years and older, and therefore adults who emigrated since 1990. The only criteria for selection of subjects were ethnicity (Georgians) and age (over 18 years old). For interviews we invited only labor migrants, while online respondents are natives with different background.

⁸ Jerome D. Fellman, Arthur Getis and Judith Getis, *Human Geography: Landscapes of Human Activities*. (McGraw Hill, 2007), 85.

⁹ Marcus G.E. “Power on the Extreme Periphery: the Perspective of Tongan Elites on the Modern World System”. *Pacific Viewpoint* 22, (1981):48-64, quoted in Ho and Bedford, *Asian Transnational Families*, 43.

¹⁰ Elaine Lynn-Ee Ho, ““Flexible Citizenship” or Familial Ties that Bind? Singaporean Transmigrants in London,” *International Migration* 46, no. 4 (2008): 148.

¹¹ Ho and Bedford, “Asian Transnational Families,” 41.

Our endeavor is among the first to explore Georgian immigration and the immigration experience in the US. What distinguishes the study from all others is that we have interviewed migrants, the main actors of the process in the direct place of their current job, the United States, unlike others that researched in Georgia either with returning migrants¹² or with relatives¹³ and family members left behind.¹⁴ As our respondents' impressions were fresh we considered that it would lead to a better quality of research.

From the Problem History

Georgian exodus is the phenomenon in question from the last two decades and has a short-term history of research analysis.

Seeking employment for the purpose of a finding a better job in the former Soviet republics became one of the main reasons for negative net migration in Georgia from the mid 1950s.¹⁵ However, this outflow was rather moderate due to traditionally low mobility throughout the nation. During the Soviet Era for almost 96, 5% of ethnic Georgians, residents of the USSR, lived in Georgia.¹⁶

From the beginning of 1990s, after Georgia announced its independence, the political and economic situation worsened in the country. Most ethnic minorities (Slavs, Jews, Greeks, Ossetians) left for their historic homelands or other post-Soviet republics. R. Gachechiladze refers to this process as "monoethnization of political territories."¹⁷ Very soon they were followed by Georgians. 1 to 1.2 of 4.6 million Georgians emigrated to CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) or EU countries and to the USA.¹⁸ The outflow of Georgian citizens was maintained during the latter 1990s, almost up to 2010.¹⁹

Since this Transition, the Soviet centralized official statistical service ceased to function which in turn caused a worsening of the local statistical services. From the end of 1990s, with support of international organizations (UN, WB, USAID, EC, EU, etc.) and involvement of independent experts, step by step the national statistical service has been gathering and processing important data. These endeavors have resulted in the holding of the 2002 overall National Population Census. However, a long time has passed since that census and today the local statistical services lack a coherent and IT based system for migration data collection and analyses.²⁰ In November 2014 the Georgian government conducted the second General Population Census which fills in the gap of the quantitative side of the process (the final results of the census will be published in April 2016).²¹

Because of the prevalence of undocumented character of Georgian migration very little is known about the migrant population in general and about the female migrants especially.²² If the role of the

¹² Aaron Erlich, Kristina Vacharadze and Giorgi Babunashvili, *Voices of Migration in Georgia, Qualitative Research on the Migrants and Their Communities in Georgia*. (CRRRC, 2009),

http://www.crrc.ge/store/downloads/projects/DRC-CRRRC%20Voices%20of%20Migration_24MAR2009.pdf;

Badurashvili, *Integration of Migrants*, 2012.

¹³ *Labour Migration from Georgia* (International Organization for Migration, 2003).

¹⁴ Ia Iashvili and Dali Mikautadze, "Emigration from Georgia and Transnational Migrant Families," in the conference proceedings of the 5th *International Scientific Conference on American Studies* (Kutaisi: ATSU, 2010), 274-85 (in Georgian).

¹⁵ Gachechiladze, *Population Migration in Georgia*, 14.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 24.

¹⁸ Giorgi Meladze, "Dynamics of Natural Movements of Population in Southern Caucasian Countries," *Caucasian Geographical Review*, no. 3 (2003): 84.

¹⁹ *Migration 2012*, www.geostat.ge.

²⁰ *Review of Migration Management in Georgia. Assessment mission Report* (International Organization for Migration, Tbilisi, 2007), 20.

²¹ "Geostat Started Processing of the Data 2014 General Population Census." February 25, 2015, <http://census.ge/ge/saqstatma-mosakhleobis-2014-tslis-sakoveltao-aghtseris-monatsemebis-damushaveba-daitsko/181#.VO6TtXyUcow>.

²² Erin Trouth Hofmann and Cynthia Buckley, "Cultural Responses to Changing Gender Patterns of Migration in Georgia," *International Migration* 50, no. 5 (2012): 10.

breadwinner is enough for a male migrant, female migration presents a greater threat to traditional dynamics and norms within the family structure. It is practically impossible to maintain the roles of mother, housekeeper, and the breadwinner simultaneously.²³

Recent years have witnessed an increasing number of single spouses migrating temporarily for work, leaving their spouses and children behind in Georgia. In the survey on return migrants, it is indicated that 85% of Georgian labor migrants stay abroad alone. Such a situation indeed creates problems for both migrants and the family members left behind.²⁴ The share of women who have left their husbands and families in Georgia, among the total number of female migrants, is 35%.²⁵ Women (most with higher education) migrate autonomously as caregivers or nurses, while men (mainly skilled professionals) find employment as construction workers and drivers. The main purpose of their mostly temporary migration is to send remittances. As a result, these changes in the process of Georgian migration are characterized by the split of the nuclear family (again temporarily, however, neither the immigrant herself/himself, nor the spouse knows for how long), transfer dependent family budget, and a single-parent household.²⁶ In the latter case, other member(s) of the family, often grandparents, serve as parents providing their grandchildren with parents' care. By Canadian scientist Esme Fuller-Thomson such type of household is mentioned as a "skipped generation household."²⁷ It is no secret that migration of one of the parents creates serious problems to children's socialization since they are left to the care of other family members.²⁸

