



Eco-Towerism in Tsiskarauli: community rehabilitation of a missile- struck medieval tower in Georgia.

An international collaboration between the International National Trusts Organisation, National Trust of Georgia and REMPART funded by the International alliance for the protection of heritage in conflict areas

Final project report 2021-2023

IN INTERNATIONAL
TO NATIONAL TRUSTS
ORGANISATION



საქართველოს ეროვნული ფონდი
THE NATIONAL TRUST OF GEORGIA



International alliance
for the protection
of heritage
in conflict areas



REMPART
TOGETHER FOR HERITAGE



Summary of project

At the close of this project, we can celebrate achieving all objectives set out in project design. Previously on the map of medieval heritage tracing Georgia's stands firm, expertly stabilised. Pooli and teams of dedicated volunteers, Ts revival for Georgian heritage.

Alongside capital restoration works, the at a local and international level in sensitisation to the value of Georgian heritage. Multiple teams of international benefitted from the opportunity to close of at-risk heritage through pioneering locally in Khevsureti, the restoration of this monument has brought much-needed attention to a remote region and political isolation from modern Georgia.

Where this project saw in real time the cultural identity, the newly restored tower shows the potential of collaboration to heal historic damage continues through the benefit to the heritage is on full display at a site that will act as a cultural tourism asset for years to come.



2021 preparatory works

Essential preparatory stabilisation works carried out during the summer holiday, under supervision of French Stonemason Pierre Denou and Georgian conservation architects:

- The surrounding area, interior ground cleared of debris.
- Access structure to the interior erected.
- Materials testing carried out, and approved.
- First section of trail from site cleared and power prepared.

Left: Volunteers transport materials to site via newly created access corridors
 Below: [Left] Newly erected access structure to the interior is given a Georgian adornment by a volunteer [Right] Volunteers

Details of Project Achievements

- **Objective:** This project will stabilise and restore the Tsiskarauli Tower
- **Status:** Objective completed in full

The tower has been fully stabilised and is now ready for the finalised capital works are of remarkable collaboration by a highly skilled core technical international volunteers - and we are immensely proud to share the results at the close of this project.

Traditional knowledge and materials were kept for rehabilitation, which was delivered to deadline, restored in accordance with conservation standards expected of the Georgian condition requires no further intervention in the

