



TBILISI
MEDICAL
ACADEMY

COUNTRY

DOCTOR



GIZO GORGILADZE. Tkhillvana

Project team:

LELI BLAGONRAVOVA
Photographer, Photo editor

NATIA MSKHILADZE
Editor

TAMAR GORGODZE
Co-editor

MAKA MAGLAKELIDZE
GIORGI KOPALEISHVILI
Organizers

NATALIA KOTCHLASHVILI
Translator

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Integration of medicine and art gives birth to new knowledge and amplifies creative thinking, which in its turn promotes popularization of science across the society and particularly among the younger generation.

The intersection between medicine and arts represents a compelling tool for developing empathy and critical thinking, as well as allows students to acquire an interdisciplinary perspective. This, in its turn aids to further development of necessary skills to carry out faster and thorough conclusions around their fields of choice.

In order to increase the scientific interest among the school students, Petre Shotadze Tbilisi Medical Academy (TMA) designed a project - «Medicine and Art», which among other activities, implied to establish the «Kid's University». The project was driven by the idea to merge the fields of medicine and art. The mutual influence of these two disciplines may in its turn facilitate students of the final grades (X, XI, XII) to absorb scientific information around medicine and art in an integrative, fun and evidential way.

The idea was brought to life after a short while, when in 2019 the project was awarded with a grant for science promotion by the Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation. From this moment, the history began.

During the preparatory phase of the project, TMA considered multiple examples of intersection or mutual influence between medicine and art. Besides, it is a common knowledge that the mankind has depicted the most of the dread, caused by the heaviest pandemics and epidemics throughout the history within the works of art.

«A doctor's work combines broad and profound knowledge, competence, empathy and communication with

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During recent years, integration of arts within the medical curricula has earned increased attractiveness, with some of the most distinguished and respectful medical schools, such as Harvard University, University of Leiden, serving as examples, alongside other notable universities

EKATERINE KLDIASHVILI
The Vice-Rector in Research, TMA

each professional acting in a rather unique and individual style. So, what is the factor, which makes the medical professional stand out from other professions? Naturally, there is no universal and comprehensive answer to this question. From our side, we envision critical thinking and empathy as the cornerstones. Is it possible to teach critical thinking to a medical school student? Can one's empathy be trained?

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By integrating the fields of medicine and art, the student acquires valuable skills for interdisciplinary thinking and gains habit to consider different possibilities. After all, art is an effective opportunity to perceive, observe and understand the actual experience of humanity, as well as an individual event. At the same time, art can also be envisioned as the chronicles of developmental changes,

AND ART



EKATERINE KLDIASHVILI



MEDEA KUSIANI



MIKAEL GOKCHE

which medicine experienced throughout the paths of history. The works of art bring under the spotlight the scenes, involving individual doctors, patients, clinics, anatomical theatres, ward or consultations at the doctor's office. In addition, once analysing the features of the characters presented through the works of art, we even can recognize specific diseases,» says the author of the project, the Vice Rector in Research of TMA, Ekaterine Kldiashvili.

Indeed, the diseases which brought despair to the humankind since prehistorical times are captured by the famous pieces of well-known artists. Moreover, some of the artists actually became successful due to the anatomical insights of their work. «For me, medicine and art have become parts of a daily ritual. I study medicine, its development and reflection to different fields of art starting from the Renaissance. This project gave me significant knowledge to broaden my perspectives, helped me to learn a lot of new things about the intersection of medicine and art, and served as an important influence to develop myself,» says one of the participants of the project, and now an active student of TMA, Mikael Gokche. Alongside theoretical aspects, the project also included practical work as well. Simultaneously to the theoretical aspects, delivered by the lectures and seminars, the students were able to conduct simple experiments at the scientific laboratory of TMA. The process proved itself to be rather innovative, where students were creating drawings using bacteria and later studying different samples of bacteria art under a microscope.

Once different bacteria are seeded on nutrient soils in a microbiological laboratory, they cultivate into spectacular cultures of the most fascinating colour gradients. Naturally, this has become a source of inspiration for many

art-loving researchers and even served as the foundation for one of the most trended directions - microbial art. One can say that the project served its participants with their first communion with the fascinating field of microbial art.

The examples, which demonstrate integration of medicine and art that were acquired throughout the project are currently successfully implemented throughout various study courses at different levels of the educational programme of TMA.

Through such examples of integration, students get to see that behind each disease stand patients with their own psycho-social problems. In result, such approach ensures that students will be more capable to create a safer environment for their patients in the future,» said Maka Zarnadze, head of the faculty development department of TMA, who also serves as the project coordinator.

One of the most interesting parts of the project was unarguably it's final part, where school students, participating in the project delivered interesting presentations. These presentations addressed participants own perspective around integration of specific topics between the fields of medicine and art. «In the difficult and, I would say tiresome life of a medical student, the project «Medicine and Art» became a highlight which refreshed the routine and infused it with bright colours. This project helped me to see that art indeed is behind everyday life, and moreover, medicine itself is based on the creativity of this wonderful field. Furthermore, it trained me to see the details which most of us probably don't even pay attention to, even though art can be found alongside each new step, taken in the field of medicine,» says Saba Zaqrade, who was a project participant and now is a student at TMA.