Research and the Main Findings

Migrant and the Host Country

The mass exodus of Georgian labor migrants accounts more than twenty years. Its scientific study has only started recently, since the beginning of the 2000s.²⁹

No comprehensive theory of migration exists, except for the so-called "laws of migration" by Ravenstein from the late 19th century which refer to the dominant trends of this contemporary process and social movement. One of the "laws" of Ravenstein concerns the economic factor: "Economic hardship is a main push factor".³⁰

²³ Asis, M.M.B., S. Huang, and B.S.A. Yeoh. "When the Light of the Home is Abroad: Unskilled Female Migration and the Filipino Family." *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography* 25, no. 2: 198-215, cited in Hofmann and Buckley, 9.

²⁴ Irina Badurashvili, *Integration of Migrants From Georgia in Countries of Temporary Residence and Upon Return to Georgia: What Differences do Georgian Migrants Face in the Process of Adaptation to a New Social Environment*,

Research report, (CARIM-East – Consortium for Applied Research on International Migration, 2012), <http://www.carim-east.eu/media/CARIM-East-2012-RR-39.pdf>.

²⁵ Charita Jashi, (2010): *Gender Paradigms of Labor Migration in Georgia, Social Impact of Emigration and Rural-Urban Migration in Central and Eastern Europe* (VT/2010/001 Final Country Report Georgia 56, 2010), 3, http://phds.ge/data/image_db_innova/Charita%20Jashi.pdf cited in Baduarshvili and Nadareishvili, 2012, 21, <http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=8864&langId=en>.

²⁶ Kakulia, "Labor Migrants," 54-57.

²⁷ Esme Fuller-Thomson, "Canadian First Nation Grandparents Raising Grandchildren: A Portrait in Resilience," *Aging and Human Development* 60, no.4 (2005):331.

²⁸ *Gender Assessment for USAID/Caucasus* (USAID, 2003), 39, http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PDACG103.pdf, cited in Badurashvili, 2012, 4.

²⁹ Giorgi Tsuladze, *Emigration from Georgia According to 2002 Overall Population Census of Georgia. Methodological Aspects and Comparative Analysis*. (Tbilisi: CRRC, 2005) (in Georgian); *Labor Migration from Georgia, 2003*; Badurashvili, *Integration of Migrants*, 2005; Toqmazishvili, "Socio-Economic and Institutional Aspects", 2007.

³⁰ Gachechiladze, *Population Migration in Georgia*, 7; Knox and Martson, *Places and Regions*, 52.

According to the recent 2002 Georgia comprehensive population census, 89.1% of able to work population left Georgia due to economic hardships.³¹ In our previous research, 83.8% of the respondents pointed out the economic plight as the main motivation for their family members' move.³² The situation has not changed since then. As Badurashvili points out, absence of work and low payments in Georgia are main motivations for 83% of migrants to leave.³³

The same reason for leaving has indicated by 40.6 % of Georgian immigrants who we investigated in the United States in 2010. Most have succeeded in finding employment. 51.7% of the poll members are labor migrants. Few respondents are aimed for study (5.8%) or uniting with an American spouse (9.4%); 32.8% indicated some other purpose for their coming.

Analyzing the results of Georgia's overall population census taken in 2002, Tsuladze indicates that 64.1% of all emigrants from Georgia have emigrated to the Russian Federation, followed by 16.2% to Greece, 4.3% to Germany and 3.8% to the USA.³⁴ The list of the most attractive countries during the 1990s does not differ much from years 2000 to 2010. In 2008, the research by International Organization for Migration (IOM) in the Black Sea region states that the two countries of Russia and Greece still dominate, with Turkey, Ukraine and Israel close behind.³⁵ In our 2009 survey the leading states in this regard are Russia with 34.3% of Georgia emigrants, Greece 22.2%, Turkey 15.1%, the USA 6%, and Italy 6%.³⁶

The distribution of Georgian migrants in receiving countries is gender biased.

The United States is one of the exceptions with a balanced gender structure. In the beginning of the 2000s, females comprised 54.7% of all Georgian natives in the country.³⁷ This balance has not changed much until recently. According to our 2010 survey the gender ratio amounted to 50.7% and 49.3% - in favor of women. Unlike America, Russia (85.2%) and Ukraine are male dominated destinations, while Greece (70.1%) and Germany (69.4%) are preferable countries for Georgian labor migrant women.³⁸

Georgian emigrants structurally vary from each other in the countries of destination.

The USA has the highest rate of Georgian emigrants from Tbilisi, the capital of the country (67%), while the lowest point in this regard - 21.3 % can be found in Russia.³⁹ We think that this issue is connected with the educational status of Georgian natives.

The US attracts migrants with the highest level of education. According to IOM, professionally qualified people with higher education living in America comprise 65.1% of the total number of Georgian immigrants there.⁴⁰ In our survey this figures even higher, at 78%. However, we do not support the idea that professionalism is the only decisive factor in this regard. Other factors include access to more information in the capital city than in the provinces of Georgia and better knowledge of the English language. 36% of former migrants from "far abroad" were good or fluent in English.⁴¹ As Badurashvili indicates, the character of Georgian migrants working abroad does not depend on their educational level or former professional occupation in the home country. Regardless of their status, including people with higher education diplomas, they are employed as both skilled and unskilled workers. The higher the level of education of a migrant the greater mismatch between educational level and actual occupation. What is more, real practice shows that jobs available for migrants really do not need such a high educational level.

