



Teach & Learn with Georgia

Annual Report for 2010- 2011

The Year End Report of the Teach & Learn with Georgia program being implemented by the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia

Executive Summary

In January 2010, the President of Georgia announced the current year as the year of education, which meant carrying out more extensive educational reforms in various directions of the education system, as well as creating new approaches and possibilities within the system in order to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

Starting from the beginning of 2010, the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia (MES) activated a new phase of reforms in the education system of Georgia. These reforms include refinement of policy and legislation and establishment of an effective preschool, secondary and high educational system staffed with highly qualified personnel, development of proper infrastructure, increasing access to education for all social groups, enhancing the quality of education and improving learning outcomes.

Among wide-ranging reforms in many directions of the education field, enhancing English language capabilities is a major step forward. Changes in the national curriculum, bringing 1,000 native and fluent English speakers, adopting quality textbooks of English, massive training of local English teachers will indeed have a tremendous impact not only on Georgian schoolchildren, but also the entire Georgian society.

Teach and Learn with Georgia (TLG) 'beyond its immediate goal -- to improve English language proficiency -- the program is aimed at helping Georgian schoolchildren in adopting and sharing Western values and culture'¹. Therefore, together with the economic, political and social sectors, a new era of sharing western and European values has commenced in the education sector as well.

¹ <http://www.mysinchew.com/node/38570> (July 5, 2011)

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Acronyms

CAT – Computer Adaptive Testing

CRC – Criminal Record Check

EA – Employment Agreement

EPIK – English Program in Korea

ERC – Educational Resource Center

ESL – English as a Second Language

ETA – English Teaching Assistantship

GEL – Georgian Lari

ICT – Information Communication Technology

JET – Japan Education and Training

LEPL – Legal Entity of Public Law

LET – Local English Teacher

MES – Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia

MOU – Memorandum of Understanding

RFP – Request for Proposal

RR – Regional Representative

TLC – Tender Loving Care

TLG – Teach and Learn with Georgia

TLGV – Teach and Learn with Georgia Volunteer

TPDC – National Center for Teacher Professional Development

Introduction

In 1991, after the Soviet Union collapsed,² Georgia was left with almost no resources to function as an independent state. There were a lot of problems that needed to be solved and the first and the utmost important challenge was to create state institutions that were necessary for the country in order to be recognized as an independent and democratic society. In spite of the civil wars and lost and occupied territories, Georgia chose the most difficult way in the current circumstances³ - a way leading to a democratic development which in its essence implied numerous reforms to be undertaken in order to establish new democratic institutions. In the meanwhile, it became obvious that specific fields needed to be prioritized in order to foster the country's successful development.

Unfortunately, almost nothing was done in the 90's that would help the country get out of the existing stalemate. After Rose Revolution in 2003, it was obvious that the country needed new generations, new ideas and faces in all sectors of the governmental agencies that would help tackle existing problems. These new people in charge of the government were the group of young people who had had an opportunity to study abroad, in US or other European countries and receive a western education. They knew and understood the importance of a proper and quality education and thus from the very first days of the revolution, development of the education system was one of the major priorities of the Georgian government.

The goal of the current government was to draw the Georgian educational system near to that of other developed countries' and change the system still rooted in soviet tradition. The actual reforms took place from 2004⁴ and are still ongoing. Currently, the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia is implementing reforms in various sectors of education. Development of a new national curriculum, prioritizing applied and natural science studies, improvement of textbooks, providing every first grader with netbooks, and focusing on teachers' professional development are just a few successful steps made by the current administration of MES. Among these reforms, the program Teach and Learn with Georgia is one of high priority for the country and is an extremely large step towards improving English language teaching and learning.

Below are some of the main directions of the reforms that are currently underway and initiated by the current administration of the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia.

² http://www.coldwar.org/articles/90s/fall_of_the_soviet_union.asp (26.12.1991)

³ http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/country_profiles/1102477.stm (04.08.2011)

⁴ <http://www.mes.gov.ge/old/index.php?module=publication&page=detals&id=91> (04.08.2011)

Development of New National Curriculum

A new National Curriculum has been developed. It will come into force in the 2011-2012 academic years and will not be changed for 5 subsequent years. The National Curriculum is based on three important pillars: information, skills and attitudes, the values that enable students to become a full member of the society. To ensure stability of the learning process, the new National Curriculum is comprised of 60% to 80% compulsory content, depending on the specificity of a subject, and the remaining are elective subjects determined by the groups of authors and teachers in the frame of academic freedom. At the same time, new subjects, such as information and communication technologies, civil protection, world culture and Georgian dances have been included. At the first stage - during the 2011-2012 academic year, the new National Curriculum will be introduced at the primary education level (I-VI grades), and at the second stage - during the 2012-2013 academic year - at the basic and secondary education levels (VII-XII grades).

Strengthening of the Teaching of Applied and Natural Sciences

MES has prioritized learning/teaching of applied and natural sciences at schools: mathematics, physics, chemistry and biology. Increased demand on the labor market makes it necessary to create adequate conditions for the applied and natural sciences at schools in compliance with modern trends that will increase schoolchildren's interest in these subjects and motivate them. Additional hours for experimental/laboratory works will be added in the natural science (physics, chemistry, biology) program. At the same time, "Abituri" hours have been allocated in the twelfth grade specifically for these subjects; restoration of physics-mathematical schools - a group of qualified teachers and experts developed curricula for the physics-mathematical schools taking into consideration international standards; support of scientific research – the "Leonardo Da Vinci" Contest has been organized to enhance the knowledge of schoolchildren, support the development of creative thinking, and get them interested in technical innovations and reveal the inventiveness of schoolchildren.

Replacing Physical Fitness Lessons with Sports Classes

The Physical Culture classes are replaced with sports lessons in order to make the classes more interesting and exciting. The sport lessons are introduced at schools according to the desires and abilities of the schoolchildren and teachers. Schools are free to choose among the following types of sports: football, basketball, volleyball, rugby, tennis, table tennis, badminton, field hockey, chess, wrestle, judo, gymnastics, swimming, skating, skiing and modern dances. Leagues are formed in different types of sports and championships are organized amongst the schools.

Introduction of the “Abituri” Program for the 12th graders

In connection with the introduction of the 2010-2011 High School Exams, “Abituri” hours are included in the lesson schedule of 12th graders in the eight subjects, they will have to pass in the High School Exams. “Abituri” hours enable students to once again revise the material approved by school programs and get better prepared for the High School Exams.

Class Tutor’s Hour

The Class Tutor’s program has been launched from 2010-2011 school years for I-IV graders. Class Tutors of all grades give classes at least once a week on the following topics: healthy way of life – personal hygiene, healthy nutrition, day regime, importance of sports, danger of bad habits; moral development, relations with peers and adults, etiquette; civil and patriotic consciousness – my yard, my school, my native country, outstanding people, significant events, traditions, rules and laws; taking care of the environment and nature; broadening horizons – the value of artistic, technological and intellectual achievements, etc.

Supplementary Literature, Visual and other Types of Material for Each Subject and Grade

In order to promote learning/teaching and enhance the quality of education, in parallel with and based on the new National Curriculum, classification of supplementary visual and other types of material are being developed for all subjects and grades, e.g.: historic and geographic maps, ICT application, supplementary literature and magazines, internet resources, description of laboratories, music CDs, audiovisual materials, etc. A web-site: www.buki.ge has been created in order to post education and cognitive resources for schoolchildren. The web-page contains various interactive games, e-library and the latest information both on state-of-art technologies, school textbooks and literature.

Netbooks for First-Graders – “Buki”

By initiative of the President of Georgia, in September 2010, the government presented netbooks - modern children’s computers - to 3000 first-graders of public schools in Batumi, Zugdidi, Tserovani, Mestia, Kutaisi and Tbilisi. From September 2011, all first graders will receive the netbooks that serve as an additional source of information in for learning. Netbooks contain educational programs in foreign languages, Georgian language, mathematics and logics, school textbooks and literature, as well as educational and cognitive games. They are equipped with a full-value licensed operational system. Apart from the offered product, schoolchildren are able to install programs and desired games themselves. Netbooks have a function key for wireless internet enabling students to use free internet at school. Teachers were provided with the netbooks as well and they passed a special training course.

Improvement of the Quality of Textbooks and Increasing their Availability

In 2010, the Ministry developed new approaches and principles of the textbook approval procedures. Competition procedures were improved. Criteria of the textbook evaluation, technical parameters and methodology of the textbook assessment were defined.

From 2010-2011 academic years, the government provides all vulnerable schoolchildren with the free textbooks. Schoolchildren of non-Georgian schools are also provided with bilingual textbooks on civil education, history of Georgia, world history and geography as well as textbooks for Georgian as a second language.

Supporting Civil Education at School

The introduction of civil education is one of the essential elements of the Georgian general educational system. According to the National Curriculum, civil education is compulsory at all three levels of general education. It has been integrated in subject matter programs of social, natural sciences and humanities as well as in the class tutor's programs. At the same time, students' self-governance was established. Students are able to elect their class and school presidents, who will present their opinions of the learning process and their initiatives to the school administration and the school board.

High School Exams

MES attaches crucial attention to the High School Diploma that schoolchildren receive upon passing the minimal competency level in the main subjects. A student graduating from school will automatically receive a certificate that means that he/she obtains the right to continue studying at professional education centers or start working. However, if a student is willing to receive a diploma and continue studies at higher educational institutions, he/she will have to pass High School Exams in eight subjects. If a student fails to pass the minimum competence level, he/she will be able to retake the exam in the following year. High School Exams will be held through the "CAT" system in eight subjects at the general educational institutions of Georgia: Georgian language and literature, mathematics, history, geography, physics, chemistry, biology, and foreign language.

Safe School Concept

Introduction and implementation of a safe school program is one of the major challenges of the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia. In 2010, MES developed the Safe School concept and its implementation. Based on the concept, safe zones at schools were set up, cash transactions at schools were prohibited, and students' credit cards were introduced. As a part of this plan, the Office of Resource Officers was established.

Improvement of School Infrastructure

Upgrading the school infrastructure is one of the important achievements of educational reform. Since 2005, the Ministry started to actively support activities aimed at enhancing school infrastructure. By 2010, all schools in Georgia have been provided with heating and electricity systems. The process of transferring school canteens to large private companies has already started. Schoolchildren use credit cards at school canteens. From May 2010, piloting of this program started at several schools in Tbilisi.

School laboratories will also be equipped with the necessary inventory. In addition, teachers will be able to use virtual laboratories to enhance teaching of the Natural Sciences at school. Virtual laboratories started to operate at schools from April 2010. Small schools will also be provided with additional vouchers which will enable them to cover the expenses of electricity and purchase heating resources. Creation of a modern learning environment with an adequate technical infrastructure (computer equipment and internet access) bringing the learning methods in compliance with up-to-date standards are key priorities of the educational reform.

Teachers Professional Development and Certification

Within the scope of ongoing educational reform, the Government has taken a significant step in terms of regulation of a teacher's profession. Teachers pass a certification examination in particular subjects and in professional skills. Upon successfully passing these exams, teachers retain the status of Certified Teacher for 8 years. From 2010-2011, all certified teachers will receive an additional payment to their salary in the amount of GEL 75. From 2011, certification examination will be held natural sciences. Exams will also be arranged for primary education teachers. Until 2014, certification of teachers will be voluntary.

Teacher's House

With a goal of further supporting teacher professional development, Teacher's Houses will be opened in Tbilisi, Kutaisi, Kobuleti, Zugdidi and Kachreti. Education staff, teachers and school principals meet one another at the Teacher's House and exchange information related to the learning process. There teachers are able to receive advice on professional development, plan their career, and improve skills and knowledge in particular subject.

Teacher Standard

The National Centre for Teacher Professional Development sets the standards for teachers at primary, basic and secondary education levels. The teacher's standard is a document that features theoretical knowledge and practical skills of a qualified teacher. The teacher's standard was developed through active cooperation with experts and psychologists that are employed in the education sector and teachers. Teacher's standards will also be available for new subjects at schools. Currently the standards are being developed for the following subjects:

Georgian, as a second language; and, professional standards for special teachers. It is planned to develop a standard for sports and Information Technology teachers. A Code of Professional Ethics has been developed for teachers, school principals, and schoolchildren. Implementation of these codes at schools is underway.

Induction

After receiving academic qualification, teachers must go through a period of induction, after induction teachers are eligible to pass the certification examination to determine whether their knowledge and skills are in compliance with the teacher's standard. MES has started work on institutionalization of an efficient system of induction and mentorship throughout the country.

Currently, Inductee Support State Program for Teachers of Georgian Language and Literature, Math and Foreign Languages is being implemented in seven cities of Georgia: Tbilisi, Gori, Telavi, Akhaltsikhe, Kutaisi, Zugdidi and Batumi. It is planned to further expand the teacher's induction program, will increase the number of participants and improve their qualification.

IT Infrastructure

To establish an information system for school children and to develop the IT infrastructure, a data base and data processing centre will be created. A common internal network (intranet) will be created that will enable all of its subordinated structures to exchange information about any new modification or renovation on-line as well as holding on-line meetings and conferences. Intranet will enable the Ministry staff to better plan joint events and identify daily needs.

IT Support Centre "Helpdesk" was created to serve all subordinate structures of the Ministry. The Centre helps to solve all existing problems in the information technologies area. By means of special software it is possible to receive telephone and on-line assistance.

