



**Post-Conflict Immediate Actions
for the Social and Economic Revitalization of the
Communities and Cultural Environment in the
Municipality of Gori (Georgia)**

KYIV INITIATIVE REGIONAL PROGRAMME

Preliminary
Technical
Assessment

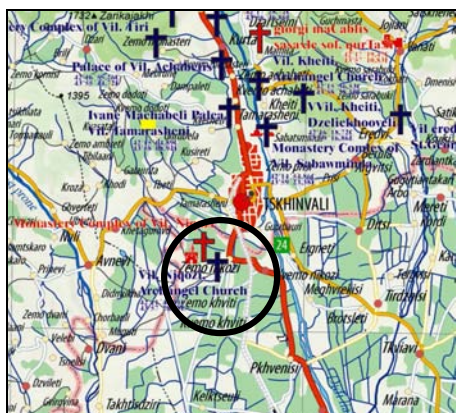
**NIKOZI MONASTERY
Gori Municipality**

GEORGIA

FOREWORD

In the framework of the project “Post-Conflict Immediate Actions for the Social and Economic Revitalization of the Communities and Cultural Environment in the Municipality of Gori (Georgia)” proposed by the Council of Europe for the cultural heritage in the conflict zone in Georgia, the present Preliminary Technical Assessment (PTA) was prepared by local experts: Mr. Giorgi Gagoshidze, Ms. Ekaterine Gurgenidze, Mr. George Sosanidze, Mr. George Mazmishvili, Gabriel Mazmishvili, Leila Tumanishvili - Project Leader, Kakha Trapaidze – Project Manager, Kristina Darchia - Project Coordinator, in coordination with the Council of Europe expert group: Mr. Mikhael de Thyse (France), Mr. David Johnson (United Kingdom), Ms. Anne Pisot (France), Mr. Bernard Bouzou (France).

1. INTRODUCTORY PAGE



Map



Nikozi Monastery

Country or Territory	Georgia
Name of organisation compiling the information	Georgian National Agency for Cultural Heritage Preservation
Contact name	Kristine Darchia (Coordinator)
E-mail address	kdarchia@yahoo.com
Name and address of building or site	Nikozi Monastery and Episcopal See, the village of Zemo Nikozi, Gori Municipality, Georgia
Inventory reference number(s)	President's decree No. 665 from 7 November 2006
Building/Monument/Site type	Architectural, religious monument
Main dates	End of the 5 th - beginning of the 6 th c.; 9 th -10 th century, 10 th century, 14 th -15 th century, 16 th -17 th century, 19 th century
Current use(s)	Religious, tourist site

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY, THE MONUMENT AND ITS MANAGEMENT

Nikozi Monastery is located in the centre of the village of Zemo Nikozi, on the right side of the Liakhvi River, at 850m above sea level (within 30km from the town of Gori and 2 km within the city of Tskhinvali). It consists of the domed Ghvtaeba Church (the Episcopal See), a bell-tower, an Episcopal palace and circuit wall fragments. A small domed Church of the Archangels stands in an old cemetery, within 100m to the south-east of the monastery.

Nikozi Monastery is a unique monument of Georgian culture. The chronology of the construction of the buildings making up the monastery, as well as restoration works conducted here span from the early Middle Ages through to the 19th century.

It is noteworthy that the monastery is an Episcopal See founded in place of an ancient pagan shrine established by King Vakhtang Gorgasali. According to historical records, the eparchy covered Dvaleti, part of Racha and the upper reaches of the Liakhvi gorge. An Episcopal see is

still functioning here and the eparchy is on the territory of the so-called South Ossetia (Tskhinvali and Akhalgori municipalities).

Apart from being of high religious significance, the monastery also serves as an important tourist site on the national level.

Separatism and conflicts supported by Russia on the territory of Georgia beginning from the 1990s have prevented the free movement of people within the territory and caused isolation of this site from the national tourist routes. Despite these difficulties, the monastery has never stopped functioning and its religious and secular importance for the community has never diminished. Traditionally, each year, on the day of the commemoration of St Razhden, thousands of pilgrims travel to Nikozi Monastery, by various means of transport, to pay homage to the holy site.

At present, the rehabilitation and development of the monastery is important in many ways:

- i) It will help to alleviate the tension artificially created between Georgians and Ossetians, both of which affirm the same religion;
 - ii) It will facilitate the full restoration of one of the most significant works of Georgian architecture;
 - iii) It will create many jobs for local people during the process of restoration and into the future;
- and
- iv) It will improve the monastery as an attractive destination for pilgrims and tourists.