Due to its innovative nature, the project progressed towards success and in 2021, under a different format and with an upgraded title - «Medicine, History Reflected in Art» continued its impressive journey with the support of Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation of Georgia. The target group of the project remained unchanged and involved students from the X-XI-XII classes of the general educational institutions. A scientific conference was held at the end of the project which involved their participation.

Clearly, the main goal of the project remained unchanged and once again intended to arouse interest towards science among the younger generations. «In my opinion, this project is interesting and important not only for future doctors, but also for any person beyond the field. It demonstrates that medicine is everywhere and always, around each of us», says Medea Kusiani, who is a student of TMA and previously was one of the project participants.

The structure of the project introduced the creativity conveyed by art, together with its comprehensive analysis in a rather fun and interactive way. This in its turn promoted awareness among the participants through analysing the art pieces, presented different eras from the history of medicine, and addressed the role of science, research and innovation. The success of the project increased interest towards medicine among youth is clearly confirmed by the fact that eight of the school pupils, who took part in the

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This project «Medicine and Art» served as one of the strongest and probably most legitimate motivations for choosing my future profession. The experience, gained through these activities, clearly inspired me to address medicine in a rather broader perspective, while it became clear that it is feasible to create a new scientific field by combining at the first glance completely different professions, where medical history is written with art

MANANA SISVADZE, TMA Student

project already represent the students of Tbilisi Medical Academy.

Unarguably, it is virtually impossible to describe briefly the field of medicine due to its all-encompassing nature. Consequently, in order to promote interest among the society towards science via harmonised synthesis between medicine and art in general, Tbilisi Medical Academy plans to implement its goals at an even larger scale. Naturally, such approach is determined by the number of students who get interested in science and scientific career through inspiration of this project.

Is it possible to represent medicine or its individual aspect to the public in a rather easy, yet at the same time emotional manner? Clearly, yes! Precisely this was the main motivation to design and develop the «Medicine and Art» project, which in its turn has obtained funded for the third consecutive time under the science promotion grant of the Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation of Georgia. The project took off on October 1, 2023 and will implement its activities until September 30, 2024. At this point, the project is open for the prospective participants to get registered for upcoming activities.





NABEGHLAVI, CHKHAKOURA, KVABGHA



NINUTSI PANGANI
LELA KORIAULI

A DOCTOR, A NURSE AND A SMALL REFRIGERATOR



Nabeghlavi – is probably one of the most picturesque villages in Chokhatauri municipality.

Wooden houses hidden among the green forestry, colourful gates and ecologically clean environment. This village is home to a small outpatient clinic as well. Likely to the residential houses, it is also constructed of wood. At first glance, it may seem empty and lifeless, however once you climb a few stairs, pass a room or two, and step through the widely ajar doors, Dr. Marika and her two nurses will greet you with a smile and peaceful eyes full of hope.

We spent 6 days in the alpine meadows hidden under the green covers in the highlands of Guria to get to know the doctors of Nabeghlavi, Chkhakoura and Kvabgha.

Guria itself represents a great monument of culture, with its mineral waters, hospitality, environment and of course, simply it's people, with greeting as their visiting card. It doesn't matter if you are a stranger or a friend, once you are walking down the road, you will definitely hear a hearty "you all right?!" from a by passer, accompanied with a generous, happy smile.

We first met doctor Marika on our way to Nabeghlavi outpatient clinic in the centre of Chokhatauri. It's been almost 30 years since the Nabeghlavi Outpatient Clinic has had the same doctor-host Marika. During the trip, we happened to witness various stories and patient's attitudes towards the doctor.

Together with her nurses, doctor Marika serve to the geographical region, which covers Nabeghlavi and its surrounding villages, laying across different distances and quite apart from the Nabeghlavi outpatient clinic, which puts it out of reach for some of the patients. Thus, together with her nurses, Doctor Marika visits her patients twice a week. "One village is on the mountain here, another village is over there, and the third one is even further away. And we try to ensure that everyone receives relevant medical services, since in many cases they simply do not have the means of transportation and cannot even walk the road that will take them to the outpatient clinic. That's why I walk a lot with nurses, we set records," says doctor Marika.

A country doctor is much more than just a doctor. In her eyes, one may read the stories that tell about the ambulance, which was running late to reach the patient, necessary medical help, which was impossible to deliver due to natural disasters, the hope laying miles away, across the covers of snow, landslide, rain or wind. The emotions, which she feels towards each patient are clearly seen in each of her gaze.

The desire to help serves as the core of medicine and its essence in general. However, the attitude towards the patients, which we read and witnessed during our stay with them truly exceeded all of our possible expectations. Once offered a car, which would provide her with own comfort, doctor Marika refused it, since in that case she would have to switch to a 3-day work schedule. Naturally, this time would not be sufficient for all of the patients, hence she chose to carry on with working her usual, over-



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One village is on the mountain here, another village is over there, and the third one is even further away. And we try to ensure that everyone receives relevant medical services





loaded schedule. "During one day you may have two patients, however for those two, during that day a visit from the physician may be vital. I can't even imagine telling a patient that I'll be at work tomorrow, not today. Then I have to worry about that patient all day long, while if their condition gets exacerbated, the feeling of guilt and conscience will always haunt you."