Enhancing the Learning of English Language

Enhancing English language capabilities is one of the most important directions of the MES. From 2011, English will be the first mandatory foreign language in every public school of Georgia, more focus is on local English teacher training and adopting modern methodologies in foreign language teaching as well as adopting new textbooks of English. One of the biggest accomplishments was opening the textbook market to international publishing houses that publish high quality English textbooks based on the highest international standards. One of them is Macmillan Publishing House that provided Georgia with new textbooks "English World" that are recognized and widely used in many Eastern European or other countries due to their high quality, new interactive methodologies and accessible prices. Based on the Memorandum of

Understanding (MOU) between Macmillan and MES, Macmillan provides every school and every local English teacher with free teaching materials – free teacher’s set consisting of teacher’s book, student book and work book, CD’s and DVD’s as well as flashcards and posters per unit and per level. Additionally, starting from June 27th 2011 through August 30, Macmillan trained around 4,200 local English teachers in the new methods of using “English World”. This is a significant achievement of the MES because teachers have all relevant tools including training that will help them to better teach the English language. To strengthen English language teaching at Georgian schools, MES also arranges English language summer schools for successful schoolchildren.

In order to develop and promote the English language teaching process more and comprehensively, MES is implementing the Teach and Learn with Georgia (TLG) program that aims to invite native speaking volunteer teachers to work in Georgian public schools. The program was initiated in January, 2010 and by the end of academic year 2011, Georgian public schools hosted up to 1,000 English speaking volunteers. The program envisages introducing new methodologies in the English language teaching process as well as helping local English teachers in the two most important skills of foreign language learning process – speaking and listening skills.

Teach and Learn with Georgia is one of the most ambitious and significant initiatives of the Government of Georgia that was planned and executed by the MES.⁵ Every schoolchild in Georgia should become "an English speaker" in next four years, as part of "educational revolution," President Saakashvili said on August 15, 2010. "Arrival of 10,000 English language teachers in Georgia in next three years is the event of exactly the same scale like the one, when David the Builder resettled 50,000 Kipchaks the Georgian state's modernization gained irreversible nature. If during the times of David the Builder the competitiveness was measured by a military criterion, today military criterion is one among others, but the key is education. What we will do within next years in Georgia is a real educational revolution and nothing of this kind has been done in any of the post-Soviet states. In next 4 years, we will achieve a situation, wherein every school-age child, starting from the age of five, will become English speaker. It means that English will be their second language after Georgian. However, the main, minimal requirement is that each child in Georgia from age of five to the age of 16 should be an English speaker with computer skills. It will give us an opportunity to make a major progress and to make the largest breakthrough in next decades in the entire post-Soviet space and that's the greatest contribution we will make to the future development of our country."⁶

⁵ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZHT8dBfCF7I> (July 3, 2011)

⁶ <http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=22601> (July 3, 2011)

TLG is indeed a 'linguistic revolution'⁷ with significant results over the period of one year – out of 4,200 local English teachers, up to 3,000 teachers had an opportunity to interact with native English speakers, get acquainted with modern teaching methodologies and techniques; up to 50,000 local students have improved their English level proficiency; more than 1,500 local host families and communities hosted foreign volunteers with an amazing possibility of cultural and traditional exchange.

⁷ <http://www.interpressnews.ge/en/video.html?video=119&view=video> (July 3, 2011)

Making of TLG

As mentioned above, Georgia has gone through very difficult times in the past, and is constantly attempting to rid itself of the soviet mentality, which negatively affected the educational system and caused several institutions to be developed which later on became the biggest problem for the entire system. One of such problems was identified in the field of English language teaching. Precisely, Georgian methods of teaching English were far behind modern standards and were failing to respond to the needs that actually existed.

In 2010, the president of Georgia prepared an initiative to develop a program which would help Georgian people to develop their English language skills and foster their communication with the rest of the world⁸ and with this aim, the program Teach and Learn with Georgia (TLG) was established. From the very beginning, TLG was designed not only as an educational program, but also to focus on the cultural aspect. Such designation of the program has been acknowledged to be very successful later on as it gave Georgian schoolchildren, teachers and ordinary citizens an opportunity not only to master their English language skills but also to cross the cultural boundaries which might exist while communicating with foreigners.

‘English opens many doors for Georgian children; it gives them the same possibilities as any student in any of the western countries.’ – said the Minister of Education and Science, Dimitri Shashkini. After the official announcement about the intent to create a program that would entail recruiting 1,000 English-speaking volunteers in Georgia by the President of Georgia, Mikheil Saakashvili, MES started an extensive research on how to implement the program. Besides MES, almost all other government agencies are also actively involved in the successful implementation of the project – President’s Administration, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Justice, diplomatic corps and many other agencies support the promotion and operation of TLG.

The program was named ‘Teach and Learn with Georgia’ because the founders of the program believed that the process of sharing values, cultures and knowledge would be mutual, i.e. foreign volunteers would be teaching the language and sharing their viewpoints while learning local, Georgian traditions and customs, culture and way of life together with the language since the language is the main and the most effective form of communication.

As similar experiences had already been in place in different countries of the world, as well as in Georgia, the design of the program was based on the Peace Corps model with certain components of Japan’s JET (Japan Education and Training) and South Korea’s EPIK (English Program in Korea) programs, while the structure, procedures and organization of TLG were created in accordance with the needs of local legal procedures and requirements.

⁸ <http://tlg.gov.ge/content.php?id=80&lang=eng> (August 4, 2011)

Additionally, In February-March 2010 Dr. Gregory John Orr conducted the 'Needs assessment for English language learning and instruction in the region of Georgia' with the support of U.S. Embassy in Georgia. A short but extensive report that talks about the English language teaching environment in Georgia: "Imagine my surprise at what I found on my return 16 years later -- a vibrant educational environment where improving the teaching and learning of English is a priority, where Education Resource Centers are operational in 72 towns, where educational reforms are coming fast (and almost too furious) out of the Ministry of Education and Science, where a strong and effective teachers association is thriving, and where Peace Corps volunteers, Fulbright ETAs, and English Language Fellows are providing native speaking expertise around the country.

However, it's not all a rosy picture. Books may be available but at a price that not everyone can afford, many teachers either don't have or don't look at teachers' manuals, and supplementary materials are still hard to come by. Teachers are still poorly paid and often have to supplement their income by taking tutoring jobs outside. Computers and internet may be in schools but teachers don't know how to use them. And not every school is as well equipped as School No. 51 in Tbilisi, as well managed as School No.17 in Kutaisi, or as innovative pedagogically as School No. 8 in Gori."

Dr. Orr also talks about the Peace Corps Georgia presence in Georgia and its results. "Peace Corps returned to Georgia last year with 18 English teaching volunteers placed in secondary schools in the eastern part of the country. They will eventually double in April and will move into regions further west. The volunteers work closely with a counterpart in a team-teaching arrangement in the classroom. Another important part of the Peace Corps experience is creating a secondary/community programs; such programs have included girls' camps, writing Olympics, teacher training, English resource library linkage, movie club, model UN, youth development, etc.)

Wherever I went principals and English teachers spoke glowingly of current and former volunteers they had at their schools. The effect of a native speaker who could not only help teachers to improve their own English as well as encourage and motivate students both inside and outside the classroom. Many also pointed to the English language sections of their libraries that volunteers helped develop as their secondary programs."

This report was done half a year ago and a year later most of the issues were addressed by the MES. As stated above, new textbooks have been adopted with an affordable price for every family; the teachers have proper training and supplementary materials; through certification, their salaries will be doubled and tripled; and all of them are advised to take computer and English courses. It is also essential that the MES is actively involved in the school infrastructure renovation process and hundreds of schools are being repaired throughout the summer. Nevertheless, challenges like teachers' professional development and training, their

computer skills and utilization of new teaching methodologies, teaching materials and school infrastructure still remain. Based on these facts, researches, existing international and local practices and the needs for the country, MES started inviting native and fluent English speakers around the world to Georgia via Teach and Learn with Georgia.

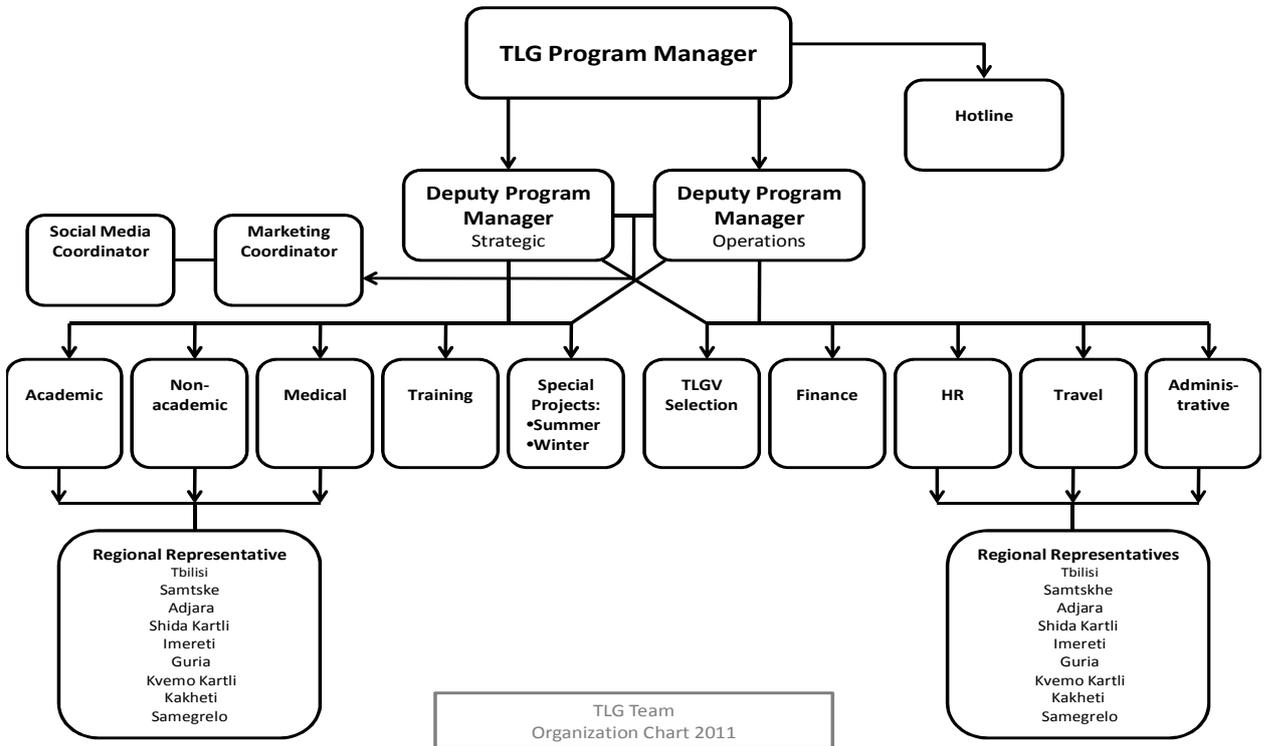
In order to respond to the challenges of teaching English, MES started implementing Teach and Learn with Georgia, the language revolution that changed the entire picture very soon. Instead of small, scattered resources, MES brought 1,000 volunteers that covered almost half of the schools in the entire country and thus impacted the communities all over Georgia. The quantity *did* matter because this was the only way that the actual improvement of in the English teaching methodology could have been done. Outdated teaching methods, lack of listening and speaking comprehensions, unmotivated teaching environment made it very difficult for the Georgian society to master the language. It is obvious that the importance of having a native speaker in schools should not be underestimated. Native speakers do not only bring the language with them but also other programs like movie clubs, libraries, critical thinking activities, etc.

Another very important issue that is also noteworthy to point out is a common practice for Georgian children to learn English through private tutoring. Parents often expressed concerns that public schools did not give children a good level of proficiency in a foreign language. Therefore, well-off or middle class families were able to hire private tutors for their children but this was not the case for many other parents who could not afford private tutoring. Taking into consideration this social factor as well, the MES provided public schools with unique resources such as TLG volunteers in order to direct all possible resources towards building trust amongst parents in public schools. It is extremely important for a country like Georgia because out of 2,200 schools only 10% are private schools. Most parents cannot afford taking children to private schools and public schools are their main place to give their children a chance to receive a decent education. For that reason, at first TLG volunteers were placed in public schools and their placement was based on covering one region at a time.

The first group of TLG volunteers was on the ground on July 30, 2010 and group consisted of 52 volunteers. The placement of volunteers in schools and host families took place sequentially the following way: Western Georgia first - Adjara, Samegrelo, Guria, Imereti; the next location was Kvemo Kartli and Tbilisi, afterwards Samtskhe-Javakheti and Shida Kartli and finally, Eastern Georgia – Kakheti. Initially, according to the program plan, it was important to have volunteers in every region of Georgia. From September 2011, the placement procedures are going to be based on two requirements: Replacement of the volunteers who left the program after their contract expired to ensure the continuity of the English lessons with a native speaker for the schoolchildren. The second requirement is per quota placement – at least 50% of

schools will be covered per region/town/village. With an increasing number of volunteers, the number of covered school will also raise.

Initially, until September 2010, the program team management consisted of 5 members who were responsible for volunteer recruitment, organizing and monitoring training sessions and volunteer placement in schools and host families. As this was the first stage of the program and the anticipated number of willing volunteers was unknown, this team was enough to manage the program. Starting from September 2010, TLG staff was expanded with the increasing number of volunteers, more experience gained from the process, requirements for the successful program management and establishing brand name “TLG” that is already an exemplary program for other countries. The TLG organization was created and established the following way. As the program progresses, the changes in TLG composition will be flexible and modified accordingly.



TLG Operation – How We Teach and Learn

As mentioned above, TLG is a government program that is being implemented by the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia. It is one of the programs under the National Center for Teachers Professional Development. The TLG task organization is based on the main directions of the program – volunteer selection, training, academic, non-academic, travel, medical, legal and program support teams.

Teach and Learn with Georgia recruits native and fluent English speakers who are willing to help Georgian schoolchildren to learn the English language in public schools across Georgia. As we strive towards globalization and acknowledge the advantages of new technology, we still consider that human interaction and people-to-people communication are irreplaceable and have far more tangible or intangible benefits than any other means of communication. This is why TLG is so important for a small country like Georgia that has exceptional customs and traditions and is willing to share them with the rest of the world. The exchange of information, experiences and cultures will create important ties between Georgians and other peoples from different parts of the world. This initiative significantly improves English language proficiency in Georgia both for local teachers and schoolchildren. It also gives a great opportunity to the volunteers to gain this teaching or cultural experience and be successful in their future careers.