The extraordinary religious, historical and cultural value of the monastery, as well as its excellent location and inspiring landscape within the mountains of the Caucasus make the site attractive for investment and commercial use. The site appears to have a great potential in this regard.

Domed Ghvtaeba Church

The main relic of Ghvtaeba Church is the grave of Razhden the Protomartyr. Persian by origin and a tutor of the wife of King Vakhtang Gorgasali (second half of the 5th century), St Razhden was martyred by his countrymen for adopting Christianity. According to the historian, Juansher (11th century), the body of the saint was buried in Nikozi. In the late 5th or early 6th century an Episcopal church was built on this site. It is believed that Zakaria was the first bishop of Nikozi. The inscription commemorating the bishop can be read above a window on the east wall.

The Episcopal Ghvtaeba Church (16, 7 X 11, 5) is cruciform in plan with its dome supported by four pillars. The semi-circular apse of the sanctuary is flanked by a rectangular pastophorium on each side. The church has two doors, one of which is cut in the south wall and another, in the west. It used to have another door in the north wall, which is now built up. The building is lit with five windows. The dome is pierced with eight windows.

The church is in a satisfactory condition. It has a metal roof and is protected from rainfall however it is recommended to remove the cement render from the church walls. Archaeological excavation should be carried out around the building, as well as in the interior. The remains of an ambulatory are visible on the ground level.

Bell-tower

Built of reddish ashlar, the double-storey bell-tower (5,4x3,5) stands to the west of Ghvtaeba Church. The lower level is formed by a vaulted porch with three bearing arches, which leads into the monastery. The upper level is a pyramidal structure serving as a belfry, the four walls of which open through twin openings. The base between openings is a round pillar adorned with a capital. Each of the four façades of the bell-tower terminates in a gable, the peak of which is embellished with a sculpted head of a ram.

The building has a hipped roof each side of which is of a rhomboid shape and is covered with stone slabs.

The bell-tower bears several inscriptions in *asomtavruli* (old Georgian majuscule) script, according to which it was built by stone-masons, Mermanishvili and Gvritishvili.

The architecture of the building differs from other bell-towers surviving in Georgia. Dating from the 16th-17th century, it finds no parallels in Georgian architecture (no other more distant parallels are known to us). Therefore, it can be stated that the Zemo Nikozi bell-tower is a unique example of medieval religious architecture.

The bell-tower is in a satisfactory condition, though water leaks through the stone slabs. An iron gate, which is incompatible with the architecture of the bell-tower, will have to be replaced. It is recommended to replace a staircase attached to the south wall, which leads up to the second level of the bell-tower.

Bishop's Palace

Ruins of a double-storey palace (21,00x11,2) of a rectangular plan is to be found close by to the south-east of Ghvtaeba Church. The palace, which once belonged to the Bishop of Nikozi, is built of rubble, ashlars and brick. A large arched porch, the jambs and the arch of which are built of brick, project into the north wall of the building on the ground floor. Opposite the porch and slightly to the right, in the south wall, is an arched fireplace, while the west wall has a lavatory. The first floor of the palace must have served as a summer reception hall. Its north wall was pierced with four arched openings which led to the wooden balcony. Dating from the 9th-10th century, the Bishop's palace is one of the rarest buildings of its kind.

The palace was rehabilitated in previous years, as a result of which it regained its function. The inner walls were built up, a tile roof was installed and a balcony built. Monastic buildings were constructed in the back of the palace.

Military activities in August 2008 left the palace greatly damaged and the new buildings destroyed. Having been targeted by several dozens of shells, the monastic buildings suffered greatly from the attack of the Russian aviation. The fire caused by the assault burnt the roof and the floors of the old palace. The contemporary buildings to the south also caught fire, which damaged the south wall cracking rubbles and covering them in soot.

It is recommended to urgently undertake rehabilitation of the old palace. Subsidiary buildings of the monastery also need to be rebuilt.

Perimeter Wall

The ruins of the old perimeter wall built of lime mortar survive to the north of Ghvtaeba Church. The wall, as it stands now, dates from the 20th century.