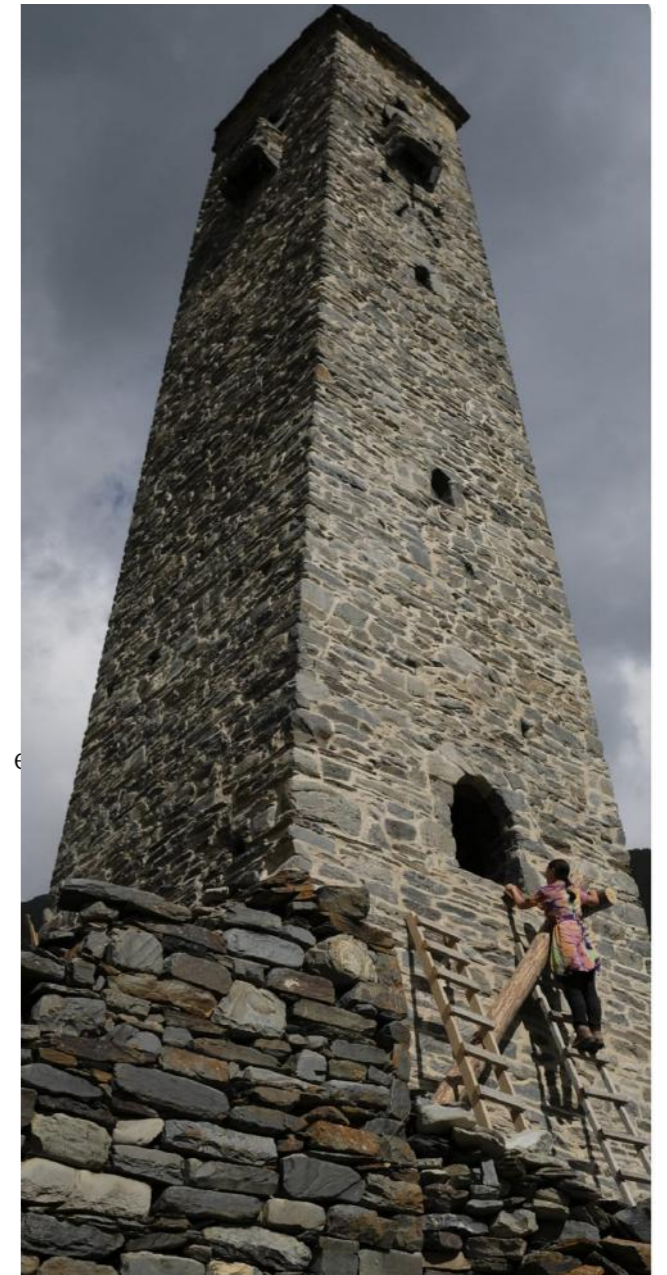


Finalised capital works

Finalised rehabilitation carried out over an eight-week period

- Cracks compromising structural integrity filled with lime mortar
- Damaged roof cleared of vegetation and masonry restored
- Missing fragments meticulously rebuilt using local shale and traditional masonry led by local mason Vasiko Nakeuri.
- Interior and facades fully rehabilitated.
- Rotten floor beams replaced using local wood, in line with traditional architecture of the region.
- The most severe structural damage on the first-floor reconstructed