As the program is of high importance and priority, the Government of Georgia offers the following benefits to volunteer teachers:

- Housing/living accommodations (Volunteer teachers live with host families);
- Medical insurance;
- Travel expenditures (round trip tickets, work related trips);
- Round trip ticket for one vacation per year;
- 500 Georgian Lari per month (approximately \$300 depending on the exchange rate);
- Safe environment.

In order to ensure the successful implementation, TLG Headquarters (HQ) manages and runs the program from the MES:

TLG Academic Team provides assistance to TLG Volunteers (TLGV) when it involves school life. The Academic Team gives the school administration the parameters of the volunteers' duties – how many co-teachers should the volunteer have, how many hours the volunteer works, and other responsibilities and obligations of volunteering. They also provide solutions to issues that may occur regarding relationships with teachers, directors and students and other matters such as lack of resources. The main resource used for communication with volunteers is the Weekly/Monthly Volunteer Report that contains assessment and other relevant information about a volunteer's monthly activities in schools. A daily report is sent to



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the Project Manager containing action items that are being addressed and the quantitative data is collected, processed and reported on a monthly basis, keeping the Project Manager informed of issues and progress in schools where TLG Volunteers are placed. Projects to improve communication and performance, for example co-teaching workshops, are initiated by the Academic Team.

TLG Non-Academic Team inspects host families and schools and places TLG volunteers in the inspected and approved schools and families; assists TLGVs in establishing good relationships with host family members and helps them in solving problems that may be raised due to language and/or cultural differences. The Non-Academic Team gets information from different sources: phone calls, emails, Volunteer Weekly/Monthly Reports (non-academic part), hotline, Regional Representatives (RR's) and others. But the main sources are e-mails and phone calls. The Non-Academic Team takes part in various projects, arranged by TLG management.

TLG Volunteers' Selection/Recruitment Team works with applicants who apply directly through TLG to participate in the program, guides them through the application process, conducts video conferences with them and provides their acceptance/rejection results. TLG Volunteers' Selection/Recruitment Team also works with partner recruiting agencies, has regular communication with their representatives, receives completed applications from them, reviews and provides the rest of the team with their acceptance/rejection reasons. The Team provides guidelines and procedures for receiving required documentation in the agreed format and communicates it to the applicants and partner recruiting agencies.

TLG Training Team organizes plans and executes orientation training for volunteers after they arrive in Georgia. They are responsible to facilitate one week of Orientation Training, which helps volunteers to become prepared and equipped with the information they need while they are volunteering in Georgia. The Training Team conducts Orientation Sessions which cover the following topics: Historical overview of Georgia; Educational System in Georgia; Volunteers job at school and responsibilities in the scope of TLG program; Volunteers in the Host Families; Means of Transportation in Georgia and Volunteers Safety. The Training Team is responsible for organizing Orientation Training where the following classes are covered: Georgian, Methodology, Intercultural Training, and Cooperative Teaching Workshops. The Training Team also participates in different Projects developed by the Academic Team and other teams in TLG to improve systems and conditions for the volunteers' life in Georgia.

TLG Flights Team accommodates TLGVs flights to and from Georgia including flights for vacation and emergency. During 'high seasons' i.e. in December and June, when volunteers return home for vacation or end of their contract period, the Flights Team, at one time moves around 400-600 people all over the world. Their main duties include getting information from the volunteers about their preferred departure dates and destination to and from Georgia

coordinating the information and purchasing tickets. Special note about this particular job is that the flight coordinator has to be available 24/7 anytime anywhere.

TLG Hotline is unique to TLG. This is the main form of communication between volunteers' and TLG. The Hotline is the place where volunteers can call anytime during the day or night to get the answers on questions or concerns that they might have. The TLG Hotline is also responsible to be directly in touch with TLG volunteers; collects and updates volunteers' contact information and keeps them updated about TLG's new initiatives, new policies, cultural tours or various events organized by the MES. The Hotline also updates the TLG volunteers' database, mailing lists, e-mail addresses, phone numbers, birthday list, etc.

TLG Legal Advisory Team (Note: Future HR team) is responsible for monitoring legal activities of the program and solving all legal related issues arising under the scope of the project. Specifically, in terms of preparation of the legal documents, the legal department deals with preparation of various administrative papers, drafting, receiving, amending, revising the Employment Agreements, as well as conducting the same operations with the state procurement and service agreements if assistance is requested from the financial manager of the program. The legal team does legal counseling under the scope of the Program and advises program staff on various legal matters, assists volunteers to solve legal problems, provides the Program Manager with the legal expertise on various matters. Negotiation with the recruitment companies on various legal matters derived from the recruitment agreement and keeping constant communication with them is also a part of the activities of the legal department.

TLG plans to change this team establishing a Human Resources team consisting of legal and HR representatives.

TLG Medical Team is responsible for participating in the selection and screening process before volunteers arrive in Georgia. The Medical team analyzes volunteer medical conditions based on selection procedures and requirements and volunteers' medical information and gives recommendations to the volunteers' Selection/Recruitment Team. The Medical Team is directly in touch with TLG volunteers in case of health issues and provides them with updates regarding medical requirements of the country. The Medical Team is a liaison between volunteers and the insurance company, ensuring proper and timely assistance for the volunteers. The Medical team is available 24/7 for the volunteers and is responsible to immediately notify the Program Management in case of medical emergency.

TLG Financial Manager is responsible for procuring various goods and services and to control procedures according to the Monetary Limits of Public Procurement law of Georgia Legislation; conduct various kinds of market research in order to establish a lower price; send out RFPs (Request for Proposal) and awarding agreements to the selected bidders. The largest part of the financial manager's responsibility is dealing with travel agencies and procuring volunteer tickets; checking invoices sent from the travel agency and ensuring accurate and

timely wire transfer. Other responsibilities are preparing financial documents for transfer and presenting them to the Financial Department of National Center For Teacher Professional Development; conducting quarterly financial analysis and providing this information to the Public Procurement Agency and other controlling organizations through the procurement department of the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia.

TLG Summer/Winter Team (Note: This team will fall under TLG Special Projects together with the Teach for Georgia Project) was created in summer to plan and execute TLG summer projects such as training police officers or participate in summer camp programs. The Summer Team at TLG regulates several aspects of volunteers' employment throughout the summer period. The Summer Team is in charge of managing different summer projects and coordinating volunteers' involvement in them. External relations include cooperating with partner organizations and governmental entities. As for the internal management, the Summer Team coordinates TLG volunteers' placement in different summer projects, providing transportation for them and organizing projects in general. Volunteers' who organize their own summer schools in their assigned areas are also regulated by TLG Summer Team in cooperation with TLG Academic Team.

Due to the variety and dynamics of the Program, many special projects occur under the umbrella of TLG, one of them being volunteer employment during the summer time. Similar short-term projects will take place in winter time as well when the schools are out and volunteers need to be involved in other activities. In summer 2011, the summer project was teaching English to approximately 5,200 police officers all over Georgia. TLG will offer similar opportunities to its volunteers during winter and summer breaks.

Another special project will become part of TLG that is an exact analogy of Teach for America⁹ program in the U.S., called Teach for Georgia locally. This project already exists in the National Center for Teacher Professional Development but due to the similarities, TLG will assume only the placement of local English teachers' in remote areas of Georgia.

TLG Regional Representatives (RRs) were added to the TLG team in May, 2011 in order to improve communication between TLG HQ and volunteers who are placed across Georgia. There are total of nine TLG RRs – Adjara, Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti, Guria, Imereti (also covering Racha-Lechkhumi), Samtskhe-Javakheti, Shida Kartli, Kvemo Kartli, Tbilisi (also covering Mtskheta-Mtianeti), Kakheti. They are under the general supervision of the TLG Academic, Non-Academic and Medical Coordinators and the TLG Program Manager at TLG HQ. Regional Representatives support volunteers as they live and work in Georgia; they set the tone and character of the TLG program in their respective regions and serve as leaders, liaisons and representatives for all volunteers and TLG staff. RRs visit schools and host families whether they are scheduled or impromptu, record and generate reports with findings. They also read and

⁹ <http://www.teachforamerica.org/>

review Volunteer Weekly/Monthly Reports; coordinate with TLG HQ Academic and Non-academic teams to solve issues as well as track accomplishments of volunteers and/or their counterparts and generate required reports. TLG RRs are in close cooperation with local government officials and authorities, representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) who could assist in promoting events organized by TLG. RRs coordinate and report these activities through the TLG Project Manager.

Volunteers' Main Roles and Responsibilities in TLG

The employment relationship between the Employer – Legal Entity of Public Law (the LEPL) National Center for Teacher Professional Development (TPDC)¹⁰ and the volunteer teacher (the TLGV) is regulated by the Employment Agreement (the EA) which is in full compliance with Georgian legislation in the field of employment law. The EA contains general as well as detailed rights and obligations of contracting parties. It serves as the main legal document which encompasses and justifies all project objectives. The very first EA was introduced in summer 2010 and had been introduced major amendments three times since then.

In order to improve the employment rights of the TLGV's and establish more precise regulations, TLG initiated a new EA which offered new rights to the volunteers. Precisely, the leave definition was expanded and the sick leave and emergency leave was added to the contract. It also added some new obligations to the volunteers, such as their duty to submit the weekly report together with the monthly report, payment of 100 GEL to the host family, tutoring of host family members, keeping their private information confidential, obligation regarding the price balance in terms of the flight ticket and etc. This EA also specified the conditions based on which TLG volunteers are entitled to specific benefits offered by the program.

Thus, the newly established rules have covered most core issues that arose in the early stages of the program. Need for new regulation was inevitable and improvement of the legal basis of the program can be referred as one of the most due challenges TLG responded to.

Academic Rights and Obligations under the Employment Agreement

Teach and Learn with Georgia is a project which was generated from the idea to improve the English language skills of Georgian school children by bringing hundreds of English language speakers to Georgia and ensure their full involvement in activities of Georgian public schools related to English language teaching. The core of the program is to achieve high academic endeavors in English teaching which can be accomplished on the one hand by the correct impositions of the scholastic duties on the volunteer teachers (Employer's part of the duties) and on the other hand by the proper performance of the academic obligations by the VT's (VT's part of duties).

¹⁰ As mentioned above, TLG is one of the programs under the National Center for Teacher Professional Development

Due to the high priority granted to the academic objectives of the program, TLG pays huge attention and strictly monitors precise performance of academic obligations by the volunteers and reacts appropriately to every deviation occurred in this regard, no matter how minor they might be. The role of the volunteer teacher in Georgian school system, level of his/her involvement in the lesson planning and in other teaching activities, measures that the Employer applies in order to supervise the performance by means of academic reports and disciplinary compliance matters are prescribed by the EA signed between the Employer and the Employee.

Academic Planning

This group of obligations includes: Teacher's obligation to plan and conduct lesson planning in Georgian public schools in cooperation with Georgian Teachers¹¹, preparation of the English teaching materials as well as planning of other teaching activities¹², participation in summer/winter schools offered by the Employer during the summer or winter school breaks with involvement of the same commitment as of teaching at the public schools¹³, working with no more than 3 Georgian co teachers¹⁴ and assisting public schools in organizing various English language teaching activities¹⁵.

All these obligations are aimed at maximum involvement of the teacher in the school life. The academic duties of the TLGVs is not only limited to classroom activities, like lesson planning and conducting the lessons in a due manner, but it is also focused on the maximum integration of the teacher in the activities outside the class. For example, TLGV is not only obliged to take care of the English language activities within the class but is also expanded to the obligation to participate in any kind of actions within his/her school where the English language related activities are involved and is therefore aimed to foster communication between the teacher and the rest of the world. Thus, the volunteer has an ultimate academic freedom at his/her public school in terms of expressing professional and social skills and by means of maximum integration in the school environment is given a chance to help students, teachers and any third parties in improving not only English language skills as such but also helps them to cross the cultural boundaries while communicating with the foreigners.

TLGV is not the sole player at the class. All TLGVs are assistants of local English language teachers and their utmost communication with them is strictly required. The EA sets maximum number of teachers the volunteer is obliged to cooperate with. In some situations, number of

¹¹ Article 4, Paragraph 4.1, Sub Paragraph 4.1.2 of the Employment Agreement between volunteer teachers and the National Center for Teacher Professional Development.

¹² *Ibid*, Sub Paragraph 4.1.3

¹³ *Ibid*, Sub Paragraph 4.1.4

¹⁴ *Ibid*, Sub Paragraph 4.1.6

¹⁵ *Ibid*, Sub Paragraph 4.1.5

the local teachers can be higher. In such cases, TLG does not interfere and the cooperation is regulated based on the mutual agreement between the parties. As the objective of TLG is not only to help Georgian school children to develop their language skills, but also help Georgian teachers to expand their professional viewpoints and augment their speaking skills.

Special Attention to Volunteer Weekly/Monthly Reports

Volunteer Weekly/Monthly Reports are highly prioritized in TLG. TLGV's are obliged to send monthly/weekly academic reports to the TLG Academic and Non-Academic Teams on last Friday of each month by filling out a weekly/monthly report form¹⁶. Sending of these reports is strictly monitored and failures in this regard are properly responded to by the legal team. Special attention to the reporting process is made due to the fact that the monthly/weekly reports reflect the reality which TLGVs are facing at school or in their host families. It is extremely crucial for TLG to know in what environment the teachers are working and what kind of issues they might have at school.

Other Academic Obligations

This set of obligations mostly deals with the disciplinary compliance issues. All volunteers are obliged to abide by teacher ethic rules¹⁷ as well as to respect and comply with the Georgian legislation in the field of general education and the public school policy¹⁸. TLGV's have the same disciplinary obligations at school as the local teachers.