³¹ Tsuladze, *Emigration from Georgia*, 84.

³² Iashvili and Mikautadze, "Emigration from Georgia," 178.

³³ Badurashvili, *Integration of Migrants*, 3.

³⁴ Tsuladze, *Emigration from Georgia*, 104.

³⁵ *Migration in the Black Sea Region: An Overview* (International Organization for Migration, 2008), 74.

³⁶ Iashvili and Mikautadze, "Emigration from Georgia," 279.

³⁷ *Labor Migration*, 41.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Tsuladze, *Emigration from Georgia*, 106.

⁴⁰ *Labor Migration*, 44.

⁴¹ Irina Badurashvili and Mamuka Nadareishvili, *Social Impact of Emigration and Rural-Urban Migration in Central and Eastern Europ*. Final Country Report (Georgia, 2012), 11, ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=8864&langId=en.

Nevertheless, 57% of respondents agreed that for the better educated migrants a better job is more readily available, and only 10% of them decided to attend the language courses in the host country.⁴² We consider that in spite of this, Georgian emigration is characterized with a high share of college educated migrants. Soviet professional skills were not sold in the United States or Europe and turned out more suitable for the post-Soviet market. That is why experts view migration from Georgia to the Western states not as much as a 'brain drain' but more as a 'brain waste'.⁴³

In contrast from the US and EU countries, Russia is the temporary home for the overwhelming majority of migrants from various provinces of Georgia (92.5% from Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti, 82.4% from Inner Kartli, 75.6% from Imereti, etc. regions).⁴⁴ Because of the linguistic limitations migrants tend to prefer a more familiar environment.

In order to measure the level of adaptation it is important to understand how the immigrant feels about both the positive and negative sides of her/his being in the receiving state and how much the process of integration is successful. However, we should keep in mind that integration abroad is practically never the goal for temporary Georgian labor migrants. Their only purpose is to earn money, send remittances, and return home soon. But of those who leave for good, for their future successful life and career, lucky integration is, of course, very important.⁴⁵

The meaning of adaptation we have defined according to Durglishvili, which is an individual's readiness to accept the changes in political and socio-economic life in conditions of her/his normal functioning. To measure the rate of adaptation we calculated the following criteria: the state of the respondent's health, the self-assessment of the economic opportunities of their family, the ability of resolving current problems, and disposition towards the future.⁴⁶

In our research during 2010, we identified that the main benefits for Georgian immigrants living in America are economic survival (27.8%) and economic advance (30.7%) of their families, although for some 16.8% the benefits came at a social cost in exchange - alienation from household members. In-depth interviews, especially with women, revealed mixed feelings on economic advance for their families. On one hand we found sentiments for the estrangement of relations with spouses, and those for children on the other.

"It seems to me that I have lost common language with my son. We were very cordial friends, but now... I don't know..., our everyday phone conversations become more and more like,... official."⁴⁷

Thirteen per cent of respondents worry about the worsening of their health status and 6.2% about loss of professional skills and cultural identities. As one of the female respondents (a Green Card owner) told us:

"I have wonderful grandkids, they are even smarter than their parents, but they can hardly speak Georgian, they are almost Americans."⁴⁸

Social interaction helps immigrants greatly to cope with the problems of a strange environment. Half of immigrants have established a communication network with mostly Georgians; 24% have relations with migrants from other national groups as well, 7% affiliate themselves with the parish members of the Georgian Orthodox Church, while 20% do not contact anyone.

⁴² Badurashvili, *Integration of Migrants*, 5-6.

⁴³ European Commission, *Georgia Country Report: Social Impact of Emigration and Rural-Urban Migration in Central and Eastern Europe, 2012*, cited in Badurashvili, *Integration of Migrants*, 5.

⁴⁴ Tsuladze, *Emigration from Georgia*, 105.

⁴⁵ Badurashvili, *Integration of Migrants*, 2.

⁴⁶ Durglishvili, *Social Change*, 24.

⁴⁷ Nana, 58 years old female, care giver, interview by Ia Iashvili, April 13, 2010, Monroe (NY).

⁴⁸ Lia, 67 years old, housewife, interview by Ia Iashvili, April 10, 2010, Brooklyn New York.

The negative sides of being in the host country always persist. For 37.2% of Georgians in the US, it is breaking off relations with family members.

"Which relations you are speaking about, which relations? How they can remain the same? Hey, come on,... 11 years I am here, everything has changed, I am different, probably my wife is different too, even our kids,... they grew up without me. When I arrived in America, I called them every day and thought that nothing can change our relations, but now I call my wife just once in a month, nothing to speak about...."⁴⁹

We consider, that those 24.8% of Georgians who do not have problems of adaptation, are mostly successful students or young professionals as well as legal migrants with a stable job and income.

Choosing the country of final destination is the key issue for any migrant in the process of decision making. One of the main questions of our research was connected with the US, as a preferable country of final destination for Georgian natives. The exact number of Georgian migrants in the States is unknown. The Office of the State Minister of Georgia for Diaspora Issues unofficially counts 90 000 to 100 000 Georgian immigrants in the country.

We have identified three phases of Georgian migration to the US during the Transition period:

1990-1999: the early exodus as an immediate response to the emerged post-Soviet crisis when the first 35.4% of Georgians arrived in America;

2000-2005: mid phase; until the implementation of significant reforms by president Saakashvili's government when 48.8 % came;

2006 -2010: the late phase with slowing down outflows from Georgia and moderate numbers of newcomers in the US (15.7%).