- Collapsed first-floor arches and vaults reconstructed using traditional lime work.

All works diligently follow the tower's original geometry and structural stabilisation.



Before



After

Left: [Top] Plant matter is removed and masonry is restored on the roof of Tsiskarauli Tower

[Bottom] Interior view of severe structural damage and its reconstruction

Above: Before and after view of facade of tower showing restoration of stonework and repointing with lime mortar

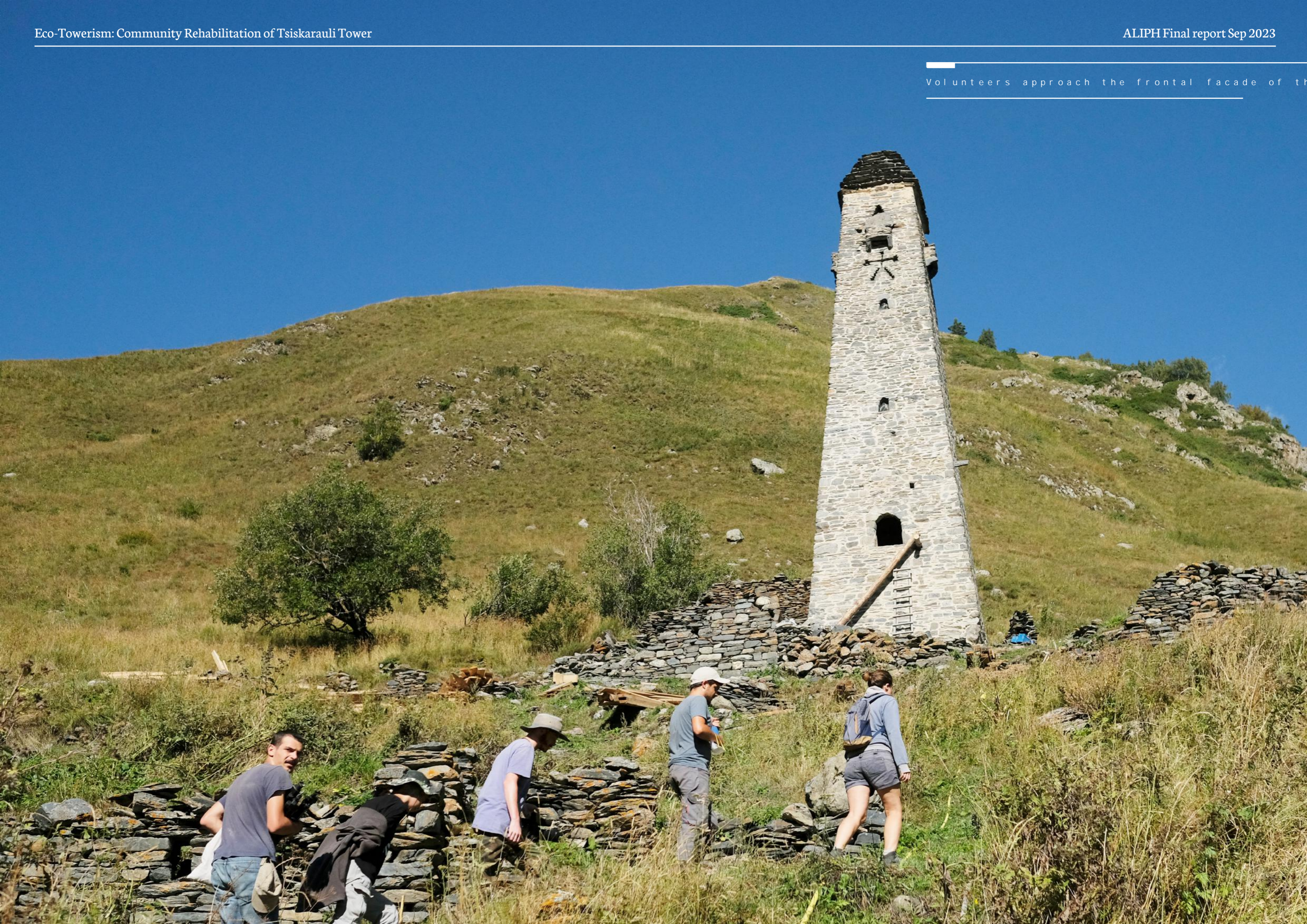
46 volunteers trained in heritage skills