This part of obligations is not limited only to the disciplinary compliance. It also covers the confidentiality clauses in respect to reputation and every day activities of the school. TLGV is not authorized to disclose and make public such information which is deemed as confidential within the school and is accessible for the volunteer within their course of employment. Information, which is not detrimental directly for the schools` reputation, but might damage the mindset of the students, is not also allowed to be publicized.

Non Academic Rights and Obligations under the Employment Agreement

As TLG is not only educational but is also a cultural program, it involves the direct relationship between the host family and the volunteer. It is part of the program that all volunteers are offered to be placed with Georgian host families and TLG is responsible to find a family which is properly screened and is secure to host the volunteer.

The non-academic part of the obligation involves three parties: TLG, the volunteer and the host family. TLG's duties in this regard are covered by the general EA with the volunteer and includes TLG's obligation to provide a volunteer with a secure work place for health and a life of

¹⁶ Article 4, Paragraph 4.1, Sub Paragraph 4.1.7 of the Employment Agreement between volunteer teachers and the National Center for Teacher Professional Development.

¹⁷ *ibid*, Article 4, Paragraph 4.1, Sub Paragraph 4.1.8

¹⁸ *ibid*, Sub Paragraph 4.1.24

the Employee and give full and explicit information within a reasonable time regarding all facts which may affect life and health of the Employee, provide volunteer with living conditions in a host family, assist volunteer in solving problems with the host family which may arise based on language barriers or some other grounds, to serve as a liaison between the host family and a volunteer in case any misunderstanding arises.

Due to the fact that TLG is responsible for the safety of the volunteers while they are in contract with each other, volunteers are not authorized to make arbitrary decisions regarding a family change. If such a decision is made by the volunteer, he/she might be subject to strict disciplinary procedures including a disciplinary warning which may affect the personal file of the person committing the misconduct.

Apart from the general EA between the volunteer and TPDC, relationship between the host family and TPDC is also regulated by a special agreement which includes all obligations and rights which the host family and a volunteer might encounter towards each other.

Host family and a volunteer

Host families part of obligations include: to provide the employee with furnished living area and respect his/her privacy while he/she stays in the allocated premise, ensure that the living area is equipped with a heating system as well as make the internet accessible for the volunteer, apply to preventive measures in order to ensure the volunteers safety, provide the volunteer with the food minimum twice a day, guide him/her in the first days of his/her arrival to find all necessary entities in the city/village such as a bank, hospital, different types of shops, groceries, chemistries and so on. The families are obliged to put their best efforts to make the volunteer feel at home and help him/her to integrate in their societies.

On the other hand, volunteers are obliged to respect the privacy of the host families, refrain from offensive attitudes and epithets while communicating with the host family, in case of misunderstanding based on the language barrier, not violate the accepted level of noise during the day and night while staying with the host family, keep minimum household hygiene, maintain the property allocated to him/her in good condition and in case of damaging it, cover costs of recovery, vacate the room in its original habitable condition upon termination of the EA and do not change the decoration of the property entrusted to him/her without obtaining prior consent from the host family, pay to host family 100 GEL which covers the utility costs and meal expenses and tutor the host family members for minimum one hour a day, three days a week.

Before arriving to Georgia, volunteers are sent a special manual with instructions and suggestions. But sometimes this information is not enough to help the volunteer adjust in uncomfortable situations. These regulations are set in ways to provide harmonized integration of the volunteer into the society he/she starts living in. The aim of the legal restrictions in this regard is not to limit the parties, vice versa it is focused on the protection of the volunteer teacher from possible cultural shock and complications which might occur. Despite all of these

efforts, when the concerns still occur from either party, e.g. misunderstanding between the host families and TLGVs due to the language, cultural challenges between them, difficulty with adaptation, etc., they are fixed by TLG in the fastest and most effective way.

Special Obligations of the Parties under the Employment Agreement

The EA also includes a set of obligations which refers to the special rights and obligations which the contracting parties have. Apart from providing the TLG with job placement and a living area, the TLG also covers the transportation costs of the volunteer which includes TLG's obligation to provide a volunteer with a round trip flight ticket to and from Georgia.¹⁹ However, there are some exceptions to be noted regarding the price balance: In case the volunteer chooses a destination other than the original departure place while departing from Georgia (after his/her EA is expired), he/she is obliged to cover the additional costs. Moreover, TLG is entitled not to provide the volunteer with the returning ticket if he/she unilaterally terminates the EA before completing the employment term or if the TLG terminates the EA based on the employee's misconduct.

TLG is obliged to provide the TLGV with health insurance as well as with medical assistance and emergency medical transportation, if needed. TLG puts its best effort to stay in connection with the TLGV 24/7, is providing the EA with assistance in solving problems based on language barriers, gives a mobile phone with a corporate SIM card to TLGV which connects him/her freely to other volunteers and TLG staff members, provides with a bank account and debit card for free, provides with orientation trainings upon their arrival in the country which involves trainings in different disciplines.

The hotel stay costs and meals during the training are also covered by the TLG. Furthermore, TLG provides with assistance in gathering the information regarding the postal and customs procedures, provides with explanation of the different legal procedures as well as with all necessary documents needed to obtain the visa and temporary residence permit. TPDC pays the salary as agreed by the EA, grants work statements upon request as well as awards certificate of completion and letter of recommendation in case the volunteer successfully completes the EA.

At the same time, volunteer has an obligation to treat carefully TLG devices entrusted to him/her and refund the costs of repair or actual costs of the goods in case any damage occurs,

¹⁹ Article 4, Paragraph 4.4, Sub Paragraph 4.4.19 of the Employment Agreement between volunteer teachers and the National Center for Teacher Professional Development.

cover the price difference if he/she wishes to upgrade the ticket. This requirement is expanded to the vacation ticket as well.

Special Benefits under the Employment Agreement

There are specific benefits TLG offers to the volunteers. In case the volunteer signs the EA for one full academic semester, he/she is entitled to paid leave for 24 working days and a round trip ticket during the vacation time. However, TLG has different definition of the semesters. As TLG has intakes minimum twice a month, not every volunteer can attend full semesters. In order to balance the duration of the volunteers' stay in Georgia, TLG came up with the teaching terms different from the Minister's Order and it defines from which period and for what duration of the contract the volunteer is entitled to the benefits specified above. The teaching term options are clearly explained to the volunteers by the recruiting companies as well as by TLG during the selection process and orientation trainings upon their arrival in Georgia.

Under special conditions, TLG offers a bonus payment to volunteers who are involved in the recruitment process. Precisely, TLG gives opportunity to current and former volunteers to recruit new teachers who stay in Georgia either for one semester or two. Every volunteer who recruits a teacher for TLG will receive a 1,000 GEL net bonus payment in his or her bank account when a decision is made.

TLG – Making a Difference

Academic World

Starting from September 2010, 1,000 native and fluent English speakers from various countries of the world started arriving in Georgia with one big aim and hope – to make a difference in the rapidly developing country of Georgia. Georgia had just fought a war with Russia in 2008²⁰ leaving country with more occupied territories and thousands of refugees within the country.

Nevertheless, the country of Georgia had to cut its losses and continues to move towards the goals it had set after the Rose Revolution²¹ - build up a democratic country with democratic values and viewpoints with a special focus on education and an educated future generation amongst others. As mentioned above, a full scale process of reforms were launched in many directions and improvement of English language proficiency both in local English teachers and students is one of them.

In order to monitor the success of the program, TLG developed a volunteer's reporting system and these reports are the main source of assessing how successfully the project goals were delivered, what kind of impact the program had on the people's life and what difference it made in the development of the system. Thus, statements made in this paper are derived from firsthand accounts provided by the volunteer teachers and are a reflection of their opinions regarding the development of the Georgian educational system.

One year experience and data revealed that TLG was an absolute success and a true language and cultural revolution. Reports from TLG volunteers, local English teachers and school administration show the breakthrough made in current 'old school' methodology – teaching English off of the textbooks with no or very little listening and speaking exercises. The reality of the English language teaching process was that in general schools and even in higher educational institutions students graduated with no speaking and listening skills. Despite the fact that Georgian children were very good at grammar, reading and some writing, speaking and listening was totally disregarded in the old way of teaching. This very often became a major obstacle for them to communicate in the language they believed they had mastered very well. It especially turned into a bigger problem if they wanted to continue their studies abroad where English was the main language, they had to take international English tests and if admitted, they needed to study, write, think and communicate in English in universities abroad.

At school, with the help of TLG volunteers, children had an amazing opportunity to practice their English skills with a native speaker and speak about the topics that had a real world context versus outdated topics from their textbooks; listen to the different experiences

²⁰ <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/09/world/europe/09georgia.html> (July 13, 2011)

²¹ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/4532539.stm> (July 13, 2011)

and backgrounds of TLG volunteers and thus think about their future studies, job opportunities, traveling in different countries and etc. When asked, these children believe that English will be their unique chance to be successful in the future without it, they have no chance to be competitive.²²

TLG Headquarters (HQ) at the Ministry of Education and Science monitor the performance and progress of the program throughout the country. The main areas of interest for TLG HQ were **lesson planning and preparation, co-teaching, teaching methods used by TLGV and local English teachers, classroom management, evaluation of student outcomes, school administration support, and extra-curricular activities**. TLG volunteers were required to fill out and send in monthly/weekly reports and as a result of this reporting procedure, MES was able to see a full picture of around 1,000 Georgian schools in terms of teacher training needs, English textbooks, school infrastructure and other essential details about the educational needs and challenges of every school that had requested and hosted a TLG volunteer. The evaluation was 1 to 4 based on these 6 components and TLG volunteers assessed their co-teaching process with 3 local counterparts (according to the Employment Agreement between volunteers and TLG, TLG volunteers can work with 3 local teachers).

One of the main reasons why these reports are important for TLG is to see where improvements were needed and what we needed to do in order to make progress. With the help of these reports, we reviewed how our volunteers and local teachers have been working together. Because of the possibility that there would be some sensitive information in the reports, only The TLG Academic Team read the reports and this was for TLG's records only. Depending on the issues raised in the reports, we made inquiries of schools, teachers, from the volunteers themselves, but they were never sent back to the schools. In case there was an immediate need for TLG to get involved, we called the volunteer first and made sure that he/she felt comfortable with TLG bringing this particular issue up to the school administration or other relevant parties.

Based on the reports received by the volunteers in the timeframe of September, 2010-June, 2011, all the areas of interest listed above were addressed. Here are some of the abstracts of these reports. One of the TLGV's placed in Adjara region, village Tsoniarisi, wrote about **lesson planning and preparation**. *"My co-teachers and I regularly meet between classes, during breaks, and after school to discuss and plan upcoming lessons. In addition we have created long-term plans and pacing guides to direct our daily lesson planning. My co-teachers and I equally share responsibilities in the classroom. Since we try to create an immersive "English only" environment as much as possible, I tend to do much more of the speaking during activities such as reading, speaking, and grammar exercises. Before the activity, my co-teacher will often provide instructions in Georgian and use Georgian to keep weaker students from becoming frustrate"*.

²² <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7LouTAPluZ4> (July 13, 2011)

Another one in the same region, but different town Sagarejo, states: *“We get together fairly regularly to plan and the teachers are very open to hearing my ideas for lessons and in dividing the time between themselves and me in the lessons. I am feeling fairly comfortable with the way we plan lessons and that the planning we do is adequate. Planning is going better I feel, I have found that we can get together and easily plan for the week and that both I and my co-teacher have a say in what we will do. I am finding it easier and easier to plan with the teachers as they get to know the way I think and I understand the way they think”.*

One of the volunteers placed in Imereti region, village Geguti wrote about **co-teaching**: *“We have become more creative with our teaching methods; practicing with play scripts, news articles, foreign text-books, etc. However, rather than engaging the students further, it only confuses them as their pattern of education has been broken. I think it will get better, and, in the end, will prove to be a good learning tool, but right now only some students are actively engage”.*

Another volunteer from Samtskhe-Javakheti, village Menji, wrote: *“Co-teaching is becoming easier and we are all in tune with each other in the classroom. We are all aware of our roles. We all know what we excel at and areas where one person is better than the other, and teach accordingly. My co teachers are always very open to new teaching methods, and enjoy using different materials to help engage the students. Learning English songs is a favorite way to help the students with their pronunciation as well as their confidence when using the English language. As the school year comes to a close it is clear that using different teaching methods has become important for both the teachers and the students”.*

“Co-teacher #1 always encourages me to attend her classes and to teach them. She will clarify instructions and any vocabulary not understood by the students. Generally both co-teachers will use me for speaking practice. As a general rule, both teachers will teach grammar as the technical terms are best explained in Georgian quickly to make the lesson flow more smoothly” – Writes one of the TLGVs from Adjara region, town Kobuleti.