Despite their health complaints, visitors of the outpatient clinic do return home content and in a fulfilled mood. Here, each patient becomes a member of Dr. Marika's family. With her humble demeanour, without any mediocrity or feeling of self-entitlement, just as we remember having heard in the fairy tales, she heals the patient by simply talking to them... that's precisely what can be said about her. She feels the pain similarly to her patients, becomes part of their suffering. She absorbs and becomes a whole part of the experience, as if she herself were a patient full of definitive expectations. Clearly, all of this is one big, straightforward and clear expression of empathy.

We asked Dr. Marika what would happen if one day she wouldn't be able to visit her patients due to some reason or circumstance, whether there was someone who would replace her, and in response, we received the following answer: "You know, it's a bit complicated, however one has to be able to do it regardless every obstacle or limitation. Indeed, one has to face eye into eye with such difficulties, yet, once you get enchanted with this nature and place, once you fall in love with the surrounding, you will never be able to get apart from it. This is a world you don't want to leave."

Together with Dr. Marika, we paid visits to the homes of the patients in the villages of Kvabgha and Chkhakoura. In our photo lens, patients and their livestock exchanged a lot of trust and love towards the medical staff, which was rather pleasant to observe and more or less unusual to see. It is often said that many people do not like doctors for obvious reasons, however in Guria we had to witness the exact opposite. During a short period of time, we witnessed many stories and absorbed remarkable emotions. Apparently, good communication has a huge power alongside professionalism which beyond any doubt, serves as the most important tool for a doctor. This thought was further asserted by the story of how Dr. Marika was able to negotiate with a severely ill patient and abided their decision to receive treatment using the magic of her communication skills, profound and limitless education and the right attitude. Today, those people are on the road to recovery. "The more you take on yourself, the more toll comes from the patient. Having their trust is the most amazing factors because once they rely on you, you have no right to let them down even for a second. For example, consider a personal problem; there had been cases when I left my child at home with a high temperature and went to the patient since at that time, they needed me more. That's what's being a doctor works like, and you can't be any other way."

The outpatient clinic in Nabeghlavi receives patients until 2 o'clock. After wrapping up the day together with the doctor Marika, we prepared ourselves for the successive meetings. Visiting patients at home turned out to be an entirely different experience. Once overhearing the doctor's voice, each member of the family, irrespective to their ages, whether they were young or elderly would show up to greet her. Alongside unconditional respect towards the physician, we were lucky to become part of the local hospitality and related traditions. The people of Guria indeed know the value of hospitality. They understand how to turn even a single visit with them into a long-lasting, unforgettable impression and it's the place where you are always expected. We, students with cameras in our hands were observed by the surrounding people with great curiosity. Meanwhile, we have become the shadows of doctor Marika, listening to the stories about her and her trusted nurses, who served as her consistent companions.

One of the nurses, which has been Marika's unchanged partner for over a year is Meri Iremadze. Prior teaming up with doctor Marika, Meri has worked as a nurse at the Chkhakoura medical checkpoint for over 25 years. Apparently, here no one takes seriously years, defined by single digit numbers, and indeed, you mostly happen to encounter representatives of rather impressive age groups, reflected in double-digit values.

At the outpatient clinic, we were introduced to 82-year-old Lali Meparishvili, who has spent alongside doctor Marika more than 30 years and currently serves as the guard of the Nabeghlavi outpatient clinic. Told you, no one here takes seriously years reflected in the single digit numbers!

Marika herself has to walk 70 kilometres from her home to the patient in Chkhakoura. In many cases, by foot, or by





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If you don't go to the patients and listen to their pain in an environment where they feel at most ease, you won't be able to make an accurate diagnosis

hitchhiking a car that passes by. This trip we took by the car. At that exact time, we realized that the actual reality, which is so alien to us, yet familiar to her, which looks so extreme and even visual imagination splashes a wave of adrenaline among us, is the usual daily life of a country doctor. The truth to be told, we even felt rather embarrassed once we realized that after our departure, she would yet remain in this reality and continue to walk the

daily lengths of kilometres in the snow, rain and wind to the small outpatient clinic, which does not have heating, nor a bathroom. Remaining ignorant towards such dedication would be truly arrogant from our part. It is hard for us to think of anything that could probably serve as a relevant comparison to such degree of love for one's work and, most importantly, for the patients.

During the conversation, she often mentioned that “if you don't go to the patients and listen to their pain in an environment where they feel at most ease, you won't be able to make an accurate diagnosis.” As it turned out, her love and commitment towards her work has made into storylines of many magazines and newspapers in the past. Due to her work conditions, she was named as the “the doctor under the open sky”, since she refuses to fear any disaster or obstacle, when she knows that has even a single waiting.