Over **10** weeks of capital works

4 external facades **19** m in height fully rehabilitated



Volunteers approach the frontal facade of the





Above: New exterior interpretation outside the Tsiskarauli Tower

Tracing the history of Tsiskarauli Tower

- **Objective:** The tower will be turned into a space with interpretation that discusses the risk posed
- **Status:** Objective completed in full

Tsiskarauli Tower has been fully interpreted into a fully interpreted site.

New signage at the site tells visitors of its restoration through international collaboration, and the conflict. Interior displays its unique architecture, which the Tower show its enduring cultural memory locally. Inspired by examples of interpretation of remote sites in the UK, remains of the missile which led to its destabilisation are on display in

Newly installed lighting illuminates the site at night - described locally as 'a lighthouse of peace'.

- **Objective:** Tsiskarauli Tower is fully documented with records shared with the relevant authorities within Georgia and international experts
- **Status:** Objective completed in full

The tower has been carefully documented to legitimise restoration.

An Art History study was produced to gain access to site from the National Agency for Cultural Heritage Preservation of Georgia in 2021. Subsequent assessments made to monitor structural integrity and damage caused by the missile.

Following delayed activity in years one and two, a group of self-funded Polish Archaeological

volunteers assessed the tower's stability through 3D modelling in 2022. Another monitoring visit by our specialist technical team to analyse its integrity and plan works for 2023.

Ante-technical report following restoration to register works with the National Agency for Cultural Heritage Preservation of Georgia, is included with this report. by the National Trust of Georgia are available via their website.



Left: [Top] New interior signage at boxed display of missile shell [Bottom] fragments set into mortar on display Above: Signage to Tsiskarauli tower in Akheili village

Sharing learning

- Objective: Capacity built at the National Trust for Georgia (NTG) learning from best practices in, managing remote heritage sites and volunteering as a route to restoration thanks to secondments at the National Trust and REMPART
- Status: Objective completed in full

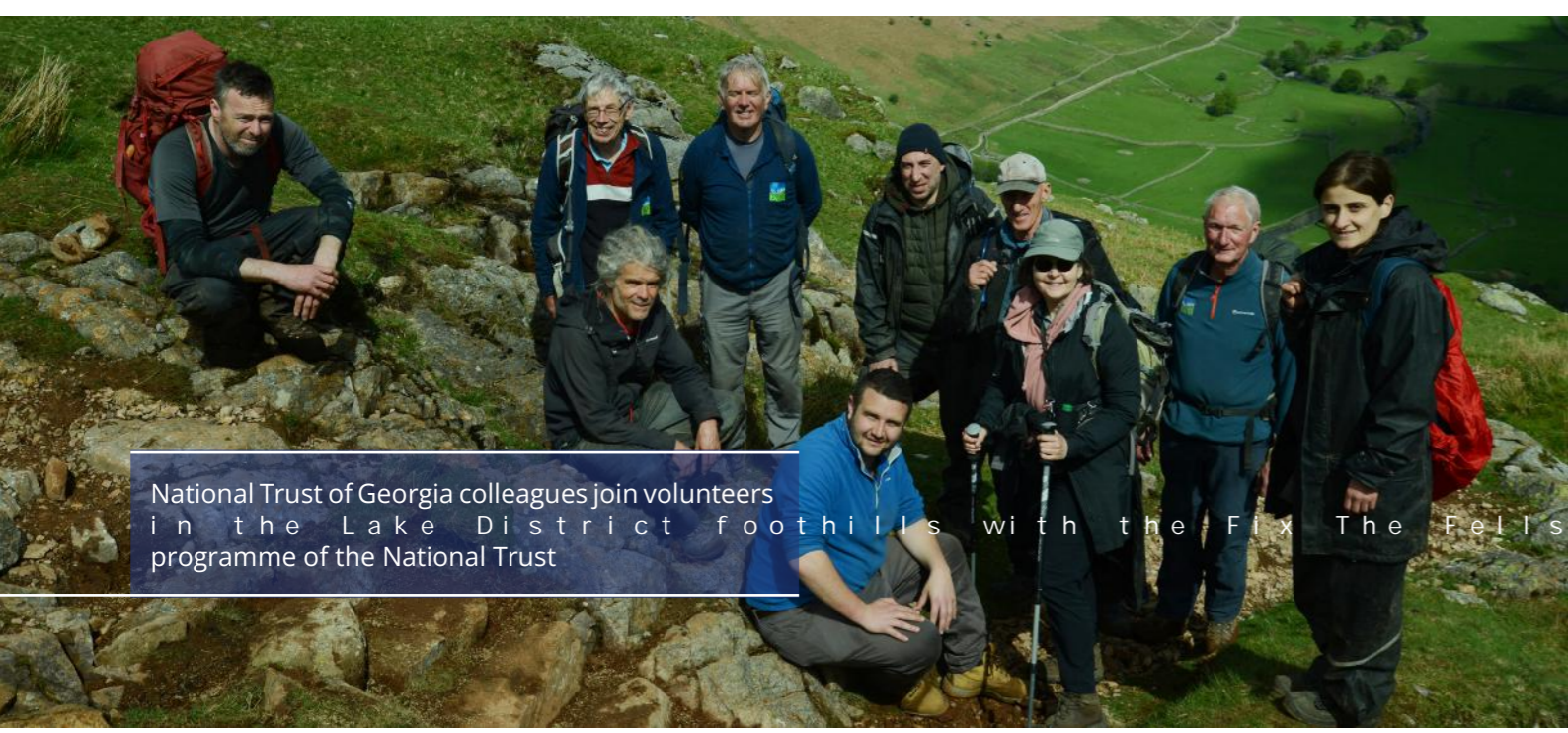
In May 2022 the National Trust for Georgia (NTG) learning from best practices in, managing remote heritage sites and volunteering as a route to restoration thanks to secondments at the National Trust and REMPART