Teaching methods is an area where TLG volunteers introduced their colleagues with not only new, creative, interactive, more effective and important methodologies but also used existing resources and capabilities of schools by adapting to the local reality and needs. There are thousands of reports where they describe their excellent ideas and creativity. One of the TLVs from Adjara region, in village Kakhaberi, is happy with the progress that has been made in her school: *“Things are moving progressively in a positive direction here, still lots of reading but we're moving in a more conversational direction with our lessons. If we are doing work from the textbooks, I am sure to ask the students what words are new, and move from the subject matter of the exercise into more general discussion. We're playing games and I've also introduced riddles and tongue-twisters, which students of all grades seem to really enjoy. (We've also been watching BBC documentaries)”.*

A volunteer placed in Kvemo Kartli region in Tetrtskaro is very pleased with his achievements: *“I continue to be extremely pleased with the variety of teaching methods being used in the classroom, and feel strongly they are contributing to increased pupil attainment. This week, for example, we took our 9th Grade class to the local history museum (a previously successful lesson with other classes). Another positive development has been the use of peer-to-peer teaching, whereby stronger pupils help those who are less able with their work. This helps to improve overall class achievement. As with last week, I continue to be impressed with the willingness of both co-teachers to welcome a variety of new and unusual teaching methods into the classroom. As this is my last week, I am particularly pleased to see an increased willingness of both my co-teacher's to incorporate into their teaching corpus more pupil-centered practices and games that use the space available in the classroom fully and in new ways”.*

In Tbilisi Public School #7, new methods used by TLGV caused curiosity and interest among all of the English teachers she was co-teaching with. “The sameness effect” was very important and commending: *“My teachers expressed curiosity as to what teaching methods I used in Japan. I explained that many of the methods I used involved materials, such as cards. I was told the school has the resources I would need to make cards and other materials. One of my co-teachers asked me if I'd be interested in doing an observation lesson with one of the grades so the other teachers could see how I teach. I am thrilled at this opportunity, as I am hoping it will be an eye opening experience for everyone”.*

A TLGV placed in Mestia, Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti region, one of the most mountainous regions of Georgia that has only one public school, also talks about different methods: *“Me and my co-teacher no. 1 try to use different teaching methods and varied instruction in order to engage more students. This month we engaged in reading exercises, listening exercises, speaking activities (discussions about hobbies, favorite things, and personal experiences always increase students' activity), group work and presentation of the results with everyone being able to ask questions and evaluate other teams' contribution, with younger children we played games, sang, and danced”.*

Evaluation of student outcomes is the most significant aspect of the entire program for obvious reasons. Since TLGVs main role is to concentrate on speaking and listening skills, the results have been truly impressive during one year period. There are many reports regarding the improvement of students' English level. TLG volunteer placed in Tbilisi Public School #27 is proud of the impact she has made: *“Many students have actually improved greatly and it is very exciting to see. I can see it mostly in my younger grades. My third graders have learned so much this semester that I actually wish I had been able to spend more than 1 day a week with them. I have also noticed a difference in my ninth graders; they have an easier time speaking to me in English and are more pleased with hearing their own voices when they speak in a different language”.*

"I have seen immense improvement at Surami #1 school since I started back in September. Student behavior has greatly improved and also student participation in class has improved also, in the beginning the students were very shy but that no longer is the case at all. All students are very eager to participate in the lessons, answer questions, and do their best orally. I really expect to see the students grasp of all facets of the English language to greatly improve over the next few years,"- reports one of the TLGVs placed in Surami, Shida Kartli.

Classroom management was a very essential component for TLG and although a lot of things need to be improved in this area, there were many teachers who managed the classroom very well. The Weekly/Monthly Reports show that one of the TLG Volunteers from Adjara, village Kakhaberi, is impressed by the respect the students have towards teachers: *"I'm really impressed by the atmosphere in the classrooms, especially the atmosphere that exists amongst the students. They seem to respect and encourage each other's success and most of them are making a conscious effort to listen and participate. There were no major discipline problems this week. My Georgian co-teachers are very good at getting situations under control quickly, and I will stop what I'm saying until students quiet down which seems to be an effective strategy"*.

Well-behaved students are an asset to the teaching process, especially at high school level. *"The students overall seemed to be much better behaved. My older kids seemed to have taken my lecture to heart and are being quiet and respectful in class. The students will listen to what I have to say more than my co-teacher, because they want me to come back to class and teach them, so I used this to my advantage to have a heartfelt talk with the disruptive grades. Overall, I'm happy with the students' behavior, which, for the most part, seems to be improving every week"* – writes a volunteer from Tbilisi public school.

TLG places its volunteers in schools that apply for volunteer placement and are willing and eager to host one in their schools. After the placement, the MES expects **school administration to support** TLG volunteers. Some of the TLGVs describe this support with one simple sentence. E.g. A volunteer from Samtskhe-Javakheti region, placed in Borjomi writes: *"My school is wonderful"*. Most of them elaborate more: *"I put 4 on the evaluation not because the school has many resources, but because I have access to all the resources that the school provides. The administration has done everything to make me welcome"* – says a volunteer placed in Kutaisi, Imereti.

Volunteer placed in Tbilisi Public School #72 reports: *"There is consistent electricity and heat in the school. All rooms have chalkboards and chalk, and one room has even received a brand new chalkboard since my arrival. There is a printer in the director's office, as well as internet. I have not been in want of anything."* And yet another volunteer recommends her school to everybody: *"I am always treated with respect at my school. I work at a great school. I recommend this school to anyone who has any experience with special needs children as this would definitely benefit the students and the Georgian teachers."*

TLGVs are strongly encouraged to come up with **extra-curricular activities** or participate in them. Most of the volunteers are actively involved in these activities in or outside their schools – they set up English clubs, stayed after classes for teachers and students. *“I have tri-weekly teacher’s club meetings where we learn English and just discuss America over tea and cake. It is a great time and interest has increased. We had another basketball tournament that I coached, our second to last one. We won the gold medal and I had an absolutely fantastic time”* – says volunteers from Akhasheni, Kakheti. Two volunteers placed in Batumi, Adjara region, had a joint movie project: *“We will be commencing film classes with the BSMA students during the final week of June 2011. We are not being paid for this, as it is a voluntary project we are running during the holidays to assist the students with their spoken and written English”*.

For another volunteer placed in Darcheli, Samegrelo, Shakespeare was an inspiration: *“We are currently preparing to put on “Romeo and Juliet” which will be performed at the end of the school year. We also made a wall newspaper this month. That was the most extra-curricular activity I have been asked to be a part of apart from the Shakespeare play”*.

Another volunteer from Samegrelo, placed in Zugdidi used local resources for her initiative: *“A speaking Club was started at school, but due to a lack of interest from students, was moved to the local American corner in town. Students from my school were encouraged to take part in this club, and a number of them showed interest. I conduct a free after school speaking club for children from other schools at the American Corner in Zugdidi town. These run Monday, Tuesday and Friday – and I am in charge of the Tuesday Club”*.

It is very obvious that the impact was enormous in regards to school environment, teaching methodologies, student mindsets and speaking skills but most importantly, the influence on teachers is very notable. In order to see what the local teachers thought about this new experience, working with foreign volunteers, TLG conducted a small survey with Local English Teachers (LET) Focus Group in different Georgian Regions – Adjara, Guria, Kakheti, Imereti, Kvemo Kartli, Shida Kartli, Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti, Samtskhe-Javakheti. The aim of the survey was to find out LETs thoughts towards the TLG program, their one year co-teaching experience – advantages and disadvantages of it, what they learned during the first year and what their recommendations were for the next year.

Here are the results provided from the survey conducted by TLG Academic Team:

Region	Number of Local English Teachers
Adjara	8 Local English Teachers
Guria	5 Local English Teachers
Kakheti	8 Local English Teachers
Kvemo Kartli	9 Local English Teachers
Imereti	7 Local English Teachers
Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti	7 Local English Teachers
Samtskhe-Javakheti	7 Local English Teachers
Shida Kartli	10 Local English Teachers
Tbilisi	7 Local English Teachers
9 Regions	Total: 68 LETs

1. How was your co-teaching experience? How did you divide roles in the classroom? How much was it comfortable to teach with another teacher?

Local English Teachers said that co-teaching was very new in their experience, first it was difficult, but then they both get accustomed. They learnt much from communication with the native speaker.

LETs from Adjara:

- To conduct a lesson with a volunteer is more interesting and productive, the students are more engaged. Co-teaching is something very new in my experience, but it is very interesting and I learnt more.

LETs from Guria:

- First we didn't know how to divide parts in the classroom, sometimes he (TLGV) was making his activities at the beginning of the lesson, sometimes in the end, but then I involved him in my plans and it worked.
- Sometimes I was the leader at the lesson, sometimes the volunteer was. I was very confused and didn't know what to do, it's too difficult two teachers at the same lesson, but nothing is impossible, later our cooperation was better.

LETs from Imereti:

- Many subjects were closed for me, and our volunteer was a kind of guide for us, she (TLGV) was telling us about literature, art. I cannot see everything myself, and someone has to explain all these things to me. Now the students know how to communicate with the foreigner.
- After the volunteer joined us, the motivation increased so much in our students everybody wanted to communicate with her.
- First the students didn't want to work with the volunteers, I think they were shy. But when the volunteer started to work with us, students liked him so much that they always asked me where he is.
- Our volunteer brought many photos and materials from the countries she has traveled, she used projector several times, but it means much when a volunteer is a professional teacher.
- Some of them learnt our language and culture very well; our volunteer took "the Knight in the Panther's Skin" to Australia.

LETs from Kakheti:

We had a brilliant person (TLGV), he had lessons for English teachers once a week, and lessons for other teachers twice a week. He trained the students in Basketball and our team became champions in the region. The students loved him very much, everybody was motivated.

- This experience was very important for me, I haven't had contact with the foreigner before him (TLGV).
- Our volunteer was very surprised that here the students can do everything, they miss the classes but they are not punished for this. They misbehave but no one tells them anything. In Canadian school children don't have so many rights

LETs from Kvemo Kartli:

- Our volunteer was so educated he could talk about everything, he was a real British. The students loved him, he planned lessons with me and we worked after classes for improvements.

LETs from Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti:

- First it was difficult for both of us, but then co-teaching worked. We had our functions at the lesson and we both knew what to do during the lesson.

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- I cannot say that I learnt a lot in teaching in general. The good thing was that I had a communication with the native speaker, and I practiced a lot. The bad thing was that I was always an initiator.

LETs from Samtskhe-Javakheti:

- The main part of the lesson was up to me, he (TLGV) was helping me in speaking part.
- In my case our communication and co-teaching was great. I did get a pleasure and experience during the last school year.
- I learnt so much – how to work with another teacher at class, and plus the co-teaching was so interesting.

LETs from Shida Kartli:

- We planned everything, for example I had a test, I created 10 exercises, and she (TLGV) created 10 exercises for the test.

LETs from Tbilisi:

- When he (TLGV) came to our school he attended all teachers' classes and then chose three of them with the principal agreement. He started with great enthusiasm, he was making free topics with the students, he was bringing poems and discussed them with the students.
- We didn't expect much from the program Teach and Learn with Georgia, but we were wrong, our volunteer was so active, he worked really hard, the students were looking for him all the time, they wanted to show him the projects they want to work on them.
- He (TLGV) was making all his funny activities all the time, but I had my program which I had to end up until the school year.

2. What would you change? Do you need more guidelines or training in order to feel more comfortable with another teacher in the classroom?

LETs from Adjara:

- We want the volunteers to receive more training about the local teaching methodology and Georgian culture in general because the students sometimes perceive them in a wrong way because they (TLGVs) are from the different culture.
- It would be better if we had a kind of guidebook.

LETs from Guria:

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- I'm sure in the future co-teaching will be better, but in the first year some kind of guidelines are necessary.
- We – the Local English Teachers as our volunteers, need joint training about our duties and roles.

LETs from Imereti:

- If TLG arranged meetings among local teachers and TLG volunteers, this would help us a lot. The cooperation will be more successful when we know more about each other.

LETs from Kakheti:

- More training.
- We need more productive training sessions.

LETs from Kvemo Kartli:

- I don't think I need guidelines. The lesson is a process. I do not need to write down who has to say this and that at the lesson. I think it is up to them, they should be ready for school.
- I need to know what their roles are and then I will try to involve him in the process. Maybe it is not his responsibility to explain new units to students. Maybe I am doing something wrong and I want to make it better.

LETs from Samegrelo-Zmo Svaneti:

- We need training.
- It is not bad if the volunteers had experience in working with children.

LETs from Samtskhe-Javakheti:

- More needs to be done in order to improve relationship between LET and TLGV.
- Our volunteer was a linguist and he had teaching experience, this helped us a lot, but there was something missed. We still needed something that made our cooperation process more vital.

LETs from Tbilisi

- This program gives us a great opportunity, but we have to know how to use it. We both need training.

3. What are your plans for next year? You already have one-year-teaching experience, what will you change in your methods? If you have volunteers for next year, what will you advise them? How will you divide roles at class?

LETs from Guria:

- I will try to communicate more with the volunteer.
- I will let him to make funny activities, if I have a suggestion from him.
- I will use some new methods that I did not use before.
- Next year I want to make some interesting projects with a volunteer.

LETs from Imereti:

- I would advise the volunteer to plan lessons with me
- I want to make online projects with the volunteer, where Georgian students will communicate with American students.

LETs from Kakheti

- I want to have a volunteer at my school, we worked so well together.
- It is so crucial for the students to work with them in the next year. Kids are so free; they already started to speak English. They are more open to them, than they are with the LETs.
- The lesson with the volunteers was more interesting and enjoyable.
- You know that it is very common to cheat during tests in Georgia, for the volunteer`s sake the students changed their attitude.
- We had different attitude about learning – to read the text and listen is not enough, I think, the students have to learn it by heart, but the volunteer didn`t think so.
- I guess the roles were divided correctly – the grammar part was mine, and the rest was up to him. I will continue this way next year.

LETs from Kvemo Kartli:

- I got a very good experience; our volunteer had a very strict attitude about grading. And I liked it very much. Plus I want the volunteer be more engaged in the lesson. If they are in class they have to have functions. I do not like that the explanation part is only up to me.

LETs from Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti:

- We will plan more English language events for next year.
- I think next year will be more productive, because we already have one-year-experience.

LETs from Samtskhe-Javakheti:

- I want to work with the volunteer in the next year too. I want them to teach us new methodology, new activities; share their experience, that I did not have during last school year.
- We had enough activities, our volunteer was very active and engaged, but there were always awkward moments between us because they do not know our culture.
- I want to have the same volunteer, that we had this year. I grew up so much from the professional angle, the one year gave me much, I will use everything what I learnt from him.
- He gave us knowledge and experience, he taught Local English Teachers, helped them to pass certificate exams.

LETs from Shida Kartli:

- I wish all the discussion that we have at the lesson was in English. The language will be more familiar for the students and they won't be shy.

LET from Tbilisi

- His main tool at the lesson was visual materials, so I will use this kind of materials more.

4. How useful was it for you to work with a native speaker?

LETs from Guria:

- Now I am more independent, I learnt the words the foreigners use in an everyday conversation.
- The students are so active; they spoke English during the whole lesson.