According to the opinion poll by Caucasus Research Resource Center (CRRC) Georgian citizens find the US as immigrant-friendly and less bureaucratic country because of ease with which irregular migrants work there.⁵⁰ The greatest difficulty is to obtain a visa.⁵¹

Sixty percent of Americans believe that illegal migration is a bigger problem than legal immigration and a "very serious issue."⁵² In another research 61% of American respondents noted the priority of temporary worker and legalization policies over deportation as a measure to reduce undocumented immigration.⁵³ Espenshade and Calhoun indicate that "Americans may have negative attitudes about immigration as a general phenomenon, but sympathy toward the immigrants whom they know personally."⁵⁴

Ilias, Fennely and Federico have analyzed the factors that determine negative public opinion and resistance of Americans toward guest worker policies. For some respondents it is the "use of more in public services than they pay in taxes"; for others it is associated with "competition between natives and immigrants for scarce resources", while others consider, that "illegal migrants take jobs away from Americans."⁵⁵ The latter judgment is more shaped among low-skill, low-wage Black and immigrant workers (Asians and Latinos) who see direct threat from the newcomers.⁵⁶

⁴⁹ Gia, 39 years old male, driver, interview by Ia Iashvili, April 12, 2010, Monroe (NY).

⁵⁰ Erlich, Vacharadze and Babunashvili, *Voices of Migration*, (CRRC), 4.

⁵¹ Ibid., 24.

⁵² Pew Research Center for the People and Press/Pew Hispanic Center, "America's Immigration Quandary: No Consensus on Immigration Problem or Proposed Fixes." (Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, 2006), quoted in Shayerah Ilias, Katherine Fennely and Christopher M. Federico, "American Attitudes Toward Guest Worker Policies," *International Migration Review* 42, no. 4 (2008): 744.

⁵³ Washington Post/ABC News, Washington Post/ABC News Poll. December 15-18, 2005, quoted in Ilias, Fennely and Federico, 745.

⁵⁴ Espenshade T. J. and Calhoun C. A., "An Analysis of Public Opinion Toward Undocumented Immigration," *Population Research and Policy Review* 12 (1993): 189-224, quoted in Ilias, Fennely and Federico, 745.

⁵⁵ Shayerah Ilias, Katherine Fennely and Christopher M. Federico, "American Attitudes Toward Guest Worker Policies," *International Migration Review* 42, no. 4 (2008): 746.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 746-49.

In our research it turned out that for 43% of respondents the choice of coming to America was based on better, or higher, compensation than in Europe, and for 34% it was due to a pre-existing network of Georgian immigrants there. This latter reason has been deemed the decisive one, as mentioned in another survey as well.⁵⁷ This leads to the concentration of Georgian natives in a particular country, not necessarily because they maintain the best conditions for certain individuals. This is especially true with respect to Greece and Italy.⁵⁸

One more reason that 23% of our respondents chose America as their favorite destination is because of the opportunities for education. Moreover, 15.2% plan to bring their children for this purpose in the near future. In spite of the fact that the vast majority of immigrants do not have access to professional schools, 15.7% still managed to improve their own professional skills while others, especially green card holders, get this opportunity for their children. As one female respondent told us:

“I like these wonderful opportunities for economic welfare and education here. I was the head of the laboratory at Rustavi chemical plant. I and my husband (also with university education) worked for decades there. However, never afforded even to redecorate our tiny apartment. I applied to Green Card lottery and I won it. I took my family here. I was working very hard as a care giver. My daughters received the medical education here and work at the city dispensary now.”⁵⁹

What Georgian natives especially like in the US it is the rule of law. Our male respondent noted:

“...The rule of law is among the first, I dream to have it in my country. When I violated the traffic rules, policeman issued me a ticket, he was right... When it happens, I never dispute with them, cause I trust them, they will never do it purposely like it was in Georgia. What is more, I know that I and a common American are equal in this regard,...well, not someone like celebrities or so,... you know, elite is elite everywhere (is smiling), just I and an ordinary American guy.”⁶⁰

For some others the pre-planned and organized way of American life is no less important:

“Why I feel comfortable here? I am more organized than ever, I like myself and I respect myself. I know that I have my job thus, I am quiet. Well, I have some health problems, but I think I would have those had I stayed in Georgia.”⁶¹

According to the survey by the CRRC in Georgia, the improved work ethic brought from abroad is very important for some return migrants. Even though they see Europe as a destination of servitude, where Georgians find themselves on the much lower stair of the social ladder than in Russia and Ukraine, they prefer Europe as a more law oriented destination.⁶² They describe their everyday life there as “structured and safe.”⁶³ In the survey of return migrants, 70% of respondents noted that they practice the experience acquired abroad in their everyday activities in respect of labor discipline and organization.⁶⁴

Usually, migrants always measure the decision of moving into the country of final destination after a certain period of time. Most migrants, as well as the members of their family and community, consider that their decision to move was correct as they had no other alternatives.⁶⁵ In the face of many difficulties, 75.4% of Georgian natives in the US do not regret their coming, while 11.8% do. When going through the

⁵⁷ Badurashvili, *Integration of Migrants*, 3.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Lia, 67 years old.

⁶⁰ Zura, 52 years old, driver, interview by Ia Iashvili, April 14, 2010, Monroe (NY).

⁶¹ Josef, driver, 48 years old, interview by Ia Iashvili, April 14, 2010, Monroe (NY).

⁶² Erlich, Vacharadze and Babunashvili, *Voices of Migration*, (CRRC), 1.

⁶³ Ibid., 22

⁶⁴ Badurashvili, *Integration of Migrants*, 10.