In the third day of our trip, thick layer of fog was wrapped around the villages and one could feel the crisp cold in the air of the mountains. This time our visits to the patient homes started above the clouds. Each family that we visited tried their best to show remarkable hospitality and exceeded all possible expectations. In each home where we stepped in, the tables were full of the usual harvest of the transitional season, when nature changes from summer attire into colours of autumn; such as pumpkin, cornbread, cobs of corn, sunflower and honeycomb vodka. Moreover, the hosts generously gave us all of these as gifts. It is impossible to dislike people of Guria. These people value humans and humanity at most. In each home we were filled with new emotions, while the hosts offered us something to eat prior leaving. It was obvious that the same thing would expect us with each successive patient, so we had to use a little trick and instead of eating, we spent time around the table in a conversation.





Speaking of supra*, one must not forget the star of all dishes, namely the Guruli pie**. Up to this day, the alluring aroma of the freshly baked pie follows us and reminds of the mornings, when our hostess Ketino used to serve these pies for breakfast.

In the cold weather, we observed the relationship between doctor Marika and her patients while warming ourselves up with a mug of a hot beverage. As she recalled, at first the local community found it hard to trust her, especially considering the changes, which she brought together with her work. These vital changes included important aspects, such as the age-specific immunization among the children, as well as determining the necessary dietary plan and ensure proper nutrition. While the families were strictly refusing immunization, doctor Marika had to take in her hand dissemination of the necessary information among the patients and in such way raising their awareness.

During the eighties, when it was much colder than today, doctor Marika, her nurse and the small refrigerator were inseparable companions. The refrigerator was intended to store the necessary vaccines, while they were going door to door and providing much-needed vaccines to all children. "I have my own vision of this scene, and the thought about three inseparable companions doesn't leave my mind." Imagine the wide frame, capturing the landscape of forest in the mountains of Guria, covered by the snow at dusk, when the sky is blending shades of dark blue while two women leaning closely towards one

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I have my own vision of this scene, and the thought about three inseparable companions doesn't leave my mind

NINUTSI PANGANI

another, with a tiny refrigerator, take small steps towards accomplishment of the big mission. Talking to them immersed us deeply and turned into participants of everything that has become their daily life for last 30 years.

A special kind of sadness enveloped us while saying goodbye. On our way back, the radio in our driver's car was playing "Yesterday", by Beatles, while in our thoughts we were still there, in the scene where the three inseparable companions made their way throughout the snowy landscapes in the forests of Guria - a doctor, a nurse and a small refrigerator.



* A traditional Georgian feast and a part of Georgian social culture

** Traditional crescent shaped Georgian pastry, filled with cheese and hard-boiled egg, which is signature for the region of Georgia and represents the central piece of the feast during each significant celebration and symbolises fertility, abundance and prosperity.

KOKHNARI SUREBI

SABA ZAQRADZE
TAMAZ OKRUASHVILI



THE MAGICAL POWERS OF THE MEDICAL STAFF OF GURIA



The mountains of Guria hide charming carved wooden houses, roads full of obstacles, contentment, love, lots of rain and fog. Yes, it may seem that all of you have seen Guria, however we assure you, unless you have shared the emotions of local people and were tongue-bounded by the beauty of this region, consider that you have not felt it's pulse and rhythm at all.

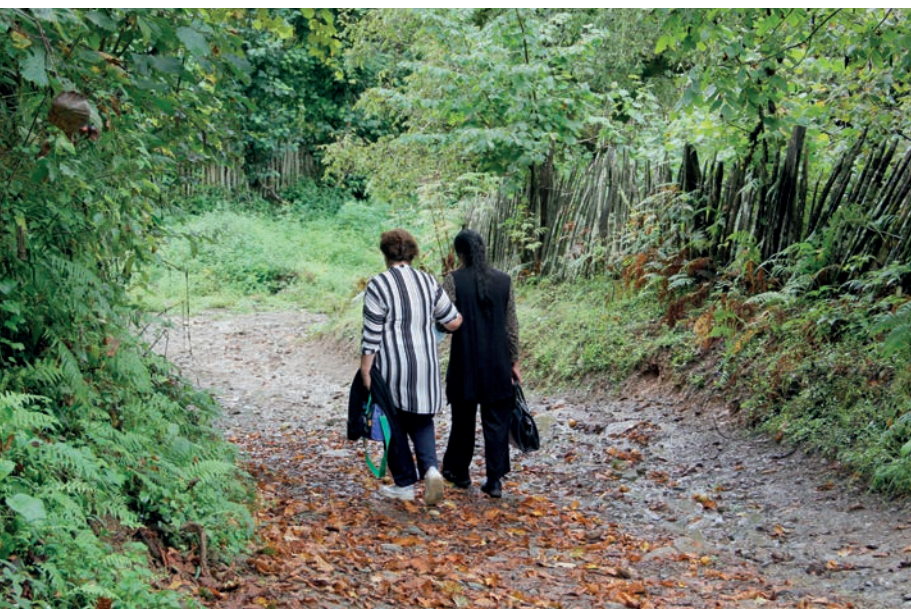
Throughout our trip on a road, which did not seem to have an end, we experienced the epitome of hospitality in every village that we had to pass during each day. Here we met families who at first found the appearance of young people, equipped with cameras rather unusual, yet kept inviting us cordially to their wooden houses with arms wide open and tried their best to treat us as if we were members of their own family.