The Church of the Archangels

This small domed Church (8,5x5,3) of the Archangels stands in the centre of the cemetery, on a small hill, within 100 metres to the south of Ghvtaeba Church. Built of neatly hewn basalt of dark tonality, it is Kuppelhalle in plan. Lit by four windows, the dome rests on pilasters sharply projecting from the longitudinal walls. The sanctuary apse, which projects in a semicircle, has small apsed niches on each side. The transition from the square bay to the dome circle is effected through squinches and pendentives. The church has three doors arranged symmetrically in the west, south and north arms. The doors used to be adorned with semicircular pilasters and arches running above them. The exterior of the dome is embellished with a blind arch supported by a paired collonettes. The inscription in *asomtavruli* script on the north wall mentions that it was built by Bishop Michael for the 'commemoration of his soul' (i.e. as a funerary chapel). The same bishop also contributed towards Ghvtaeba Church.

The Church of the Archangels dates from the latter half of the 10th century.

The condition of the church is satisfactory. In 2007 the dome was covered with stone slabs. The arms of the church still bear tiles, which are also to be replaced with stone slabs.

3. ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

3.1 Responsible Authorities

According to the Constitutional Agreement (Concordat – p/d 1697) signed between the State of Georgia and the Apostolic Autocephalic Church of Georgia on 20 October 2002, the monastery at Zemo Nikozi is owned by the Patriarchate of Georgia.

The rights and responsibilities of monument owners are regulated by Georgia's Law on Cultural Heritage. The Ministry of Culture, Monument Protection and Sport is responsible for validating state policy in the field. At the same time, it is also entitled to exercise supervision of listed cultural heritage properties.

3.2 Building/Site, Name and Address

Nikozi Monastery and the Episcopal See, the village of Zemo (Upper) Nikozi, Gori Municipality, Georgia

3.3 GPS coordinates

42 11'46, 41C
43 57'29, 68 E

WGS-84 UTM coordinates

Site 1 – 9 070.0 m2 Ghvtaeba Church and the Episcopal palace	X = 413990.733 Y = 4672077.722
Site 2 - 4 029.0m2 The Church of the Archangels and a cemetery	X= 414007.732 Y = 4671944.941
Site 3 – 2 604.0 m2 Area along the bank of the canal	X = 414054.237 Y = 4672072.591

3.4 Type of Monument

Architectural monument for religious use

3.5 Ownership

The Georgian Apostolic Autocephalous Orthodox Church (Georgian Patriarchate)

3.6 Statutory Protection/Constraints

The monastery and the Church of the Archangels at Zemo Nikozi were listed as immovable monuments under the 30 March 2006 decree #3/133 issued by the Minister of Culture, Monument Protection and Sport, while under the President's decree #665 dated 7 November 2006 they were granted a status of a national monument. Thus, all types of works on the site require a permit defined in Georgia's Law on Cultural Heritage Protection. All design drawings in respect with works shall be agreed upon by the Ministry of Culture, Monument Protection and Sport of Georgia.

In addition to the aforementioned, respective design drawings shall be considered by the Board of Art, Architecture and Restoration at the Patriarchate of Georgia.

4. SUMMARY OF CONDITION

4.1 Summary of Physical Condition

Ghvtaeba Church – satisfactory

Episcopal palace – very poor, the walls are fire damaged and the roof is missing

Bell-tower – poor, the roof fails to prevent rainwater penetration.

Church of the Archangels – satisfactory. The covering of arms with stone slabs must be finished.

4.2 Condition Risk Assessment – Gradation A-H

Immediate risk of destruction of a unique monument of cultural heritage

4.3 Priority for intervention – high/medium/low

High

5. EXISTING INFORMATION

5.1 Documentary sources:

Documentation relating to the monastery is kept in the respective archives of the Patriarchate of Georgia and the Ministry of Culture, Monument Protection and Sport of Georgia.

- Zemo Nikozi Monastery (domed Gvtaeba Church, the church of the Archangels, bell-tower, Bishop's palace) drawings, drafts, measurements, Authors: L. Khimshiashvili, D. Morbeladze. 1951
- Zemo Nikozi Monastery (Bishop's palace) drafts, measurements, Authors: N. Sheliava, D. Tchikaidze, T. Gabunia. 1982
- Rehabilitation Project of Church of the Archangels in Nikozi Monastery (domed Gvtaeba Church, the church of the Archangels, bell-tower, Bishop's palace) drawings, drafts, measurements, Author: D. Tchikaidze. 1982
- Monument certificate compiled in accordance with Georgia's Law on Cultural Heritage Identity and of an immovable monument of cultural heritage supported by photographs, September 2006