Visiting the Lake District foothills with the Fix The Fells programme of the National Trust



Salome Tsiskarauli Co Manager at the National Trust for Georgia, participating in additional co-funded ERASMUS+ training in REMPART in July 2021.

Georgian staff who
 “Being closely involved with volunteers helped me understand their dedication and the vital role they play. It was enlightening to witness their enthusiasm and willingness to contribute their time and effort to a cause they believe in.” - Salome Tsiskarauli - Project Co-Manager NTG



National Trust of Georgia colleagues join volunteers in the Lake District foothills with the Fix The Fells programme of the National Trust

In 2021, two community secondments commented on the reforming process in REMPART, observing the workcamp.

This provided crucial insight into the collaborative relationship between volunteers and experts, integral measures, key infrastructure planning requirements, of resources.

“This secondment provided me with a well-rounded perspective on the collaborative dynamics between experts and volunteers. It underscored the importance of communication and coordination between them to achieve shared goals.” - Guga Klibadze Project Co-Manager NTG

Enhancing eco-tourism

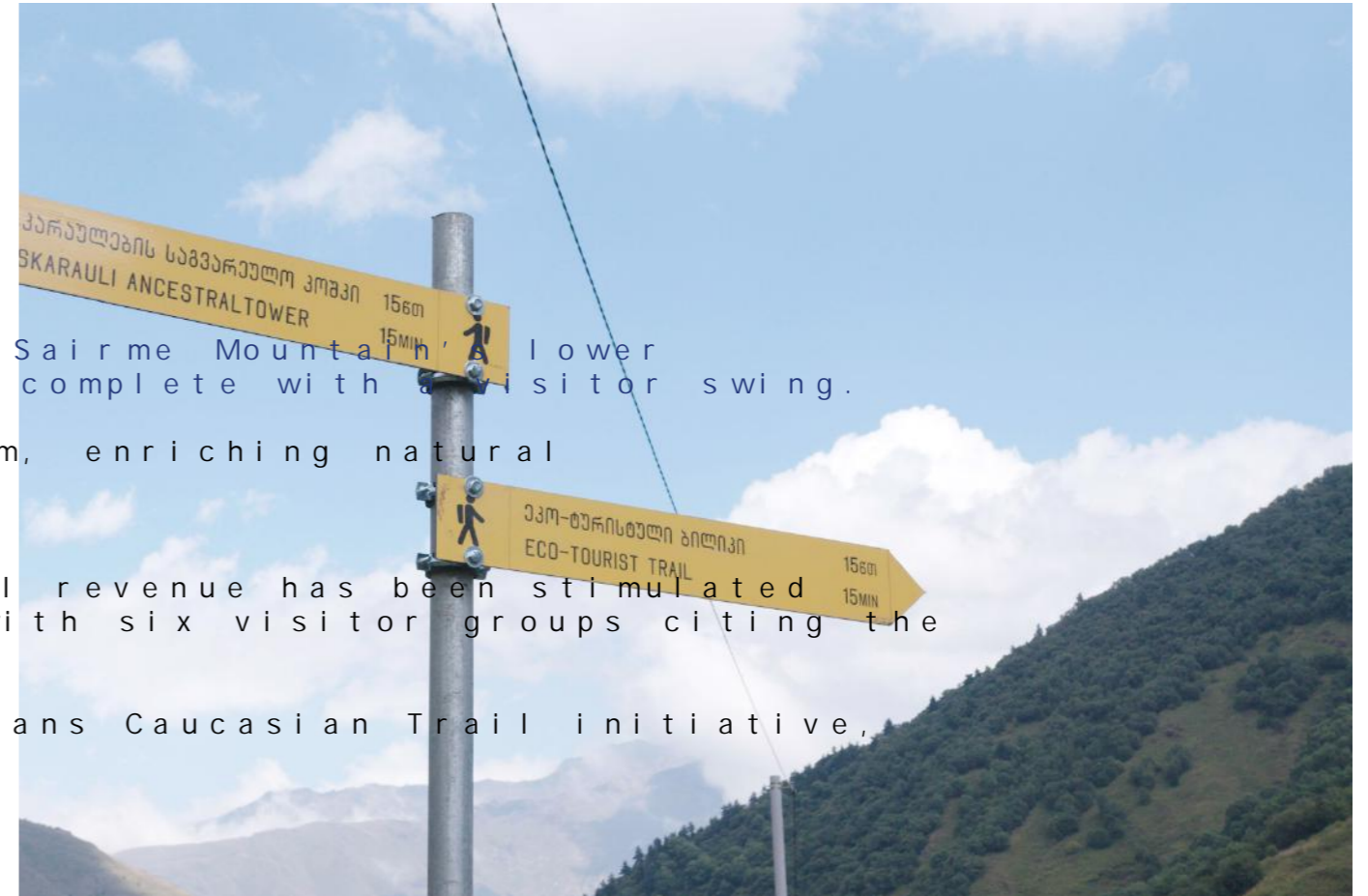
- Objective: A new walking route will be created bringing much needed eco-tourism and economic opportunities
- Status: Objective completed in full

Volunteers have created a 700m walking path along Sairme Mountain ridge, to a viewpoint overlooking Akheili village, complete with a visitor swing.

This project expanded beyond providing eco-tourism, enriching natural cultural tourism in the region.

This has been welcomed by the local community, who have sought opportunities to connect with existing pathways in the area. Local revenue has been stimulated via increased visitation from project publicity, with six visitor groups citing the project as their primary reason for the journey.

Ongoing potential to grow impact exists with the Trans Caucasian Trail initiative, who have shown interest in the project.



Above: New signage in Akheili shows route to Tsiskarauli Tower and hiki



Left: Volunteers building ecotourist trail in 2021 working holiday
Below: Map detail of trail from site

700 m of eco-tourist trail created

Climbing **200** m of Mt. Sairme





“I think its human patrimony, so I am a bit responsible, even if I don’t live here. It’s important to me as a person to help, and I keep learning this knowledge about building with stones. So, I have something I can give, and I’m glad I can share it” - Mylène Garcia, French volunteer

Above: Mylène Garcia French volunteer applies lime mortar to stones on

Pioneering working holidays

- **Objective:** Complete a programme of working holidays utilising volunteers from France and the UK demonstrating common work as a tool of mutual understanding. 56 international people learn about Georgian heritage over four working holidays delivering conservation outcomes
- **fgpLMGFTGFAGGkTNkTFgT**

This project delivered under the supervision of Georgian experts and pioneering this model in France and the UK. The project attracted 46 international volunteers to the skilful rehabilitation of the Tsiskarauli monument. Of these, 13 were French, one British, one UK, and 31 Georgian. The project was a great merit of this project, as it demonstrated the peacebuilding power of collaboration and exchange between people from different backgrounds. The project was a great merit of this project, as it demonstrated the peacebuilding power of collaboration and exchange between people from different backgrounds.

Working holidays also fostered a sense of intangible heritage between volunteers, and the host community. Georgian volunteer Lomadze, reported when sharing Georgian Supra toasting culture with French colleagues a recurrent toast materialised – “To the mortar that unites us!”. According to the goals, the core values revolve around freedom and equality. Working on the tower brought together people with diverse values, all converging around these fundamental principles.”