Our adventure took off from the village of Kokhnari, located in the district of Chokhatauri. 55-year-old doctor Zeinab has previously studied medicine at the Crimean Medical University. While being one of the aspiring contestants for the first place in chess as a junior, Zeinab probably never even imagined that one day she would become the hope and pride of the village of Kokhnari and serve a role model for its inhabitants. Today, Zeinab carries the hopes of approximately 1400 people from four villages of that area.

Most of the patients here come from disadvantaged families. Alongside financial limitations, many of them also find difficult to move physically as well. However, the wrinkles on their faces, callouses on their hands and eyes full of sadness would immediately transform into a warm and full-of-hope expressions as soon as they would see the doctors. One must admit that the way which we took to reach the patients was not easy. Due to the harsh con-

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This is the work I love and has become my flesh and bone during these ten years



ditions, doctor Zeinab often had to travel from one village to another with her own funds. Her daily routine would usually start with small family chores, followed by the daytime of her favourite activity, saving people.

Doctor Zeinab used to meet everyone in an optimistic mood and a sincere smile on her face. She treated each patient as if they were a new, blank page in a book. Establishing various diagnosis, writing referrals and patient histories has become a significant part of the daily routine for a woman from Imereti, who was married in Guria and dedicated her life to this part of the country. This kind of workload is objectively rather exhausting and time consuming, yet once we asked her about it, she answered instantly without a slightest frown: "This is the work I love and has become my flesh and bone during these ten years. Perhaps, even if I had to make a decision all over again, I would once again choose the same field, because I love helping people, especially my people of Guria".

THE HOPES OF THE VILLAGE OF SUREBI – DOCTOR MARINA AND NURSE KETINO

Another village, which will retain a special place in our memories, is the village of Surebi, which is mostly cut off from civilization. It took us more than half an hour to reach the outpatient clinic and even though the road is in general considered to be a hazardous landslide area, the doctors passed through it every single day. Here transportation remained to be the main problem as well. The village is usually served by a single bus, which is available every other day. Here we were privileged to meet the real heroes, role models and simply outstanding people.

Days on the calendar were replaced by years, and after



thirty-five years of waiting, the state assigned a doctor to the local nurse - Ketino nurse and the Surebi village in general. Doctor Marina became everyone's hope and subject of admiration from the very first day of her work. Unarguably, the country doctors are heroes indeed and this fact is once again asserted by the dynamics and rhythm of their work.

Marina Sikharulidze is the doctor-in-chief of the village, while Ketino is her nurse. She lives in the village of Zemo Surebi and usually meets the doctor at the outpatient clinic. Marina also worked as an ambulance doctor and often had to either take shifts one after another or go straight to the outpatient clinic in the village of Zemo Surebi after a night shift. Regardless, her facial expression indicated nothing but energy, warmth and love, without any traces of fatigue.



Winter in Guria is magical, but harsh. Probably the scene, where a nurse rushes to a patient by skiing would be most suitable for some sort of a movie. That's right, in the village of Surebi, Ketino, the local nurse, has to ski, so she can help the patients. Here, in Guria, everyone knows Ketino. You see, it's one thing to deem twenty-four-hour shifts exhausting when you're at a renovated clinic, however it's an entirely different matter when you have to deal with a huge number of patients under such conditions. Sometimes, rather often as a matter of fact, Ketino rides

her horse through the covers of night, hold a hunting rifle by her side just to get to the patient, but as she herself explains, she does enjoy each bit of her work. It seemed a little unbelievable at first - how can one enjoy and have fun, when every single day you have to face the danger and wonder, whether you're going to get home unharmed, since the wildlife is quite common around the village of Surebi. Once, during a visit to the patient home, one of the men stretched out his hand, pointed at an area literally ten meters away and told us that just a couple days before on that same place was seen a bear. I think this one sentence perfectly sums up the environment there.

Ketino has been a nurse of the village for forty-three years, yet she does not consider her mission to be accomplished. "Well, in seven years it will be fifty years since I have been a nurse, and only after that I will consider that I have achieved something in my life," says nurse Ketino. However, if you ask the inhabitants of the village, each of them will tell you how amazing and beloved is she due to her selfless work. Indeed, Ketino is a fearless woman. If "Otaraant Widow" were brought to the reality of today, we are sure, it would be impersonation of Ketino. She fears neither snow, nor rain or any natural disaster in general. "There had been common occurrences when I had to move on skis just to reach the patient during the winter times," told us Ketino with a smile on her face. After listening to this part of the story, we were once again convinced that being a doctor is not just a duty, but the main purpose and reason of life.



Being a doctor is not just about wearing a white coat, because here, in such place, dedication and love towards your job is enough for heroism. During the entire time, spent with them, we had a lot of questions and wondered, what amount of inner strength kept these doctors going under these difficult conditions. In response to our questions, we received following answer - "We always help and get pleasure from what we do".