⁶⁵ Erlich, Vacharadze and Babunashvili, *Voices of Migration*, (CRRC), 17; 31.

details, it turns out that migrants have very different feelings about their stay in the country of immigration. If 29.6% find themselves free and happy, some migrants, in spite of better economic status, think that they became more nervous (27.7%) and oppressed (5.5%).

"Well, I never built the dream towers in my mind, but anyway... it was still euphoria to come in America. Yhaaa, I knew about emigrant's difficulties in general, but I found really hard to be adapted here...."⁶⁶

Finally, 25% of Georgian natives say that they practice nearly the same style of living and nothing has changed for them, while another 12% consider themselves more educated than before.

Family Members Left Behind and the Home Country

Our previous research in 2009 on Georgian migrants⁶⁷ was one of the first endeavors in the field to examine in which ways and spheres do transnational exchanges shape and affect Georgian family life, as well as how families reacted to the socio-economic decline that many Georgian emigrants accepted in exchange for economic security of their family. As a result, we contrasted the economic benefits from emigration with the social and psychological costs associated with separation of the nuclear family members (mainly parents and children).

In most cases families are involved in the process of decision making.⁶⁸ As our respondents in the United States indicated, the decision to emigrate was their own choice for 56.3%, while everyone else agreed with their family members.

Ravenstein indicates that "Most migrants are adults; families are less likely to make international moves."⁶⁹

One of the main peculiarities of Georgian emigration is the split of a nuclear family. While studying Georgian migrant families we have indicated that 30.3% of households have emigrant mothers and 32.3% emigrant fathers; in 3% both parents have emigrated. When summarized, it is clear that 62.6% of young adults are growing up and live in single parent families and that, unfortunately, has become a norm in Georgian society.⁷⁰ Nevertheless, it is still believed Georgians should live in Georgia, reflected in opinion polls which admit that migration is a personal choice but family survival is paramount and exceeds all other aspirations.⁷¹ We consider one more "law" of migration that was suggested by Tyner which states "Families are both as beneficiaries to the process [migration] as well as its potential victims"⁷² is relevant to such situation.

During the nearly twenty-year period of Georgian emigration, nine to fifteen per cent of households had become dependent on remittances.⁷³ In 2011 remittances amounted to \$1.3 billion, which comprised 8.8% of Georgia's total GDP.⁷⁴ Such a high share of remittances is typical for developing countries and often exceeds foreign direct investment. From the total amount of remittances that were transferred into the country in 2008 (1.002bln.USD), 6.4% was from the US (63 866 mil.USD) with almost the same amount from Ukraine, 4.7% from Greece and 63.3% from Russia.⁷⁵ These trends have been changed

⁶⁶ Lali, 37 years old female, care giver, interview by Ia Iashvili, April 10, 2010, Brooklyn New York.

⁶⁷ Iashvili and Mikautadze, "Emigration from Georgia," 178.

⁶⁸ Ho and Bedford, "Asian Transnational Families in Transition," 2008; Huang, Yeoh and Lam, "Asian Transitional Families in New Zealand," 2008.

⁶⁹ Fellman, Getis and Getis, *Human Geography*, 2007.

⁷⁰ Iashvili and Mikautadze, "Emigration from Georgia," 282.

⁷¹ Erlich, Vacharadze and Babunashvili, *Voices of Migration*, (CRRC), 1.

⁷² Tyner, J.A., "Geographies of Identity: the Migrant Experiences of Filipinas in Northeast Ohio," *Asia Pacific Viewpoint* 43, no. 3 (2002): 311-326, quoted in Huang, Yeoh and Lam, "Asian Transnational families," 3-13.

⁷³ *Migration in Georgia: A country profile* (International Organization for Migration, 2008), 26.

⁷⁴ Givi Melkadze, "Labour Migration and Remittances to Georgia," *The ISET Economist*, September 26th, (2012): par. 3, <http://www.iset.ge/blog/?p=779>.

⁷⁵ *Review of Migration Management*, 21.

recently with a steadily declining share of remittances from Russia, down to 52%⁷⁶ and increased transfers from the USA, as well as from Greece (\$47.2million in 2008 and \$60.7mill. in 2010), Germany (\$7.2mill. in 2008 up to \$14.6mill. in 2010) and other EU countries.⁷⁷ Surprisingly, the global financial crisis almost did not reflect on amount of money transferred to Georgia.

Surveying the structure of the use of remittances in Georgia we learned that 54.5% of incoming money is for children's education, 20.2% for food, 17.1% is to purchase medication, and 3% for saving; 4% of money family members use for various purposes.⁷⁸ Education is the most important issue for migrant parents. As Gvenetadze and Samkharadze (2012) note, school age children say that parents explained to them that their education is one of the main reasons why they had emigrated. Migrant mothers help children with their homework via Skype, they also contact school teachers on a regular basis and ask about their children's performance. Parents pay for tutoring and extracurricular classes such as music lessons, dancing, and sports. As most caretakers (the respondents) in this small-scale qualitative research are grandparents, they are usually responsible for all duties in the family and consider that "the children get to enjoy their childhood to the fullest."⁷⁹ However, more vast surveys reveal that the parental influence of families on children has weakened in Georgia, which manifested as growing homelessness, begging, and juvenile delinquency.⁸⁰