- Salome Dumbadze, Georgian volunteer.

Modelled on international voluntary service for peacebuilding, as demonstrated by European partners, the cultural understanding and community building impact of this project is profound.

Below: Volunteers observe mixing of Tsiskarauli tower whilst rehabilitation



This is the first project of its kind in Georgia, where volunteerism is much less established. For a nation that has suffered in conflict, the project was a great merit of this project, as it demonstrated the peacebuilding power of collaboration and exchange between people from different backgrounds.



A volunteer uses lime mortar to restore original

Valorising community heritage

- Objective: The local community are sensitised to the value of the tower wishing to protect it within their own communities
- Status: Objective completed in full

The restoration of Tsiskarauli Tower has symbolically and tangibly valorised the regional heritage of the Arkhoti Valley community.

Promotional efforts have provided much-needed attention to this previously neglected region. Immersed in the daily life of the community, the work of volunteers was incredibly well received locally. In a stakeholder meeting, community member Pikria Chincharauli, expressed her gratitude -

“The work of this multicultural group is so admirable that it would be a shame for us to not transmit it to future generations. We must tell future generations who carried out this good deed”

Below: Pikria Chincharauli and community members at a community meeting



Above: A guesthouse in Akheili puts up a new sign for visitors. Below: Project Co-Manager Salome Tsiskarauli speaks to

Lela Ninoshvili (NTG), reported increased interest over the project lifetime in conservation with several families pursuing rehabilitation of houses and improving living conditions, stating - “They are looking at the site with a real understanding of what the tower’s restoration serves as an anchor for ongoing village maintenance, as a site of Georgian mountain heritage.”

More tangibly, revenue has been generated in Akheili through hosting visitors, catalysed by the project. This has triggered new initiatives among the local community including new guesthouses. The site has gained recognition on tourist trails through project-driven promotion and during the work season local





Above: Project Co Manager Guga Klibadze presents at a community meeting in Tbilisi

Sustainability and visibility

- **Objective:** NTG take a long-term commitment to the site, and area continuing to run working holidays and advertising the region for eco-tourism
- **Status:** Objective completed in full

This project significantly shows the challenging capacity to support a Trust of Georgia's capacity to co-steward the fully funded working holiday site with the community. external funding. As a result work has reached a level that Six colleagues benefit from two successful heritage management and community engagement models. With enhanced capacity and knowledge Moreover, the project successfully established the National Trust is now the concept of heritage development in other Georgia. The remote nature of this site has

- **Objective:** National and International heritage community is aware of project activity
- **Status:** Objective completed in full

Concluding this project, **Foundation and Jagellonian University**, promising achievements in sector ongoing regional research, demonstrating the reach and value of the project beyond our In Georgia, NTG amplified participation in **seven events and lectures**, making use of **Tbilisi Technical University, ICOMOS Georgia and Blue Shield Georgia**. The partnership remains committed to Internationally, the project reached at **two INTO conferences** in 2021 a reaching 600 global heritage Collaborations with the **Polish Chudow Castle**



Above: Marie-Georges Pagel-Brousse of INTO Dundee with the Gelderland Trust of the Netherlands
Left: Manana Tevadze of Blue Shield Georgia delivers a lecture as part of project sensitisation activity

Risk Management

Our project has been overseen by a risk management committee, meeting regularly to mitigate and respond to risk rapidly.

COVID-19

The pandemic posed substantial risk to the completion of this project, but mitigated through contingency models were produced for volunteering that omitted international travel. We delayed as far as possible to avoid postponements with ALIPH allowed ease of delivery of activities when the global situation improved. Delivering our pilot working holiday from 2021, we tested and hygiene measures the safety of volunteers and the success of this was evident further disruption on site from

Inflation

Compounded crises over the project lifetime saw unpredictable levels of inflation. This was particularly challenging in Georgia, where material costs rose significantly. This had a similar impact across costs associated with transportation of materials. Working predominantly over focussed on achieving rehabilitation objectives, the costs associated with this. Where possible, we mitigated against this through careful financial planning to in price, redirecting unders where possible to ensure the safe stabilisation of the monument. For the final overspend budget (approximately \$2k), meet these elevated costs to prioritise the restoration objectives set out in this project.

Safety on site

Working on an active restoration and staff was of the utmost importance. This element in secondments, in particular in

France, where NTG secondees observed from REMPART, the operational requirements and necessary to ensure safe conditions completed additional training in refresh learning and adhere to high standards of health and safety.