SACHAMIASERI
VANZOMLETI

LIKA KEKELIDZE
SALOME MUMLADZE

THE ANGELS OF GOD IN SACHAMIASERI



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For such people, the doctor is a hero, an angel of God, who gives hope against their concerns and will not abandon them regardless difficult conditions



We arrived to Guria, this enchanting corner of Georgia to describe the life of country doctors. We felt certain excitement from the very beginning of the storyline, since we understood well enough the significance of our expedition and our role within. Meeting with the local country doctors, Mrs. Asmati and Mr. Victor genuinely exceeded all possible expectations. The mountains of Guria hide charming vintage houses, carved gates and vibrant people of Guria, full of colours of life under the constantly changing moods of the weather.

We start our storytelling from a place called Satchamiaseri. The locals have different versions regarding the origins of this name. One of them is related to a legend: apparently, in the past these mountains were covered with rich, nourishing pastures, right about the same location where currently lays the centre of the village. Naturally, the wolves were attacking the herd and abducting livestock, hence comes the name of the village - Sachamiaseri. As for the second version, one tells that there had been a large linden tree standing on a hill. According to the saying, while working in these fields, the peasants used to hang their lunch on that tree, and that's where the village was later called Sachamiaseri.

To describe in a nutshell, Sachamiaseri, as a community, serves as a kind of centre for surrounding villages of Kvemo Kheti, Chometi, Mamulari and Kalagoni, and unites them similarly to the roads, directed towards heaven.

The first morning of our journey turned out to be a rather cold one. We got dressed in the blink of an eye, ran down the stairs and walked to the village of Sachamiaseri. The nature here is wild, yet incredibly peaceful, which has remarkable attractiveness and mesmerizing powers. We were genuinely stunned when our eyes caught a donkey behind outpatient clinic. We even asked each other whether we both could see the same to make sure that it was not just a fruit of our imagination. Next thing we noticed were demolished and abandoned buildings. The doctor's office was located on the left-hand side and was the first thing we noticed as soon as we entered the outpatient clinic.

During that day the outpatient clinic was crowded with the patients. Here people come mostly due to the complains of acute respiratory and chronic cardiovascular diseases. Now, we should introduce you to the doctor Asmati, who is a paediatrician by profession, however due to the shortage of staff, she had to take on other directions as well. Don't even think that the story of doctor-patient interactions ends at the outpatient clinic, of course not. Very

often the doctors have to visit their patients themselves.

Together with doctor Asmati, we first met the patients at the outpatient clinic, later followed her to see two other patients, which couldn't visit the clinic due to the severe illnesses. The road which leads you to their houses makes you sad instantly. Somewhere deep in your thoughts, you might allow yourself to turn back, however in the same moment you reject your concerns and contradict yourself, once you get to realise that doctor Asmati walks the same road through the rain or grim weather.

The workday of doctor Asmati hadn't ended yet, once we whispered to each other "we're so tired". As soon as these words slipped, we immediately thought about how exhausting all of this should be for doctor Asmati. This was a moment of where we came to much deeper understanding of how long can a workday actually last for a

physician. This thought gets even more intense taking into account that there is no transport that takes you to the patient and the outpatient clinic does not have the necessary conditions for receiving people as well.

During the day our camera lenses captured the faces of the patients, whose expressions would dramatically change upon seeing the doctor and sad, pain-driven looks would get instantly replaced by the rays of hope in their eyes.

Sadly, the majority of local inhabitants live in poverty, while at the same time struggling to maintain their health. Givi Ramishvili has been doctor Asmati's patient since 2016. Visually, his look reminds you of the words of Victor Hugo: "There is a gaze that begs you to be saved." For such people, the doctor is a hero, an angel of God, who gives hope against their concerns and will not abandon them regardless difficult conditions.

ELDERLY DOCTOR FROM GURIA

"When you really love your profession, it's impossible to sit home and do nothing."

Probably there is no one in Guria who hasn't heard of doctor Viktor Makharadze. The senior doctor ignites hopes among everyone, not only with his professionalism, but extraordinary attitude towards fellow villagers and patients as well.

There is a tiny outpatient clinic in the village of Vanzomleti, which doctor Victor built with his own hands. Here the patients are received daily. The road to his clinic appeared to be not easy. While driving through the narrow road, paved with rocks, we were afraid that the car tires would most probably fail us, however luckily, we arrived without complications.

The outpatient clinic, which looks like the fairy tale house of the main protagonist, has only two rooms. One room is designated for the nurse, while another room is occupied by the doctor himself. As admitted by doctor Victor himself, these activities, which involve hard, daily labour do not come to him easily due to his age, however, he is strongly convinced that "when you really love your profession, is impossible to sit home and do nothing."

That day lots of people were passing by around the outpatient clinic and as soon as they saw us, they immediately turned on their characteristic, Guruli humour to engage in communicate: "dear, you seem to be too quick for a person from Tbilisi, you must be Guruli yourself." Hearing this instantly brightened my face brightened and I nodded back with smile to confirm, just like it is expected from people of Guria.