One of the major negative aspects of migration is related to children growing up without parental care.⁸¹ For "compensation" of their absence most parents try to give strong financial benefits to their children. Women migrants work without days off, and restrict their personal expenses in order to send as large remittances as possible home.⁸² 45% of our respondents (students, adult children of migrants) from a 2009 survey in Georgia believe that the largest share of remittances is for them; the other 50% consider that money sent from abroad is equally available for all household members. Only 3% think that it is for emigrants' spouses and for elderly parents (the remaining 2%). Here are more exact figures about distribution of remittances: 25% of respondents have indicated that they consume 50% of all remittances and another 25% do more than 50%.⁸³ We consider that one more "law" of migration is relevant to this process: "Nevertheless many researchers see migration as a family decision or strategy, some members will benefit more than others from those decisions."⁸⁴

In the research on family members left behind, consumerism has been seen as a problematic issue, found in other surveys as well. After some time, expensive presents sent from abroad begin to represent the parent's love, which generates tendencies of consumerism among both minor and adult children.⁸⁵

However, to blame only one side would be an oversimplification of the process. In many cases parents are aware of the negative sides of these relationships but are unable and unwilling to change anything. As one of our male respondents notes:

"I know that I am a coin minted machine here, but I prefer to leave everything as it is. I mean, not ask them [grown up children] to invest money that I usually send them... I mean, to start any business or so. Why? If they have problems with that, it will be my problems as well; I should help them to solve these problems from here. And what if I couldn't? It's only tearing

⁷⁶ Melkadze, par. 3

⁷⁷ *Labor Market and the Reintegration of Returning Migrants in Georgia* (Danish Refugee Council: Tbilisi, 2012), 101.

⁷⁸ Iashvili and Mikautadze, "Emigration from Georgia," 281.

⁷⁹ Tinatin Gvenetadze and Mariam Samkharadze, "Migration from Georgia: Families Left Behind (Summery)," in *Summer School Reader Building Training and Analytical Capacities on Migration in Moldova and Georgia (GOVAC) Project* (Austria: International Center for Migration Policy Development, OstWest Media, 2012), 22-23.

⁸⁰ *Gender Assessment for USAID/Caucasus*, 39, cited in Badurashvili and Nadareishvili, 21.

⁸¹ Erlich, Vacharadze and Babunashvili, *Voices of Migration*, (CRRC), 10.

⁸² Badurashvili, *Integration of Migrants*, 4.

⁸³ Iashvili and Mikautadze, "Emigration from Georgia," 282.

⁸⁴ Fellman, Getis and Getis, *Human Geography*, 90.

⁸⁵ Gvenetadze and Samkharadze, "Migration from Georgia," 22.

of nerves. I'd better to preserve these relations and not start anything new and complicate. I compensate my absence."⁸⁶

However, some others have different attitudes:

"I never spared money that usually I received as remittances from my mom from Cyprus to fulfill any of my desires. But now, when I have one year experience of working there, I am so careful with every cent that she still sends to us. I and my dad try to save and invest in something viable."⁸⁷

Problems with Irregular Status of Georgian Migrants and the Need for Migration Policy

One of the key problems with Georgian emigrants is their irregular status.

In most cases Georgian migrants leave the country with a short-term tourist visa and then overstay it.⁸⁸ Due to this, they have the fewest opportunities to visit their families back home. This makes their stay in the host country harder and negatively affects their level of adaptation to the new reality.⁸⁹ On the other hand it causes alienation and cooling of relationships with family members. According to the 2002 Georgia population census, the percentage of those emigrants who have not visited their home country for a period of 6 to 9 years is highest and comprises 23.3%.⁹⁰

Illegal status is one of the main reasons why the Georgian migrants do not apply to employment agencies and usually find jobs with the help of friends or relatives who left earlier. Only 13% of return migrants indicated that they were employed abroad, according to an official labor contract.⁹¹ Absence of interstate agreements and circular migration policy, as well as lack of state regulation mechanisms for outflows from Georgia, puts migrants in a vulnerable situation abroad. As they are undocumented workers and do not have an official labor agreement with the employer, they are indeed not insured from violation of their rights. Georgian migrants work 58 hours a week on average. Such a situation is caused by migrants' undocumented status which forces them to agree to any working conditions.⁹²

Around 60% to 80% of migrants from Georgia work illegally due to lack of qualifications, language barriers, and lack of a residence or work permit.⁹³

The only way for Georgians to obtain legal status abroad is to marry a foreign citizen, maintain student status, or have exceptional professional skills, which very few Georgian migrants possess.⁹⁴ With their irregular status, Georgian transnationals are unable to reunite their families. Parents' illegal status hinders Georgia's young generation to be admitted into Western universities. The stories of transnational migrants from other countries show that from the legal status of parents working abroad as unskilled workers, young children benefit greatly. As Ho and Badford indicate (2008), in the 1990s, one or both parents in bi-local families later returned to Hong Kong or Taiwan, the home land for work, leaving their children to be educated in New Zealand. This young generation came with their parents as secondary school students, received higher education in the host country, and then either practiced the transnational migration (to another country) as high-skilled international professionals or decided to stay in New

⁸⁶ Guram, 57 years old male, driver, interview by Ia Iashvili, April 14, 2010, Monroe (NY).

⁸⁷ Maya, 21 years old female, student, interview by Ia Iashvili, November 20, 2009, Tbilisi, Georgia.

⁸⁸ Erlich, Vacharadze and Babunashvili, *Voices of Migration*, (CRRC), 4.

⁸⁹ Badurashvili, *Integration of Migrants*, 4.

⁹⁰ Tsuladze, *Emigration from Georgia*, 107.

⁹¹ Badurashvili, *Integration of Migrants*, 6.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Erlich, Vacharadze and Babunashvili, *Voices of Migration*, (CRRC), 11.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 4.