Extreme weather events

An acute landslide in our project region delayed integral work in the area. In 2022, an acute landslide in our project region delayed integral work in the area. In 2022, an acute landslide in our project region delayed integral work in the area. In 2022, an acute landslide in our project region delayed integral work in the area.

Internal and external unrest

Working in a region with the war in Ukraine posed a meaningful risk to the project. A security risk was identified in the region. A security risk was identified in the region. A security risk was identified in the region.

Internal unrest triggered by the Foreign Agents Bill in Georgia in 2022 was closely monitored. Well-positioned to access up to date information as the situation evolved, contingency plans were regularly reviewed through the process.

Modifications to project

All major modifications to project discussed and agreed with ALIPH ahead of time for the duration of this project.

In 2021, with the rise of the pandemic, we introduced a contingency model integrating Georgian volunteers to the programme, and on-site UK volunteer participation on the ground of mitigation against travel restrictions. The participation seen been one of the project's was agreed with ALIPH in March

The collaboration with Chudow Castle Foundation of Poland was agreed with ALIPH in the agreement that volunteers would support the costs of their trip. This was a valuable provision which was since provided invaluable professional archaeological surveying expertise from the team to assess

Our working holiday schedule was agreed with ALIPH in response to postponements by the UK government in 2022 which took place in 2023 over challenges to conservation objectives.

Within this, a project extension with ALIPH in August 2022, after the cancellation of the original project. This proposal was a hybrid model that prioritised the work on a cost-neutral basis for the project. The proposal was agreed in August 2022, with all budgetary February 2022.

A communication campaign was also integrated into our budget extension. To prioritise working period this subject budget activity. An essential tool for achieving our objectives, we were still able to produce a short documentary, securing external funding outside

Below: UK volunteer David Grigg on a working holiday in 2023



“This project has breathed life into the community in Akheili village, and has shown the importance of valorisation of heritage for local communities. It’s legacy will remain in the continued visitation and interaction with the local community and their cultural heritage and the promotion of this region’s immense cultural value by the National Trust of Georgia”

- Marine Mizandari Co-chair of the National Trust of Georgia



Lessons learned

Evaluation methodology

This project has exceeded expectations of success partnership. Evaluation and assessment against our objectives used a number of methodologies.

Our full project partnership has met on a monthly basis being conducted for financial, risk and progress monitoring as needed. This has allowed us to monitor progress to deadline.

A coordination and mid-project review meeting was conducted. Monitoring and narrative reporting processes between partners were overhauled for greater accuracy and streamlining of working processes. A budget was reviewed to ensure we were well resourced for the following year.

The closing visit to Georgia represented an opportunity for a comprehensive project evaluation, which was led by Emma Taylor assessing achievement against our objectives and discussing lessons learned in the partnership.

Local impact

The impact for the local community from project activity is perhaps the greatest success of this restoration. On the ground, the National Trust of Georgia has facilitated project impact and proper consultation with the local community through meetings and events.

The recruitment of Salome Tsiskarauli as project Co-ordinator was a success due to her close ties to the local community, where their concerns and perspectives could be communicated easily. The National Trust of Georgia has supported this kind of initiative, whilst maintaining a diverse team of representatives to serve community needs. Constant stewardship and involvement at every stage was essential to this project in forging a lasting legacy.

Community impact has been measurable in other ways in village life – locals have demonstrated a shift in valuation of their heritage – where several families are now pursuing traditional restoration of buildings instead of contemporary modifications.

Evaluation sessions with delivery teams in Georgia revealed that this project has shone a light on a lack of regional support for the local community, and has revealed the importance of national visibility of this region. The project was visited over the work season by 20 visitors who had heard of project work, as well as descendent families and has become known on tourist trails. One increasing visitation.



Above: [Top] Typical trails one increasing of the Arkhoti Valley [Bottom] Volu

Lessons learned

“Our action takes on its full meaning as it goes beyond history, to be deeply rooted in the future of the region. It has been an honour to help restore the greatness of this place, steeped in history, in the cheerful atmosphere of an international project.”

- Billie Bazin, French volunteer

Feasibility of working holidays in the Georgian context

A major lesson learned through this project is the feasibility for heritage working holidays in Georgia. Gathering testimonials from volunteers has shown that opportunities of this type are valued and sought after in Georgia, as well as for international visitors.