LETs from Imereti:

- It was useful for me and for students too. Our volunteer was from Australia and he used to speak with short phrases.

LETs from Kakheti:

- First I was so nervous – will I be able to understand what he is talking about? When he came I used to ask him “please, speak slowly”. But then everything went well, I could understand everything.
- We all have to say that there is nothing better in learning foreign language than to have everyday communication with the native speaker.

LETs from Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti:

- This experience was useful not only for the students and Local English Teachers, but for other teachers too, that the volunteer taught English to them.
- This was very useful for me and for the students.

LETs from Samtskhe-Javakheti:

- It was useful for language practice.
- This was good for practice.

The survey shows that most of the co-teachers benefited from the teaching experience with a TLG volunteer. All of the main goals of the project in terms of the local teacher development – introducing them to the new teaching methodologies; using more listening and speaking skills, making the lesson time more enjoyable – were achieved. A similar project was created involving the ‘other side’ - TLG volunteers in order to hear the opinions of TLG volunteers as well. The Volunteer Exit Interview was done by TLG academic team and the main purpose was to hear what the volunteers impressions were about their experience in TLG, and learn what they thought about the schools, the program overall.

The survey was voluntary and the targeted participants were the volunteers who had been with TLG for at least 8 months. The information from these volunteers was gathered in a file. The file was sent to all members of TLG staff anonymously – there was information which would be useful and interesting for all members of TLG staff.

Here are the results of the Volunteer Exit Interview/Survey where we were mostly interested in the improvements that they felt or noticed throughout their teaching period in Georgia.

Have you seen improvements in your school (Georgian teacher performance, student’s behavior, English performance), over the course of the past year?

TLG Volunteers from Shida Kartli

- I have seen immense improvement at Surami #1 school since I started back in September. Student behavior has greatly improved and also student participation in class has improved also, in the beginning the students were very shy but that no longer is the case at all. All students are very eager to participate in the lessons, answer questions, and do their best orally. The Georgian teacher performance has improved in the respect since we now know and work with each other totally as a team and both my co-teachers and I feel much more comfortable and confident in each and every lesson that we plan

and teach together. I really expect to see the students grasp of all facets of the English language to greatly improve over the next few years.

- Yes. Both my teachers have stated that their English usage and pronunciation has improved. Both are beginning to use books to supplement the course materials. The students are more confident about speaking English and their improvement is noticeable.

TLG Volunteers from Imereti

- After ten months I'm happy to report that yes, definitely there have been improvements in my school. My Georgian teachers have been wonderful the whole way through. They've been open to trying new ideas, and they've even used different interactive games and activities that I showed them on days when I'm not co-teaching with them in the classroom. I've learned a lot about life in Georgia from my co-teachers and enjoyed spending time with all three of them in and out of the classroom
- The biggest improvements I've seen are an increase in motivation to learn, and an increase in respecting differences. The majority of my students have come to realize how useful English can be for their future careers
- Over the course of the past year I have seen a general increase in students and teachers interest in English. Students have become more comfortable starting a conversation and are more excited to learn English now that they have been exposed to someone from an English speaking country. As far as teacher performance I would say it has improved slightly. I think since my teachers have been exposed to different teacher methods, and grading systems they have seen there are better ways of teaching. They haven't necessarily acting upon these new methods, but they have shown increased interest in them, and are starting to understand their use.
- There have been some changes in the classroom mainly in the use of English. I feel that the teachers use more English during the lesson and less Georgian. The students' speaking skills have greatly increased and they are more interested in the world outside of Georgia. Students are always asking me questions about America and about my life there. I believe that I have opened their worlds to new possibilities and new cultures.

TLG Volunteers from Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti

- I have seen great improvement on both the part of my teacher and my students. The classes have become focused on speech and listening. The students seem to be far more comfortable with the language than they were at the beginning of the year. I also believe I have better prepared my co-teacher for her certification test.
- I am fairly sure that I have seen improvements in all three aspects over the past year. While things have not improved as much as I would like and improvements are hard to

measure, I think that some things have changed. I think that my single biggest influence has been to make the children keener on learning and practicing their English. Even if this is just them saying 'Hello, how are you?' every morning I think that it has helped to show them the relevance of learning English. This is partly because for many/most of them I am the first person that they have met who they cannot communicate with in Georgian so they have to try English without the fallback option of asking the teacher to translate.

- I also think that I have introduced some variety to the lessons and hopefully shown the teachers and the children some new ways to learn.

TLG Volunteers from Tbilisi

- Yes. At the very least, my co-teachers have gotten better at speaking at listening (one of them I could hardly understand at the beginning), and my students have as well. Some of my teachers who were stuck on the translation method have tried to bring worksheets and activities to class after seeing how well it worked when I did it. One great improvement is that the co-teachers have started to use a lot more English in class when giving instructions, etc. Before most of the class was done in Georgian. As far as behavior, in some of my classes the students have gotten much better when I'm in the class.
- The students were very eager to learn and extremely motivated. I was very firm in my beliefs of grading progress, homework, and pop quizzes. I had rules and my students through hard work came to understand them. In one class EVERYONE DID HOMEWORK, I was proud of them for making the effort and I let them know.

TLG Volunteers from Kvemo Kartli

- The overall answer to this question is yes; My teachers are more creative, flexible, and diligent in their work now. My students can read and speak much better. The children who listen and learn are much more comfortable and less shy speaking to me, each other, and other foreigners in English. My teachers are more willing to explore teaching activities spontaneously, and more importantly, without constantly relying on our flawed textbooks.
- Yes. In regards to the teacher, she is more willing to call on all students in the classroom, and not just the smart students. She also is more willing to allow activities or games to teach the students.
- Since more of the students are being involved in the classes, more of them are expressing interest in learning English. Some students that are labeled as slow/stupid have shown

- much improvement in the past couple months and have started doing their homework and participating in class.

TLG Volunteers from Mtskheta-Mtianeti

- Absolutely, yes! Students are doing homework and coming to class prepared. Students are exhibiting a noticeably higher level of self discipline. My co teacher's language skills are stronger according to her own expressed opinion. My co-teacher as well as other teachers in the school has adopted many teaching methods we have developed and applied this year. All together English skills, teaching and learning are measurably improved/improving.
- Yes. Both my teachers have stated that their English usage and pronunciation has improved. Both are beginning to use books to supplement the course materials. The students are more confident about speaking English and their improvement is noticeable.



The survey shows that most of the TLG volunteers have seen improvement in their classes with their students and teachers. With their help, the teaching process in public schools drastically changed and the overall environment was greatly impacted by TLG volunteers. It is indisputable that TLG made a difference in schools for thousands of Georgian children.

The next sub-chapter will discuss how TLG influenced the local community by placing volunteers in host families.

Community Integration

One of the main goals of TLG is community integration, known as the non-academic direction of TLG. What happens outside of schools is equally important for the country – socializing, sharing values and culture and integrating with local communities. Being a Soviet country meant being a closed society with little or no contact with the outside world for various reasons. People with different skin colors, different ways of life, appearance, language and even food preferences is something that is still new and odd to most of Georgians, especially to the ones living in the rural areas and the older generation.

As mentioned above, TLG volunteers are placed in local host families where they pay 100 Georgian Lari (GEL) out of their 500 GEL stipend for their food and utilities. Part of their job is to help family members with English. For most of the volunteers, the experience of living in Georgian traditional families has been truly memorable. They have been amazed by the famous Georgian hospitality that sometimes was more than they often asked for. The different culture of a “guest-host” tradition may have appeared as shocking for most of the volunteers but over time with humor and survival tips given by TLG during the orientation training, volunteers get used to these traditions and start cherishing them.

Here are some of the abstracts from Volunteer Weekly/Monthly Reports. A TLGV from Buknari, Guria, writes: *“I helped them (host family) plant their new corn crop, as well as chop wood and such. Plus, I watch a lot of Al Jazeera English with my host granddad, which is great as I can now consistently keep up with the events of the world. I also have coffee with them, and I get them treats when I'm out of town. Doing pretty well. I'm so comfortable here, that I often forget that I'm on the other side of the planet from where I grew up. But I am recently learning how to protect myself in social gathering with other men so that I don't eat or drink too much, as in the past I would just accept everything out of some fear of accidentally being rude. I am so craving Mexican food. Have been for a while. Those Spanish soap operas in Kartuli aren't helping any. When I get back home, I am going to Qdoba, and then I'm going to one of the many Mexican restaurants in the area, and getting the chicken fajitas, which they serve with that plate full of Mexican rice, beans, salsa, lettuce, cheese, and guacamole. I never realized how much Mexican food we ate in America until I left it”.*

A volunteer placed in Tbilisi brought his parents from USA: *“There was extra interaction with my host family this month because of the Easter holiday. My parents came from America and we had a big family supra and went to Mxeta the following day. It was truly a wonderful experience. After 7 months, I am pretty well adapted.”*

As with the previous volunteer, it happened very often that volunteers brought family and friends from their home countries to share this wonderful experience with them. Volunteer placed in Korbouli, Imereti region wrote: *“I have a fairly large level of interaction with my host*

family, though their limited English and my limited Georgian result in limited communication. My host mother is the fondest of me, followed by my host grandmother. I had an especially wonderful time spending Easter with my host family, and they were very welcoming to my boyfriend who visited from the US. The weather is beautiful, the plumbing and electricity problems have virtually vanished, and my living conditions are subsequently nothing to complain about. I think the best indication of my adaptation to the local culture is my very limited interaction with other volunteer English teachers. I am almost always with other Georgians. I have had at least a dozen home stays at Georgian households other than my host family since coming to Georgia and am constantly being invited to others. I recently visited Turkey with one of my English teachers and her parents. I'm having a great time in Georgia.

"Between giving lessons and sharing meals with the family, we interact a great deal. They have been very warm and celebrated my birthday this week with me and invited me along for my host brother's birthday celebrations as well. Perfectly satisfied with my living conditions. It is a difficult adjustment going from living alone for 5 years and now living with hosts who asks a great deal of questions but I am managing amicably. I am continuing to get better with the language. I feel pretty comfortable navigating and think if I had a real problem I would be able to communicate my needs with someone who spoke no English. I am quite in love with the country and plan to continue practicing until I can reach a strong level of communication abilities." A volunteer placed in Adjara had a hard time adjusting with living with the family at first but he enjoyed family environment afterwards.

"I spent many hours every day with my host family, they speak little English and my host sister (who is away at university), is frequently called (on the phone) as a translator. Despite this the family has been very welcoming and has provided everything from warm bedding and food to internet access and gvino. They are a little more overprotective than I am used to but this was explained during training and thus was not a shock, it is no problem. The house is very well equipped as mentioned above, I shall be glad once the snow melts and thus there is a little more warmth but for now the wood burner in the front/living room is excellent at heating the house. I have no complaints as unlike some other teachers I have all western style comforts which has made settling in a lot easier. I shall say once more than my host family has been excellent to me thus far and I fully expect their hospitality to continue. In addition to providing for me at home they have helped in other ways too, such as organizing a trip to Telavi so I could visit my friends." This is a typical case when volunteers often pointed out that the families were overprotective. This particular volunteer was placed in Tbilisi.

The next volunteer placed in Odishi, Samegrelo, is actively interacting not only with his family members but also different communities. *"My host family interaction is very good. I sort of feel like a prince and am very excited about my opportunity with them. I am teaching the host sister English about 3 to 5 hours a week. This includes reading articles, reading books, and*

discussion. In fact, we discuss most days for hours and her English is increasing significantly. My conditions are good. The host family makes every possible comfort for me, almost to where they treat me better than themselves. I am adapting to my new culture quite well. I have been to two weddings, a funeral, and countless supras. Further, I am making contacts outside of my host family and school. I visited Tbilisi once and am planning a trip to Kutaisi. I am writing a blog that my friends and family are reading and they are enjoying learning about the country. In fact, I have two friends who are hoping to visit this coming June (prior to me coming here they had no desire to visit Georgia). I am enjoying visiting the local churches on Sunday mornings. As both a historian of Christianity and a Christian, the experience is quite rewarding.”



We could continue endlessly with thousands of reports from TLG volunteers where we saw that community integration was indeed an integral part of TLG. Both the academic and non-academic areas of TLG had a tremendous impact on the Georgian society, one that cannot be easily removed and is part of the Georgian people already.

Despite this overwhelming accomplishment, the road to success was not an easy one. The challenges to achieve maximum results were many and they still remain in both academic and non-academic directions of TLG. The next chapter will be dedicated to reviewing the challenges that TLG was faced with, overcame some, but some still remain.

Challenges in Teaching English

The Teach and Learn with Georgia program was created and executed in order to improve the current situation that existed in schools in regards to the English language. As the program developed, there were number of various challenges that were identified by the MES through TLG volunteers. It was important to understand that some of these challenges could be fixed by TLG (such as better communication, comprehensive training), some of them could be solved by MES (such as textbooks, teacher training) but there were some issues that will need to be changed overtime (such as teachers' mentality, adopting new teaching methodologies, lesson planning, classroom management, etc.). Some of these issues have already been addressed by MES or TLG but most of them still remain and MES plans to solve them in the coming years.

Textbooks

Challenge: The first and the most painful issue turned out to be existing textbooks of English in schools. Volunteers often pointed out that the books were not of a good quality and it was almost impossible to teach with them. Together with the poor quality, there were a lot of spelling and grammatical mistakes in the English textbooks. This made many things more complicated for native speakers – co-teaching, lesson planning and the entire teaching process.

Volunteers placed in Tbilisi pointed out that: *"The textbook is boring and sometime completely irrelevant to children of 12/13 year old children"*. Another volunteer notices that local teachers are not happy with the books either. *"The teachers do not like the books and have asked me to bring my own books and materials for the classes"*. *"In most classes, reading and translating from the textbooks is the norm and makes up the majority of the lesson. This works for the older kids who have the Oxford text books, but the younger ones who have the older books need games and activities to remain on task"*.