Zealand.⁹⁵ Most of them were told by their parents that the main reason for their families move to this country was to get a good education for them.⁹⁶

Currently, the best choice for Georgian youth to receive a good education is participation in international educational exchange programs offered by international donors (American Council, British Council, Open Society Institute, etc.). Some inconveniences that accompany this suggestion include very high competition rates, a limited numbers of grantees, and strict return policies with two years of home residency (after a short-term internship for most governmental programs). As Georgian migrant professionals are not employed legally after graduation in the host country, this minimizes the skills obtained by them abroad.⁹⁷ In our modern globalized world, the industrialized economies rely heavily on highly-skilled young workers.⁹⁸ We consider that giving more opportunity to Georgian youth to get international education outside of international programs, will contribute to their involvement in international professional labour markets greatly.

In the research on East European and post-Soviet countries by the World Bank (WB), Georgia emerged with the highest rate of return migrants having completed higher education abroad.⁹⁹ We think that because of the aforementioned policy, Georgia receives back its high skilled graduates. Even though it is encouraging for young professionals with international education, because it offers them good job opportunities at home with the national government, it should not be ignored. In this way they can contribute much to their native country.

One more problem with irregular status of Georgian immigrants is connected with the uncertain duration of their stay in a host country. According to the opinion of Georgian immigrants in America, the disposition of their family members in this regard is diverse. Almost half of them believe that the closest relatives anticipate the migrant's return; 32% think that family members have adjusted to their absence, while 24.5% consider that even though the household members miss them, families still need financial support from abroad. As our female respondent mentions:

“My grandson graduates from high school in this year. He is smart and good, he needs a lot – I pay his tuition fees, I bought a laptop for him, he really needs that. And when he starts at collage? He needs more, that's why I am here, 7th year already..., for younger ones as well.”¹⁰⁰

We think that as the prospect of return is unclear and currently the “permanent” job with “permanent” income exists, guaranteed remittances create more demand for them to stay. The longer this period continues, the longer the demand for remittances will remain. On the other hand, the absence of any kind of governmental policy or private initiatives to ensure efficient use of migrants' money transfers for development or reintegration of returnees at local labor markets will cause new outflows from the country and spur the process of re-emigration.

According to our research, half of Georgian migrants plan to return in the next 5 years, 30.3% do not plan yet, and for 12.9% it is unclear when they will decide. 14.5% have other plans and only 4.5% think they will be able to manage to bring their family members to the US.

Seeking legal status is extremely important for transnational migrants in order to stay internationally mobile, politically secure, and to enhance economic capital for themselves and household members. To

⁹⁵ Ho and Bedford, “Asian Transnational Families”: 43.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 49.

⁹⁷ Erlich, Vacharadze and Babunashvili, *Voices of Migration*, (CRRC), 1.

⁹⁸ Iredale, R. “The Need to Import Skilled Personnel: Factors Favoring and Hindering its International Mobility,” *International Migration* 37, no.1 (1999): 89-120, cited in Ho and Bedford, “Asian Transnational Families”: 53.

⁹⁹ Ali Mansoor and Bryce Quillin, ed., *Migration and Remittances: eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union* (The World Bank, 2007), 185.

¹⁰⁰ Nana, 58 years old.

negotiate the migration strategies is always challenging.¹⁰¹ As the previously mentioned problems continue to persist, there, in turn, is a growing need for better migration policies.

Currently there is no explicit migration policy in Georgia, although, several institutions have a role in migration management in the country.¹⁰² The most problematic issue is an absence of quantitative information on Georgian migrants. We hope that results of 2014 population census will help paint a clearer picture as to the accuracy of migration data, which in the past has proven to be problematic.¹⁰³

Even today, Georgia has yet to ratify any international agreement on labor migration (e.g. C97 Migration for Employment Convention 1949, C143 Migrant Workers Convention 1975, International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families, etc.). No dual citizenship is allowed. There are no bilateral agreements regulating the labor migration flows of Georgian citizens abroad; neither labor migration law was developed, nor were any issues concerning circular migration negotiated.¹⁰⁴

Nevertheless, in 2009 the implementation phase of the Mobility Partnership (MP) started between Georgia and European commission and 16 EU member states. At present, however, it is limited only with readmission and reintegration of forced returnees. At the Mobility Center established in the framework of the MP agreement, 344 persons went through vocational training, 216 persons have been referred to employment units, 51 return migrants received funds for financing business plans, and 17 persons were provided with temporary accommodation.¹⁰⁵ What should be the main benefit from the MP? Supporting the legal employment of Georgia citizens in EU countries and development of circular migration, which has not been realized yet.¹⁰⁶ The main obstacle in this scheme is the disposition of Georgia's government, supporting the idea of liberal economic policy, and it does not consider any management of labor market necessary. With the absence of state employment agencies and registration of unemployment, as well as lack of information on the Georgian labor market's supply and demand, it is impossible to stimulate circular migration.¹⁰⁷

An important agreement on visa facilitation and readmission of irregular migrants was signed between the European Union and Georgia that entered into force on March 1, 2011.¹⁰⁸

Certain categories of Georgia's citizens (close relatives of EU countries' residents, businesspeople, scientists, students, etc.) already benefit from a visa facilitation agreement aimed at making it easier to acquire short term Schengen visas.¹⁰⁹ Labor migrants are not counted in this list.

The agreement on readmission sets out clear obligations and procedures for the authorities of both Georgia and EU Member States as to when and how to take back people who are illegally residing in their territories.¹¹⁰

The target projects, which are designed to support the integration of returning migrants in the framework of the agreement, should realize several goals, such as: improvement of the legal basis and elaboration of a relevant policy; assistance to returning migrants in provisioning them with specialized training programs for vocational education; development of business plans and allocation of funds for

¹⁰¹ Ho, "Flexible Citizenship," 148-150.