Each conversation with doctor Victor was an amazing experience to on its own. The elder colleague from Guria kept surprising us with his humour. "Are you studying TV now?" Learn. In case if you forget something out of a sudden, you can always turn on the TV and quickly find what

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Dear, you seem to be too quick for a person from Tbilisi, you must be Guruli yourself

LIKA KEKELIDZE





you've been looking for, also you will learn new information." Despite being a Guruli myself, I was confused at first, then I realized that by TV he was referring to a computer. It felt elevating to find out that despite his advanced age, he never hesitated to seek further knowledge and continue development. Indeed, doctor Victor is a clear example that the education is continuous and lasts as long as the life itself. It is remarkable that even though doctor Victor lived his life with sadness, this was never reflected to his work. He used to meet each patient with a smile.

No wonder that everyone loves to come to him, as he provides a warm and cozy environment. When it comes to the needs of the patients, doctor Victor is ready to take all the lengths and spares nothing to provide necessary aid. Throughout the years, he had gained exhaustive professional experience, as he had to treat rarely seen cases from a very young age. His work and unmeasurable humanity has turned him into a motivation for other doctors and someone to look at. It is remarkable that despite all, doctor Victor was able to create a better reality for his fellow physicians, better outpatient clinic and certainly more comfort than he had himself.

Upon meeting with doctor Victor, the first thing that comes to the mind are the words of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, an Indian lawyer, politician, civil activist and writer, which state that "the best way to find yourself is to get lost in the service of others." Well, clearly doctor Victor fulfilled his life's mission with dignity and in result, he has found himself. "The life of a doctor is all about reading, all about learning. I am a man of advanced age and still read all the time" – this phrase is something we will definitely always remember, which belongs to Mr. Victor. The relationship with the country doctors allowed us to understand the importance of our profession. The fact that we have such strong professionals especially in the regions is really something to be proud of. Moreover, it would be good to promote among younger physicians the desire to work in the countryside and create relevant practice or internship opportunities at least for a short period of time. We believe that the "Country Doctor" project is the first step of this important journey. And yet, imagine the level of heroism among each country doctor, which has to face these difficulties every single day just to reach their patients and help them while in need. Even if in pain, the country doctor will disguise himself, forget his own problem and focus on the patient. After the work is done, the doctor will say goodbye with love and rush to the next patient. At the end of the day - he will go home. Next morning once together with the first crowing of the rooster, this routine will start all over again.





Photo: Davit Tchalidze

LELI BLAGONRAVOVA

Photographer

SIX DAYS OF COUNTRY DOCTOR

Photography expands our window into the social world through the photographer's individuality and connections with the community. In order to open the window widely and see the existing reality in a clear way, it is essential that we capture the stories with the help of the lens and a tape. The story of a country doctor is one of the links of a big chain, which allows to feel the perspectives of the people who make a difference in our everyday lives and change our reality.

Photographer Leli Blagonravova has been teaching photography to students for more than two decades. One day, while she was preparing study material for students, she came across the work of the photo-documentarist William Eugene Smith - «Country Doctor».

Smith created «The Country Doctor» in 1948, where he described the daily life of Ernest Ceriani, a general practitioner from Kremmling (Colorado, USA). Smith's photo essay tells the stories of the brave doctors who are engaged in fight against various diseases. These photos left Leli with a remarkable impression and in result the idea for creating a new project was born.

Sometimes the life happens to bring together important ideas and attracts the right people naturally. The same happened in this case as well, and consequently

Petre Shotadze Tbilisi Medical Academy joined the initiative to develop the project of «Country Doctor». It must be highlighted that at that point transdisciplinary approach towards medical education through combining medicine and art has already been one of the most significant directions of activities during previous years.

This is how photography and medicine joined forces in a fascinating crossover. This project provided TMA students with outstanding opportunity to implement one of the main leitmotifs of the institutional mission, - benefit the community of Georgia.

Perhaps the most important thing in this story is the fact that main creators of the project are students of TMA, who worked hard to capture the daily routine of their prospective colleagues and important roles of a country doctor.

It is a common knowledge that for both professions, factors such active listening, observing and establishing rapport between affects the final outcome at a greater level, and serves as the key to both professions. The project brought together these fields and their collective effort had been successfully implemented for the second year in a row.



- The project took off from the highlands of Adjara after successfully completing its first phase, delivered remarkable experience. It's interesting to know, what led you to choose the region of Guria as the target area for implementing the successive phase of the project?

- For me, as a photographer it is particularly alluring to explore unfamiliar places. These kinds of situations bring emotions to a new level of congruence and personally, it helps to find myself even better, both at the professional and personal levels. Even though I travel a lot across the mountains and meadows within frames of various projects, for some reason, prior this project I didn't have much knowledge or points of intersection with the region of Guria and Chokhatauri district particularly. This project in its turn provided a wonderful opportunity to fulfil that shortcoming and study this area through various new angles.

- How do you make sure to establish connection between yourself and the people standing behind the camera in a way that once looking at the shot, even a stranger feels like they are the ones behind that lens and not someone else?