5.2 Bibliography

1. Juansher. Tskhovreba Vakhtang Gorgaslisa, *Kartlis tskhovreba* (The Life of Vakhang Gorgasali, The Life of Georgia). The text edited according to all major texts by S. Kaukhchishvili, vol. 1, 1955, p. 199.
2. Vakhushti. *Aghtsera sameposa Sakartvelosa* (Description of the Kingdom of Georgia), edited by T. Lomouri and N. Berdzenishvili, Tbilisi, 1941, p. 76.
3. N. Shoshiashvili. *Lapidaruli tsartserebi* (Lapidary Inscriptions), I, East and South Georgia (5th through the 10th century), Tbilisi, 1980, pp. 70, 71; 185-188.
4. I. Megreliдзе. Sidzveleebi Liakhvis kheobashi (Antiquities in the Liakhvi Gorge), Tbilisi, 1984, pp. 118-161.

5. P. Zakaraia. *Zemo Nikozis Ghvtaebis eklesia, Sakartvelos istoriisa da kulturis dzeghta aghtseriloba* (Ghvtaeba Church at Zemo Nikozi, Description of Georgian Historical and Cultural Monuments), Tbilisi, 1990, pp. 68-69.
6. L. Rcheulishvili. *Mtavarangelozta tadzari Zemo Nikozshi* (The Church of the Archangels in Zemo Nikozi), *Kartuli khelovnebis istoriis narkvevbi*, Tbilisi, 1994, pp. 76-104
7. N. Gengiuri, *Kuppelhalle* (in Georgian and English), Tbilisi, 2005, pp. 49-55.
8. M. Brosset. *Rapports sur un voyage archéologique dans la Géorgie et dans l'Arménie*, VI, SPb, 1851, pp 53-56.
9. P. Uvarova. *Materialy po arkheologii Kavkaza* (Materials on the Archaeology of the Caucasus) IV, Moscow, 1894, pp. 179-182.
10. R. Mepisashvili, V. Tsintsadze. *Arkhitektura nagornoj chasti istoricheskoy provintsii Gruzii – Shida Kartli* (The Architecture of the Mountainous Part of the Highlands of Georgia – Shida Kartli). Tbilisi, 1975, pp. 11-13, 70-74.

5.3 Fieldwork already conducted

Beginning from the 1970s, various kinds of works have been conducted at the monastery at Zemo Nikozi, including:

- Roofing of Ghvtaeba Church with stone slabs in 1970;
- Replacement of the existing roof with a metal one in 1999 (with the support of the World Bank);
- Creation of a restoration project for Nikozi Church of the Archangel in 1989 (designer: restoration architect Asmat Jikaidze);

works on the site were undertaken in 1990 but were suspended in 1991 because of the civil war in Tbilisi.

Works were resumed after a long pause in June 2008 and then again suspended in August due to the hostilities. It was not until November-December 2008 that the activities were resumed.

- The restoration project of the Episcopal palace was developed in 1991 (designer: restoration architect Gaioz Gomorashvili); the project was revised in 1991;
 - The ground floor walls were restored in 2000.
 - In 2007, restoration work was completed with the funding from the Fund for the Protection and Rescuing of Historic Monuments of Georgia – the building was roofed with tiles.
- General technical assessment of Nokozi Monastery was conducted in 2009.

5.4 Projects in progress

None

5.5 Projects already planned

The Georgian Arts and Culture Centre has submitted a proposal to the Prince Claus Fund for Culture and Development (Program Cultural Emergency Response) for emergency intervention on Zemo Nikozi Monastery. If selected for funding, the project will support the activities planned under it.

5.6 Financial estimates already made

See below 7.7

6. SCOPE OF THE PTA

6.1 Extent/Nature of assessment

Giorgi Gagoshidze – art historian, PhD, curator of the Georgian National Museum, Georgia
Ekaterine Gurgeniidze – art historian;
Giorgi Sosanidze – restoration architect, the Georgian National Museum, Georgia; coordinator of the architectural unit of Samtavisi and Gori Eparchy;
Giorgi Mazmishvili – design engineer, Geo Ltd, independent expert, Georgia
Gabriel Mazmishvili – GIS specialist, director of Geo Ltd

6.2 Limitations of the study

Lack of funds for conducting geological, structural and archaeological studies prior to the development of the rehabilitation project.