“This endeavour has become something both tangible and symbolic, and it is a tremendous honour, LLLLLL

- Ana Saralidze, Georgian

For both parties the collaborative element of this understanding between nations. This is summarised in Billie Bazin -

“This project is not a simple workshop, it is a whole experience, disrupting both professional and personal habits. In addition, the breath-taking landscapes, the turbulent history of the tower, as well as powerful encounters, implies a strong emotional involvement: this project is unlike any other! There, our action takes on its full meaning as it goes beyond history, to be deeply rooted in the future of the region. It has been an honour to help restore the greatness of this place, steeped LLLL

Operationally this project has equipped NTG with the holidays in the future through this pilot delivery model case study in heritage working holidays which

Capacity building and organisational sustainability

Insight into the REMPART model of community-valued and managed heritage, the National Trust of Georgia has built a lasting partnership with this

Their partnership with REMPART has also been hugely successful in fostering opportunities to collaborate in the future thanks to successful co through this project. The secondment at the National INTO, ensures that National Trust of Georgia has ongoing support with business stability and management of this site.

New tourism enterprises in the community catalysed by this project means that continued promotion and celebration of this project's achievements will see the successful resilience of this community and site into the future.

Rehabilitation

The accessibility, short time frame and scale of restoration were all major challenges to restoration work.

However, the National Trust of Georgia through considered recruitment of appropriate and dedicated expertise - particularly in the case of high-quality works to be completed.

“Having regained its initial splendour and stability, the elegant silhouette of the Tsiskarauli Tower dominates the valley during the day; at night, the illuminated tower turns into a Lighthouse of LLLLL

- Marine Mizandari (NTG)





Internationally we have exploited our networks to raise the project's approach on a number of global platforms in the heritage sector highlighted in sessions at INTO Online 2021 and INTO Dundee conference bringing together over **600 global delegates** from seven continents working in the field of heritage. At INTO online 2021 the project was presented by Bishop of INTO and ALIPH's Scientific Director in a masterclass. At INTO Dundee 2022, Marie-Georges Pagel-Brousse, President of INTO, led a workshop on the potential of volunteering, and the social impact of heritage. The project is also featured on the Culture in Crisis portal by the V&A – showcasing project working with at-risk heritage.

The project results will be presented by Peter Nasmyth Co-Chair of NTG at two upcoming UK/Georgia connection events on November 2 and November 7. The project will also be presented at the University of Westminster for Georgia Studies day, to be attended by Salome Zourabichvili and Mark Clayton, British Ambassador to Georgia on November 7 at an event celebrating the twinning arrangement between Tbilisi and Westminster.

Engagement of both the British and French embassies in Georgia has provided support and visibility for project work, with a project featured in their updates, and visibility on social media from both the British and French Ambassadors. The attendance of our final event in Tbilisi.

All partners have also successfully promoted this project via their own digital platforms, through social media, blog updates, newsletters and annual reports. Project content reached over **75,000 people**, with almost **8.7k engagements**.

Full details and links to all promotional and communications work is linked here

High resolution images of project activity can be found here

Above: NTG, REMPART & INTO with the French and British Ambassadors

Media and communications

We have benefitted from a number of features in the media context - where our project has been covered on national TV, including Imedi TV and Rustavi 2 - the **top two ranking channels** in Georgia. The project has also been covered in Georgian digital press seven times in articles, as well as a promotion via the Georgian Technical University. The German-French channel, which has for their online video content tops **7.6 million views** per month, also visited Tbilisi to interview our project manager Salome Tsiskarauli and project partners.

The project gained key coverage from national press. Project achievements were shared at an evening bringing together partners, project volunteers, local community, key stakeholders from the Georgian heritage sector and the French and British embassies. The event included a project presentation showcasing restoration successes led by Marine Mizandari, a screening of a 16-minute documentary following the towers restoration, and an exhibition of photography of the project in collaboration with a Ukrainian volunteer.



Above: National Trust of Georgia speak to press at event

“Community Rehabilitation of the Tsiskarauli Tower” was a three-year partnership project between the International National Trusts Organisation (INTO), the National Trust of Georgia and REMPART, supported by the International Alliance for the Protection of Heritage in Conflict Areas (ALIPH) that followed to rehabilitate the Tsiskarauli Tower

Suffering significant structural damage in 2001 during the Russian-Chechen conflict, the monument was left at risk of collapse and in urgent need of stabilisation. Learning from examples in France and the UK facilitated via secondments for National Trust staff in Georgia, restoration was delivered through a series of volunteer working holidays.

Georgian and international volunteers collaborated under supervision of conservation architects and heritage architects to rehabilitate this unique example of Khevsuretian defensive architecture. Bringing together skilled and previously unskilled hands, these camps allowed for the transference of traditional heritage skills, and a common ground of cultural understanding across borders which holds a profound legacy.

Previously an emblem of conflict and division, the monument now exemplifies the reparative potential of international peacebuilding through heritage restoration.

International National Trusts Organisation

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