¹⁰² *Review of Migration Management in Georgia*, 20.

¹⁰³ "Georgia will conduct", April 16, 2013.

¹⁰⁴ *Migration in Georgia*, 41.

¹⁰⁵ Natia Chelidze, *Readmission, Return and Reintegration in Georgia*, CARIM-East Explanatory Note 13/25, (CARIM-East – Consortium for Applied Research on International Migration, 2013), 6, http://www.carim-east.eu/media/exno/Explanatory%20Notes_2013-25.pdf.

¹⁰⁶ Badurashvili and Nadareishvili, *Social Impact*, 26.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ *Conclusion of Two EU Agreements with Georgia on Visa Facilitation and Readmission*, 2011, par.1, http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/jha/118885.pdf.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., par.4

¹¹⁰ *European Union signs visa facilitation agreement with Georgia*, June 17, 2010, par.5, http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-10-737_en.htm.

their implementation in some cases, etc.; provide migrants with information on available reintegration opportunities prior to their return.¹¹¹

There is some concern in Georgia about forcible return of migrants to a country with an estimated unemployment rate of 32%,¹¹² especially in regards to the current immigration policy of Georgia which allows foreigners to enter the country very easily to start working or create businesses without getting employment permission.¹¹³

Georgia's government is still reluctant about establishing bilateral agreements and designing a circular migration policy, even with the top destination countries of Georgian migrants, such as Greece, Italy and Turkey. One more issue that is connected with implementation of circular migration is the mismatch between the skills of potential migrant workers in Georgia and demands for available jobs abroad.¹¹⁴

Today, many emigration countries benefit from community-led associations created by migrants that are almost unknown to the Georgian people. As a survey on return migrants by CRRC revealed, Georgians had never heard about such organizations. After a description they noted that these types of organizations would be of great importance to people for financing various community projects connected with the development of local businesses that will create work places for the local citizens.¹¹⁵ At the same time, some respondents expressed less trust towards the government (fear that remittances may not reach their destination) and prefer that the programs be community run only.¹¹⁶

Georgian emigrants claim there is a lack of attention from consular offices abroad. They find consular officials as arrogant and not there to serve Georgian citizens.¹¹⁷ Emigrants are not aware of programs or organizations that either help people while they are working abroad or assist them to come back.¹¹⁸

One positive step that Georgia's government made in 2011 was the establishment of Sunday schools in 50 countries with Georgian diasporas.¹¹⁹ In the US the schools are functioning in Washington D.C., New York, Chicago and New Jersey. The schools are for three age groups, from 6 to 12 years old, to be taught the Georgian language, its geography, and history. This is a very good initiative, without saying, and should be welcomed. However, those emigrants who left indefinitely, with their whole family, benefit more than labor migrants who reside without children in the host country.

Conclusions and Recommendations

To conclude, we consider that the main policy objectives of Georgia should be as follows:

Create, whenever possible, exact data on migration flows and stock of Georgian emigrants. The census is both a necessary and a sensitive issue. It is therefore essential that the 2014 census data be released transparently and in a timely fashion;

As Re-admission and Visa Facilitation agreement works, it is necessary that comprehensive information on the Georgian labor markets need to be available for potential return migrants; at the same time increasing job opportunities in the country is essential;

¹¹¹ Chelidze, *Readmission*, 5-6.

¹¹² Tukashvili Mirian and others, *Internally Displaced Persons in the Georgian Labor Market* (Tbilisi: DRC, 2012), 7, cited in Chelidze, *Readmission*, 1.

¹¹³ Badurashvili and Nadareishvili, *Social Impact*, 26.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 35.

¹¹⁵ Erlich, Vacharadze and Babunashvili, *Voices of Migration*, (CRRC), 14.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 28.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 1.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹¹⁹ *Meeting With the Teachers of Sunday Schools*, May 28, 2012, <http://www.mes.gov.ge/content.php?id=4052&lang=eng>

As separation times among families are often extended, which seriously affects the social and psychological environment of both migrant and his/her family in the long run and promotes the formation of vulnerable group such as children, development of circular migration is crucial. This will mitigate the pain caused from the long absence of a nuclear family member, especially for mothers;

As international organizations (IOM, USAID, DRC, ICMPD) implement several projects of reintegration of return migrants to the Georgian labor markets, the government should collaborate actively with these donors to create conditions for a decent return;

As community-led associations are less known in Georgia, Office for the State Minister in Diaspora Affairs should promote this issue and help migrants to create such organizations in order to have additional work places for development of local businesses (tourism, agriculture) and help reduce emigration from the country. It is believed that if such conditions were to exist, Georgians would never leave again.¹²⁰

Measures to encourage Georgian Diasporas through Sunday Schools and arrangement of national festivals should be continued. The Office for the State Minister in Diaspora Affairs of Georgia should enhance its activity through more involvement in the migration process and governmental policy. It is of the utmost importance to create a database of Georgian citizens abroad, protect their rights, help them to obtain work permits, and prevent criminals from migrating;

Governmental officials have a responsibility for citizens of Georgia who live abroad permanently or temporarily today. Consular offices abroad should be more cooperative when emigrants address them for help, realizing that they are in the service of migrants and the Georgian State.

We would like to finish our paper with a message from one of our male respondents that we consider very meaningful:

"America is the big sweet marshland that pulls you down, attaches you to itself. Probably, if you want, you can overcome it, but you don't."¹²¹

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¹²⁰ Erlich, Vacharadze and Babunashvili, *Voices of Migration*, (CRRC), 13.

¹²¹ Zura, 52 years old.