- As a photographer, each time you have to act differently. This is where the body language is the main facilitator, which in its turn ensures readiness of the people on the other side of the camera. The way you're going to arrange their emotions is entirely up to you though. I personally do not hide my emotions, so they can understand that I am rather fond of them and keep them curi-



ous about what I found to be the most interesting about them. This entire process is about mutual observation. You observe them while they observe you in return. The key to this process is authenticity, which actually yet can be found among the people of the highlands. In general, I love people and they feel it. I also adorn the mountains, the meadows, and each building together with its surrounding. While filming the landscapes I always think about how many people have already stood here, how they were overlooking at these views and what were they thinking...

Last but not least, I chose this profession because it is for people.

- As we know, prior filming their prospective colleagues, the students underwent a preparatory course.



What were the main challenges you encountered while visiting Guria at the preliminary stage?

- Once I decided to go to Guria, in the beginning I was rather nervous and concerned, since as I already mentioned, unlike highlands of Adjara, I'm not particularly familiar with this part of the country. At the same time, I didn't know what kind of visual features would be presented in this part of the country.

While filming in Adjara, you can always rely on the ethnographical part, which in its turn helps to reveal the most authentic environment to the target population. This in its turn served as a particular challenge in Guria, since similarly to other regions, one can often meet new houses, built during recent years under the influence of contemporary architecture. With this project I wanted the viewers to identify easily that the photos had been taken in Guria. Hence, we decided to unveil part of the environment with separate photos, while the others would be merged in a synthesis. That's exactly why we paid particular attention to the landscapes as well. I had the best possible help during the decision-making process provided by Doctor Marika Jikia, who accompanied me during the preparatory visit while I travelled to the highland villages of Guria.

While we were driving through this long, heavy road with my car, I felt how concerned and worried was my companion. Indeed, the road was not easy at all. During the trip doctor Marika shared what kind joy she felt while walking down through the enchanting nature towards the patients' houses. On the other hand, the energy which she would absorb from the nature would be sufficient to overcome other challenges.

After reaching the final destination, I felt like I miraculously appeared in a magical village. During summer months, these villages are temporarily inhabited with the families who are involved in farming. Here you could meet the mixed families from both Adjara and Guria, while their rhythms of lives dramatically differ from one another.

Here I had an impression that time was standing still, or at least I didn't want these moments to pass. Many of the stories would align into a single picture. In terms of emotional part, one doesn't feel any rush. Here they finish with their tasks early in the morning, while afterwards they relax, enjoy themselves, engage in conversations, express their emotions and ask questions. This is when you witness the art of sharing which these people receive from one another. On our way back, we happened to encounter remains of the houses which told their stories to the bypasses through their chimneys. In this area you will see many abandoned and crumbling houses, however their centre piece, the fireplace remains standing on the settlement.

- How did you select the doctors who were photographed during the project?

- The physicians which we filmed later were selected with the help of Tbilisi Medical Academy. In general, anything that we deliver to the viewers is determined by the doctors. They are the ones who determine the agenda of the joint work day. We trust their plan and follow it accordingly. Hence the heroes, who we capture with our

lenses and stories that we tell entirely depend on them. Naturally, all of these processes are planned during the preparatory stage and strongly depend on my relationship with them, exchange of detailed information, outcomes reached at the end of the implementation and related challenges.

The doctors are being informed that the students are appointed to picture authentic stories and their main goal is to capture the reality which represents their everyday being. Unlike Adjara, doctors of Guria are mostly at the outpatient clinics and the patients have to visit the centres themselves. In Adjara the physicians are provided with a service car, however the same cannot be said about Guria as well and the doctors have to cover the travel expenses out of their pockets. Thus naturally, together with the doctors we also photographed the outpatient clinics as well.

- **Was it hard to reflect the reality to the film?**

- Probably, the students did not experience any particular difficulties while conveying the reality, because there was nothing that would remain hidden from these lenses. Yet I still had this sense of deficiency after our return. Not because the students didn't nail the assignments, missed something or were unable to finish it... obviously not, however I still had this feeling of deficit.

- **Was there anything particular that was not feasible to capture by the lens?**

- Meeting with people doesn't pass without traces. I wish that the stories which were told by the film would serve as the trigger for the positive, realistic changes for these people in the future. Upon our observations, this region is in need for more attention and this project itself represents exactly this much required spotlight.



- **As for today, here and now, would you say that the project turned out the way it was planned in the beginning?**

- Following the wrap-up of the project for the second time already and taking into consideration current reality, I can clearly assert that this project met and exceeded its estimated objectives and delivered much more and interesting results as we might have expected at the level of idea.

- **Is it planned to continue this project in other regions as well and what would be the format of successive initiatives?**

- As for now we plan to enrich and diversify the project. We think to cover several regions during the third phase of the project. If previously all six students were assigned to one and the same region, in this case we plan to disseminate them across several regions and at the end of the project they will be expected to share with their peers and the wide audience the stories from their regions. Thus, the scope of the project will follow more country doctors and introduce their heroic deeds to the society.





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