One of the volunteers placed in Kisiskhevi, Kakheti region was very emotional in her report: *"The school desperately needs new books. I'm very tired of using them!"* Yet, another one placed in Zugdidi, Samegrelo: *"I am growing more and more frustrated with the New 2000 plus series of textbooks. New 2000 plus is an absolutely horrible series of textbooks that focuses on grammar that my pupils seem unable to apply to everyday situations"*.

More complaints from the volunteers placed in, Kakheti, Adjara and Tbilisi who were equally frustrated with the textbooks: *"We continued to meet daily to discuss lesson plans for the following day or couple of days. I found myself getting frustrated with the number of mistakes in the textbooks, and the fact that we apparently have to teach the by those books, but there were no big issues with lesson planning"*. *"As a returning teacher, I try to be on the same level with all three of my co-teachers. From the beginning, we've discussed and tried to incorporate new teaching methods into our lesson plans. Overall, we're aware of the reliance on grammar translation, and we are trying to push more communicative activities into our lessons. We're*

experimenting with new lessons, but the textbooks do not promote this type of teaching style". "I don't feel that I can grade this section since lessons are generally dictated by the text books we use. Some books are great (friends), and others are awful, dull, and full of mistakes (the Georgian textbooks). Both teachers do not like using the books and try hard to make lessons more interesting and like to use a range of methods where they can, but with some classes it is not possible. In the 'learning through film' classes we use a range of methods and my teachers really enjoy these".

Solution: Based on these reports and overall consent from the MES about the existing textbooks, the Ministry made a decision to change textbooks from levels 1-6. The timing was perfect for such a change due to the fact that the new national curriculum will be effective as of September 2011 along with the new English textbooks. As mentioned above, the Macmillan Publishing House and MES concluded an MOU under which to provide Georgia with new textbooks for levels 1-6. From the next academic year 2012-2013, with the change of the national curriculum in 7-12 grades, the English textbooks will be changed as well. Additionally, every English teacher went through Macmillan training and all of them will receive a free set of English World.

One of the reasons why adoption of Macmillan books was vital for Georgia is that the teaching of English language will be based on levels versus grades. This has been a challenge in public schools where students in one class have different levels of English proficiency. This was one of the concerns that TLG volunteers raised as well, as seen above. At the same time, together with Macmillan training sessions, TLG will conduct an Introduction Training for TLG volunteers and present them with free Macmillan teachers' set and the rest of the plans in regards to teaching English from the new school year.

In order to have more effect in improving English language proficiency in public schools with new textbooks and native and fluent English, TLG volunteers will be teaching grades 1-6 in every public school they will be placed at. This approach will benefit all the parties involved to a great extent – TLG volunteers will help their co-teachers in adopting and adapting the new teaching methodologies that are widely based on speaking and listening skills, and more interactive and up-to-date ways of teaching English. On the other hand TLG volunteers will be able to co-teach with the methods and books that are closer to the teaching methods used in their respective countries. One more important aspect that should also be pointed out is the monitoring and assessment of the process of using new English books in Georgian public schools. This way MES will be able to assess how the schools are coping with the utilization of the new national curriculum and new text books.

Teaching Methods

Challenge: Teaching methodology was probably the most sensitive and challenging aspects of TLG volunteers in Georgian schools. There were numerous complaints from TLG volunteers regarding the out-dated, uninterested and teacher-orientated teaching methodologies. Due to the fact that volunteers placed in almost all the regions of Georgia had same concerns, we will just quote them regardless of regions and instead we will concentrate on the teaching methods or the lack there of.

There were different aspects of incorrect teaching methodologies. One of them was teachers **using only textbooks and less interactive methods** of teaching English." *I am trying to talk with my teachers about the concept of memorization vs actual learning. It's frustrating because they don't seem to realize that having a student memorize an entire page of dialogue doesn't do anything but teach them how to memorize things. They don't really understand that the students aren't learning anything..."* "I find that each teacher has the one way of teaching and do not try new things ever. I am the only one who will bring new teaching methods into the class. One teacher though disagrees with change and does not like when I change up the method. One teacher has not done anything since I have been at the school. Just straight through the text". "Unfortunately, my best co-teacher is not open to new teaching methods. I try to incorporate different forms of teaching into class, but when discussing the lesson plans, she does not agree with them. She says these learning activities take up too much time in class and so we cannot get as much done as we need to. I am trying to find a way to shorten such activities so that the students can experience "something new" in class".

Another problem was teachers **not concentrating on all of the students**, i.e. paying attention to only those students, who studied well. "I hate to say it but the teachers tend to cater to higher-level students more than lower level ones. As the children advance through the grade levels, lower achieving students fall farther behind, till they have no idea what is going on in class. Naturally these students, who do not know what the class is talking about, are much less engage". "We have been doing some group work, but it always ends up being the smart kids doing the work and everyone else sitting around". "Some of my co-teachers still believe select students are 'good' or 'bad' students and divide the classroom based on their perceptions. I do not grade my students because tests are mostly a waste of time in this school since most students simply copy answers from one another. I need to evaluate my students based on their abilities displayed during class". "I've become more aware of students being pigeon-holed by the teachers, who then do not call on the poor students in class, who then lose more interest and learn less. Meanwhile, the good students get all the attention and practice".

Solution: Part of these problems will be resolved by the new Macmillan textbooks because they have and require new teaching methodology with more interactive activities, student-oriented lessons and concentrating on speaking and listening skills. Another solution is continuous training sessions planned and implemented by the MES through the National Center

for Teacher Professional Development that are focused on introduction of new teaching methods. The certification exams for teachers are also an integral part of raising teachers' personal and professional development.

The biggest challenge still remains in teachers' mindsets and getting them to the point where they will be willing to change old teaching techniques with new and more effective ones. But with time, more training and new initiatives, this will also be solved.

In the Classroom

One of the most important issues is **lack of lesson planning**: *"I am still learning the format of units and chapters. The teachers do not seem to have broad goals for where a unit is leading them. When I ask teachers, even right before a class we are teaching together, 'what are we teaching today?' they often have no answer. In that, most teachers are following the workbooks to the letter. That makes sense as to why they have no plans beforehand, but it is difficult to see broad based weekly goals". "There is no real long-term plan in the school or classes, unless you say going through the workbooks is the long-term goal. I would say that a long term goal should be, for example, 'can students use past tense to accurately describe an event that took place in the past?' but that does not really exist here. The planning I do with teachers is always very short term. I ask what we will do next week, and we decided on what my activity will focus on. That's about it". "Lesson planning has never happened at my school, despite some efforts of mine at the beginning of the school year, and continues to not happen. One of my three teachers does some advance preparation before class--usually in about ten minutes before class begins--one goes directly by the book, occasionally looking at it before class starts, and one does advance preparation".*

Classroom management is another problem in some schools that TLG volunteers had to face. *"Almost everyone in the younger classes is excited and actively engaged. It is almost the complete opposite in the older classes. Most of the children just do what they want to and the teachers just let them be which I think is very wrong. I try to make my classes more exciting and interesting for the older children. It seems to work". "The younger classes are very well disciplined. They have great respect for their teachers, because they are very interested in learning English. As the classes get older, their discipline and respect begins to diminish. The classes become very loud, and it gets harder to hear and pay attention to the few students who are still interested in learning". "In Georgia, I've had to get used to a number of things I wouldn't usually tolerate - lateness, talking in class, arguing with the teacher, and many, many instances of cheating. Discipline remains the same, and I continue to be surprised by just how much students can get away with. There were standardized tests all week, and every single class participated in what I would consider cheating, but the co-teachers think is 'helping'. Students look at each other's papers, ask each other and the Georgian teachers the answers, and look at*

their books behind the teacher's back. My older students simply don't show up to class any longer, and if they do, they never have books with them".

Lack of resources at schools often create obstacles for TLG volunteers to teach the language more effectively. *"Listening exercising in the textbook are ignored because there is no CD player, and there is no tape script provided to be used in place of not having a CD player". "My school has a computer lab, but we don't have a printer or photocopier, which limits the activities and materials that I can bring into class. The school doesn't have any CD/tape players". "There aren't CD players in the classroom, so we use my laptop for listening activities. If my laptop isn't there, the listening activities just get skipped over". "I have a CD for the book I'm using, but there is no CD player to use it with". "I would love to have access to a printer! There is access to a CD player in one room but it does not go outside this room". "We have no CD player so audio activities are not possible". "However, my co-teachers and I do lack certain resources, such as a printer and CD/tape player. I bought a CD/tape player for one of my classrooms and this covers three of the grades I teach, but we don't have a CD/tape player in any of my other classrooms". "Our school doesn't have additional resources such as DVDs or CDs, just outdated books".*

Solution: As seen above, despite the tremendous success, there were some anticipated and more non-anticipated challenges that TLG volunteers faced during their time in Georgia. As a response, TLG has identified several ways of solving various academic problems in the academic team procedures. Classroom management is one of the most challenging issues TLG Volunteers faced during 2010/2011 school year and therefore TLG has made some recommendations to improve discipline issues and developed a Course Program with different methods of handling them. Types of challenges were students missing classes, they use cell phones during the lesson, they do not bring books with them and etc. Several steps have already been taken by MES currently by developing a Code of Conduct for teachers and school principals; numerous books for classroom management and teachers' professional development have been translated into Georgian and distributed in schools for teachers.²³ More training will be carried out by the National Center for Teachers Professional Development to present teachers with new approaches and solutions. The new Course Programs once again covers recommendation and procedures on what TLGVs can do in these cases together with consequences if students do not follow the Class Code of Conduct. Nevertheless, it is obvious that more classroom management training is needed for local teachers that would raise their awareness and develop ways to possibly involve parents in this process as well.

Co-Teaching and lesson planning was a fairly new field for Local English Teachers and it was more or less anticipated by TLG team. For that reason, TLG Academic Team together with

²³ http://www.tpdg.ge/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=16&Itemid=63 (July 28, 2011)

the Training Team started conducting co-teacher training for all volunteers and their local colleagues in their respective regions that proved to be a very successful step towards solving this issue. Initially, co-teaching training had not been covered in the volunteer orientation training nor had the Local English Teachers been trained. On the academic side of the program the most frequently mentioned feedback had been about volunteers not being engaged in the classroom and the Local English Teachers not knowing how to incorporate the volunteers into the lessons. To work towards success of the program, they both required some tools.

Team teaching demands more time and energy for planning. There is also a need to rethink the course plan to accommodate team teaching methods. The first step was to present co-teaching information to volunteers and their respective LET who were already in the regions and then with each new group of volunteers that arrived, the information would be presented in the orientation training. Presenting the information to the volunteer and their respective LET at orientation also served as a way to introduce the pair to each other before arriving at school. The main goal of the workshop was to open a dialog between the LET and volunteer and to give them a few models of successful co-teaching strategies so that they could develop a method that would work for them. The results were overwhelmingly positive as reported by the volunteers that attended the workshops and we will continue to present these materials to volunteers and their LETs as an on-going project. For the upcoming academic year, TLG will continue co-teacher training via RRs in every region that school volunteers are going to be placed in.

Many Georgian schools are not renovated yet; school infrastructure needs improvement. When TLG volunteers bring up issues like lack of resources such as chalk, printer, old chalk boards, no CD players or projectors, it can be easily remedied by talking to the school principal or deputy principal and making sure that the TLGV has all the necessary resources to teach.

Sometimes conditions can be worse such as lack of desks and chairs or they need to be repaired, some windows are broken, electricity is off sometimes, heating is not enough or internet is not working, TLG puts together a School Infrastructure Feedback (SIF) and reports these issues to a higher level to take appropriate steps. At the same time, TLG informs its volunteers that there are not enough resources to renovate all schools at one time but the Ministry is working on it and step by step the situation is improving as more schools are being renovated. Improvement of school infrastructure is essential for ensuring proper classroom environment and delivering quality lessons.

Lack of resources is also a very important problem for MES to solve. As pointed out above, MES is actively involved in the improvement of the current situation by implementing reforms in 42 different directions one of them being school and infrastructure development. When reporting existing challenges, TLG volunteers also stress that they are very fond of their teachers, students, principals and host families. They understand that it is the inherited educational system and the way people have adapted to their environment that is at fault. But at the same time they want to do what they came here for – make a difference by shedding light to these important issues.

Institutional Achievements TLG and Future Recommendations

Despite the fact that 2010-2011 was the first year for TLG, there were substantial institutional steps that were taken within TLG. Multiple projects are being carried out on a daily basis in order to ensure better communication and accommodation for volunteers and quality teaching processes for Georgian public schools.

Even though TLG is still in its pilot year, the program achieved high endeavors and still responds appropriately to all challenges which arise in the process of its rapid development. However, there are some aspects which need more attention and should be taken into consideration. This chapter will discuss areas that have already been covered and created by TLG and future recommendations from certain teams of the program in order to become a stronger institution.

Recruitment

Success of the application process is highly dependent on the way the employer designs the process and continually improves it. In the initial stage of the TLG program the application process was based on very straightforward method - applications through the online system and the submission of required documentation. This seemed to be a very simple process – receive all the required documents, review them and make a decision. However, the process is much more complicated than it might seem from the outside. Each document and each case is very unique and needs very precise attention, so that the goals of the program are met at the highest level.

As is the case with most developing organizations, the TLG program grew and changed through experience. As such programs involve human interaction, cultural exchange and many other aspects which entail individuals' involvement, predicting processes and outcomes is an ongoing challenge.

The complex procedures and details were developed as the project grew based on the experience gained over time. In the beginning, the process of recruitment consisted of applicants using a web page with very detailed information to submit their application, submitting their documents electronically via e-mail, and constant communication with applicants by phone or email. The latter has always been one of the most successful strategies of the TLG program, constant communication, where we do not leave any request or question unanswered and we reply to all calls and emails as soon as possible. This together with the continuous improvements of our systems has guaranteed and resulted in the success of the program during its first year.