7. The PTA

7.1 Background

According to historical records (Juansher, p. 199), Nikozi Monastery and Episcopal See was founded by King Vakhtang Gorgasali (second half of the 5th century) in place of a Zoroastrian temple, where he had buried St Razhden the Protomartyr. St Razhden of Persian origin was a tutor of the wife of Vakhtang Gorgasali. He was martyred by the Persians for adopting Christianity. The body of St Razhden, buried near the south door of Ghvtaeba Church, is a great relic of Nikozi Episcopal See.

Nikozi Eparchy covered Dvaleti (northern region of Georgia), part of Racha and the upper reaches of the Liakhvi gorge. At present, Nikozi Eparchy incorporates the Tskhinvali and Akh'algori municipalities.

It is assumed that the first bishop at Nikozi was Zacharia (early 6th century). An inscription in *asomtavruli* script, commemorating the bishop, can be read above the Altar window on the east wall.

An inscription carved on St George's Church at Eredvi (a Georgian village near Tskhinvali, presently occupied), which dates from the year 906, mentions Bishop Stepane of Nikozi.

Bishop Michael, active at the end of the 10th century, restored Ghvtaeba Church and built the Church of the Archangels at Nikozi.

7.1.1 Summary description of the building/site

Nikozi Monastery and the Episcopal See lies in the heart of the village of Zemo Nikozi, on a small hill. The Episcopal Ghvtaeba Church and a bell-tower are located in the area enclosed by a wall. An Episcopal palace is to be found nearby. Within hundred meters from the monastery, on a small hill, stands the Church of the Archangels.

Ghvtaeba Church is a central building of the monastic complex. Cruciform in plan, it is built of ashlars of various sizes and tonalities. The dome rests on four pillars. The sanctuary is flanked by right-angled pastophoria.

A brick canopy is attached to the south-west pillar of the church, below which an Episcopal throne (18th century) is located.

Standing to the west of the church, the lower level of the bell-tower forms an arched porch leading into the grounds of the monastery. The upper level is a belfry, each of the four walls of which opens with twinned arches. The bell-tower dates from the 16th-17th century.

An Episcopal palace, which stands to the south of Ghvtaeba Church, is a double-storey building of rectangular planning (9th-10th century). The north wall is pierced with large arched door. The south wall in the interior has an arched fireplace. The ground floor is covered with timber beams. The first floor serves as a summer reception hall. Its north wall has a wooden balcony. The façade of the palace thus looks out onto Ghvtaeba Church.

In 2007, the palace was covered with a tile roof, which was burnt down during of the events in August 2008.

Within hundred meters to the south-east of the complex stands the Church of the Archangels (second half of the 10th century). It was built by Bishop Michael as his funerary chapel. This single-nave domed church (Kuppelhalle) is built of hewn basalt blocks and is adorned with façade decoration.

7.1.2 Summary of historic development and evolution of the building or site from the earliest times until the present day

A Zoroastrian temple must have stood on this site before the erection of Nikozi Episcopal Church (late 5th-early 6th century). The presence of a Zoroastrian temple indicted in historical records has been confirmed as a result of archaeological studies conducted at Nikozi, but the temple has not been found yet. Its discovery will enrich the history of not only Georgia, but of the entire Caucasus. Of particular interest is the architectural type the building represented. This is one of the most important challenges of contemporary Georgian archaeology. Also of interest is the way Persia influenced Georgian culture.

The construction of Nikozi Monastery and the Episcopal See covered a broad span of time beginning from the 5th-6th century to the end of the 19th century.

Initially (in the 5th-6th century) was built a three-nave basilica of Ghvtaeba, which was followed by an Episcopal palace in the 9th-11th century and a church of the Archangels in the 10th century. Also in the 10th century, Ghvtaeba Church was repaired. In place of a badly damaged three-nave basilica a cruciform domed church was built in the 14th-15th century. The proportions and the decorations of the dome were borrowed from the church of the Archangels standing nearby.

In the 16th-17th century, a bell-tower of an original shape was constructed in the west of the monastic complex. Ghvtaeba Church was restored at the end of the 19th century.

Thus the monastery, which took its present appearance in the 16th-17th century, can be considered authentic.

Monastic buildings, cells, a bishop's dwelling and a refectory, burnt down and destroyed in August 2008, were erected behind the Episcopal palace in the beginning of the 20th century.

In 2004-2005, a double-storey parish house was built to the west of the church, which survived intact during the Russian-Georgian conflict in 2008.