Marketing and advertising research and strategies was another major challenge we faced in the beginning stages of the program. We knew that there were various ESL programs around

the world, which have been in operation for decades now and have unprecedented results for their countries; however, we needed to research how these programs work in all aspects. Getting people interested in the program is one of the most crucial components. We started approaching people through various means of communication and advertisement, contacting ESL communities, using social media, etc. However, the results we were getting were not satisfactory. We were looking for additional solutions, which would be more cost-effective, time-effective and would help us recruit larger numbers of more qualified teachers.

As mentioned previously, ESL programs are found worldwide, and the numbers of volunteers and/or teachers they have recruited has been numerous. While researching such programs, we discovered that there are various recruiting organizations worldwide, which are specialized and focused on recruiting ESL teachers. It was interesting to find out that the majority of these agencies/organizations are established by people who have participated in such programs and have experience of how ESL programs around the world function. Consequently, they have the ability and experience to provide the people they recruit with the information they need to teach abroad. They are able to prepare them for possible challenges so that they are ready to participate in the Teach and Learn with Georgia program. This aspect of recruitment was especially crucial in the initial stage of the program, where Georgia was less experienced in ESL programs and needed advice and the experience of other professionals and organizations.

Another important aspect of TLG partner recruiting agencies is their marketing and advertising strategies. It was very challenging for the TLG program in the beginning because marketing and advertising are very expensive and require a lot of time and need very professional and precise selection methods to recruit the right people for the program. ESL recruiting agencies have been providing their service to ESL programs worldwide so partnering with them early in the program solved the advertising challenges mentioned above. Organizations we started partnering with in terms of recruitment sent their representatives to Georgia. They were introduced first hand to the information of how the program worked, as well as visited schools and host families on site and travelled throughout the country. This allowed us to provide a clearer picture of how the program works.

A standardized system was designed for submitting applications in a timely manner, for making revisions in a more organized way, for processing paperwork as needed and for working with the database more effectively. Overall, it made the process run much more efficiently. As the process became smoother, the entire functioning of the program became relatively easier as well.

As mentioned previously there were some aspects which could not have been foreseen for such an innovative, unprecedented program and consequently has developed a great deal since it started. Developments have been made through various aspects of the application

process. For instance, in the beginning, the required documentation included a standard medical check which was used throughout the selection process. Later we found that this information alone was not enough to insure the long term health and well being of our volunteers, we needed to consider their medical conditions throughout their stay in Georgia. The insurance company was very supportive but there was a need for a medical consultant who could work directly with volunteers to monitor their ongoing health conditions. Another improvement in the application process was to the Criminal Record Check (CRC), another very important part of the process. Initially, according to program regulations we would accept criminal record checks on various levels for example the U.S. has county, state, and country level checks and other countries had various levels as well. However, as TLG is not recruiting its volunteer teachers from solely one country but from around the globe there was a need for a unified system for background checks. We decided to standardize and only accept country level checks from all countries. The interview process was moved from phone interviews to more in depth video interviews for a higher level of communication which significantly improved the quality of the interview process.

Unlike many ESL programs around the world, TLG recruits volunteers and has groups arriving all year round and offers various types of contract durations. Even though logistically this is one of the most challenging aspects of the program, these flexible options make the program more attractive and appealing for many people and contribute to the success of the program.

Although recruitment for our project is all year round, there are low and high seasons of recruitment. During low seasons in recruitment we constantly develop and improve the details of the recruitment process e.g. communication, informational materials, and improvement of our partner recruitment agencies. At this stage of the program, TLG volunteer teachers' selection process has developed improved procedures and methods, a detailed database, marketing strategies and the ability to forecast projected numbers. All of these developments and improvements help us to better manage the program and meet program goals.

Currently, TLG has developed a customized system of processing applications, though we do believe in constant development and ways to improve the system. As the word about the program spreads around the world, we will receive more and more qualified applicants for the program, who will share their knowledge and culture as part of Teach and Learn with Georgia and make a difference in Georgian society.

Recommendations for the future in recruitment

- TLG needs to hire one more person (preferably foreigner and experienced in marketing and PR), who would be in charge of constantly searching for various schools and institutions and working with them to partner TLG for sending more applicants to the

program, as well as regularly have very aggressive approach to using social media for spreading the word about the program

- The person assigned for the above mentioned goal would also search for various education fairs and job fairs around the world all year round, make plans with the program management and travel to these fairs himself/herself or work with other TLG team members to organize confirmed trips for popularizing the program
- TLG Volunteer Teachers' Selection Coordinator should be very detail-oriented and have constant communication with applicants and partner recruiting agencies, and make sure everybody gets the same information in the timely manner

TLG Flights

As mentioned earlier, the TLG Flights Team manages TLGVs flights to and from Georgia including flights for vacation and emergency. Communication between TLG Flights and the volunteers was not adequate and procedures were unclear. This caused a great deal of distress for volunteers and much is being done to improve the process. Also there were challenges with Travel Agencies being able to provide quality service for such a high demand of travel requests. A change in travel agencies negated hundreds of return tickets which was not communicated and caused a major crisis for the Flights Team. This affected TLG's ability to provide timely travel for its volunteers. All of the aforementioned issues are being inspected and efforts are being made to solve the problems associated with volunteer flight service. TLG developed procedures that have been implemented to help improve this challenging task.

Communication

Communication with the volunteers has been a priority of the TLG staff from the beginning of the project. When the first volunteers came in Georgia and began teaching and living here, they had a lot of questions and needed to have a person to whom they could address about their problems. It became necessary to have one person gather information from the volunteers' and direct them to the relevant team member/s.

There was a need to have one person who would be available on the phone anytime during the day and night, to handle emergency situations. That is why TLG Hot Line, with free corporate calls is available 24/7 for all volunteers all around Georgia for any kind of issue.

- ✓ School ((including questions about text books, teachers, co-teachers, school principals).
- ✓ Lessons and Timetable.
- ✓ Volunteer monthly/weekly report.
- ✓ Questions regarding volunteers' role at the school, or working hours.
- ✓ Questions regarding contract extension, flights.
- ✓ Host family issues.

- ✓ Problems with placement, location.
- ✓ Emergency situations.
- ✓ Any other concerns/questions/suggestions.

Legal Area

TLG has faced several challenges during its development but as a result of specific changes and improving the legal basis the program has reached its ultimate goals. Establishment of precise clauses has improved employment rights and consequently contractual relationships have become better regulated. TLG has achieved high academic endeavors in English teaching and appears to be not only an educational but also cultural program. Better definition of the rights and obligations, constant monitoring of academic performance and more precise disciplinary measures produce beneficial results for the program.

However, as TLG aims at constant development and improvement there are several recommendations which must be taken into consideration, such as better communication between TLG and Recruiter Company or TLG and volunteer, creation of more solid legal grounds for summer activities and the precise definition of teaching term options. These aspects need attention in order to improve contractual relationships, avoid misunderstandings and generally, to increase productivity and credibility of the program.

First recommendation concerns the improvement of the communication with volunteers before they arrive in Georgia in terms of understanding the rights and obligations they have. In some situations, due to various reasons, volunteers are not fully aware of the work conditions that TLG is offering them after they arrive in Georgia and this causes misunderstandings in the initial stage of the employment relationships.

This problem will be solved by better communication between TLG and the recruiting company in case the volunteer is recruited through them and by better communication between TLG and the volunteer if they are directly applying to the program. The recruiters and the volunteers need to know in detail about even minor changes of labor conditions and constant communication in this matter should be ensured.

Second recommendation concerns the summer activities of the volunteers and creation of more solid legal basis for this type of employment relationship. At present, TLG gave the responsibility to the partner agencies to provide the volunteers with necessary information regarding their temporary employment in summer. Even though each program had been preceded by field related training, some confusion still had been caused due to the lack of information presented to volunteers regarding their roles and responsibilities. In some situations, volunteers were not aware about the methods of teaching outside the school environment and concerns had been addressed to TLG.

In order to avoid the same situation happening next winter/summer schools, TLG will regulate the employment relationships with the volunteers in this regard from the very beginning. All rights and obligations will be prescribed in advance and presented to the volunteers before the training actually starts. All employment conditions have to be clearly negotiated and defined with the partner organizations before presenting them to the volunteers and TLG will put its best efforts forth to harmonize the labor conditions offered from the partner organizations to those prescribed by the existing Employment Agreements with the volunteers.

Academic Area

Hundreds of volunteer reports (monthly and weekly) were sent to TLG every month. Reading and responding to 5 reports per volunteer per month was an extremely challenging and difficult task. There was the need to combine the weekly and monthly report for improved efficiency for volunteers as well as the TLG Team. There was also a need to collect quantitative information for the purpose of charting the information over time or pinpointing issues specific to regions, schools or by component and to prioritize where resources could best be utilized. The new report forms have more useful information for the TLG project, are easier to fill out and the weekly and monthly reports are combined into one comprehensive report.

The new Volunteer Weekly/Monthly Reports are used to chart comparisons and improvements over time in the regions for a set of components e.g., co-teaching, lesson planning, support and resources, extra-curricular activities etc. Reports can show results by volunteer, school, region, and component. The downside to this new way of collecting Volunteer Weekly/Monthly Report data is that the report form must be in an MS Word document attachment that allows the quantitative data to be transferred to Excel files in order to develop charts and graphs. Many volunteers have had difficulty complying with this format and the process for collecting the reports and transferring the data has been time consuming. TLG is in the process of developing an E-Volunteer Report that will simplify the filling out of the report and sending process as well as save valuable time with reduced manual processing time. This system will also be able to track and inform those volunteers who have not complied with due dates and automatically send reminder messages. The new E-Volunteer Report system is expected to be up and running at the end of September for the first reporting of the new semester.

New Initiatives

The following initiatives will be presented at the end of August and as volunteers arrive on-going throughout the 2011-2012 school year:

Introduction Meetings consisting of:

Class Program – The goal of the Class Program is to develop a guideline that will help teachers, directors, parents and students to be clear about their expectations, responsibilities and accountability. It gives them a tool to communicate the objectives of the course and a basic code of conduct that also contains respectful consequences. It also aims to involve all parties in the learning process and school life. To this end we have developed an Introduction session that will include the TLG Volunteer, 3 of their LETs, the Director and Head OF ERC. The training meeting will take place before the semester begins or before a volunteer enters the school.

Co-teaching Training – The main goal of the workshop was to open a dialog between the LET and volunteer and to give them a few models of successful co-teaching strategies so that they could develop a method that would work for them.

Director Accountability Form - The purpose of this form is to monitor TLGVs' academic performance on weekly basis. This is implemented through the specially designed weekly accountability form, filled out by school principals and submitted to TLG regional representatives on weekly basis.

Volunteer Teacher Portfolio - Developing a Teacher Portfolio will be an additional motivator for volunteers and give them something tangible to take away from their experience here in Georgia. TLG will name the best portfolios after the end of the school year 2012. Without the cooperation of their LET it will be difficult for volunteers to produce a winning portfolio so in this way it will encourage cooperation. This may also encourage LETs to develop portfolios of their own.

E- Volunteer Weekly-Monthly Report – TLG is planning to introduce an outline and snapshots of the new E-Reporting System.

Another Project Proposal that is in the process of being defined is **Professional Practice** Training Workshops in the Regions which is now in the planning stage. This has been directly requested by volunteers and LETs. The Academic Team has and will continue to listen, analyze information and implement new strategies for enhancing the TLG program to assist the program in meeting its' academic goals.

Orientation & Safety - Orientation training is designed to prepare and furnish volunteers with information that will assist them in adjusting during their stay in Georgia. Although the training covers all areas that are necessary for adaptation, volunteer's safety is of the utmost importance to TLG. Orientation training will enhance this section of the training focusing on

sexual harassment and discrimination. In addition, the TLG Team is in the process of developing a way to deliver on going reminder sessions throughout the volunteers' involvement in the program.

TLC for TLG – The Tender Loving Care project is an important project for both TLG staff and TLG volunteers in order to maintain continuous contact with TLG during their time with TLG. The initiative belongs to the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia and the main goal of the project is to show appreciation to our volunteers for their contribution in the development of Georgia's education system through different recreational events organized by TLG.

Some of the TLC projects for TLG are: *Daily telephone interface* with volunteers asking general questions regarding school, host family, local community, anything they would like to discuss directly with different TLG members. *Happy birthday wishes* by the Minister himself with a phone call as well as text message and e-mail from TLG inbox. *Arranging excursions all around Georgia all year round* that gives volunteers an excellent opportunity to both see the wonderful sites of Georgia and interact with TLG staff members and each other. These events take place on weekends and they can last for one day or two days. *Meeting with the Minister of Education and Science and TLG management* proved to be one of the most successful ways to communicate with TLG volunteers. The Minister meets with all volunteers in every region and introduces to them the ongoing processes in the education system, talks to them about future plans of the Ministry, hears firsthand information from volunteers regarding their concerns, suggestions, and findings and participates in Q/A sessions. The TLG management team discusses TLG related issues including ongoing and future initiatives and arranges TLG Q/A session for volunteers during these meetings.

All of the current and future plans of TLG are aimed at improving the TLG operation as whole and making TLG an exemplary program around the world.

CONCLUSION

Teach and Learn with Georgia's aims, as set out by the President of Georgia, are to achieve high academic endeavors in English teaching and learning, and make available unique cultural exchange opportunities for Georgian schoolchildren, teachers and citizens. These goals and opportunities are intended to cross cultural boundaries while communicating with those from foreign nations. In the process of implementing and maintaining the TLG program, we have impacted thousands of people worldwide and as we proceed into the second year, we will have an effect on thousands more.

This is a considerable responsibility to continually develop, maintain and achieve a high standard of service to all that are involved. We will continue to strive to make it an exemplary program that helps to foster communication between Georgians and the rest of the world. This communication is of utmost importance for a developing nation like Georgia with unique tourist potential and our desire to become a globally integrated part of the international community.