7.2 Significance

7.2.1 Summary statement of significance/historical and heritage importance

Nikozi Monastery and the Episcopal See is an important historical, cultural heritage monument. Having been a religious centre of the north part of the Shida Kartli region, it is a clear evidence of the autochthony of the Georgians in this region. A Zoroastrian temple, the presence of which is confirmed in historical records, has not been found yet (it is of note that the archaeological studies conducted on the site were limited to minor cleaning work). The discovery of the building will enrich the history of Georgia, while the conservation and presentation of temple fragments will significantly increase the flow of tourists to Nikozi.

The monastery itself, which spans the period from the second half of the 5th century through the 19th, will turn into an important religious and tourist destination. Of note is the fact that Ossetians from Tskhinvali were also among those who went to pray to Nikozi. Therefore, the restoration of the monastery will also facilitate the strengthening of friendship ties between the two peoples.

The buildings making up Nikozi monastery are distinguished by high architectural significance. The most remarkable is the Church of the Archangels, which is an outstanding work of Georgian architecture with its planning (kuppelhalle) and forms. The archbishop's palace is one of the rare examples of the type it represents in Georgia. Altered many times and preserving even 5th century basilica remnants, Ghvtaeba Church is a subject of interest of both tourists and specialists. It is highly notable that the church contains the relics of St Razhden, who was martyred for converting to Christianity. On August 3 each year, on the saint's memorial day, Nikozi hosts a large number of pilgrims.

Evaluation of the significance:

7.2.2 Historical	high
7.2.3 Artistic/Aesthetic	high
7.2.4 Technological	high
7.2.5 Religious/Spiritual	high
7.2.6 Symbolic/Identity	high
7.2.7 Scientific/Research	high
7.2.8 Social/Civic	high
7.2.9 Natural	high
7.2.10 Economic	low
7.2.11 Category of significance	high

7.3. Vulnerability/ Risk Assessment

7.3.1 Natural threats:

- The buildings (the Episcopal palace, dwelling and subsidiary structures used by monks) affected by the air assault of the Russian aviation and artillery are in an extremely poor physical state and require urgent consolidation and/or dismantling. There is an immediate risk of collapse, especially during winter and spring rainwater.
- the bank of the canal running to the east of the complex (the segment in front of the monastery) needs to be consolidated in order to prevent the erosion of the ground on the bank.

Storm water removal and drainage systems will need to be installed in the entire area.

7.3.2 Looting

A significant part of the monastic area remains unprotected. The circuit wall needs to be restored. The monastery was looted several times during the occupation of the region by the Russian forces.

7.3.3 Development threats

The monastery forms an architectural dominant feature of Zemo Nikozi. Central and secondary village roads are concentrated around it. An irrigation canal runs nearby. The location is favourable for the further urban development of the village.

Of the uncontrolled construction of dwellings, incompatible both in terms of character and scale, as well as infrastructural monastic structures threaten the centuries-old architectural, planning and spatial image of the monastery.

7.3.4 Maintenance

To the present day, Nikozi bishop and a small group of monks who risked their lives by not leaving the monastery even during the August hostilities have been the only guardians of the monastery and the village in general. They defended the church from looters and encroachers. In the post-conflict period, the Gori municipality (self-government bodies) has been maintaining and protecting the security of the monastery.

7.3.5 Resources

The post-war relief measures and the rehabilitation of the monastery cannot be conducted due to the lack of funds needed for research, design and building works.

7.4 Technical condition and 7.5 Summary of required repairs

The main structures making up the monastery are in different technical condition: some of them require repair, while others a more serious construction intervention, and even dismantling and rebuilding.

- A. The central cathedral, a dome Ghvtaeba Church – the condition is satisfactory. Cement plaster applied to the church walls at a later date is to be removed. Archaeological excavations shall be conducted within the building and along the outer perimeter. The authentic, now deformed, floor needs repair. It is desirable to cover the church with a tile roof.
- B. The bell-tower to the north-west of the church – the condition is satisfactory. The crevices between stone slabs need to be cleaned and filled with lime. An iron gate, incompatible with the architecture of the bell-tower, needs to be replaced. A staircase, faced with basalt stone, leading to the upper level, needs replacement. It is also desirable to replace the steps with stone blocks compatible with the stones of the bell-tower facing masonry.
- C. Episcopal palace – badly damaged as a result of the military activities during August 2008. The roof and the floor were fire damaged and ruined, the north and east balconies destroyed, and the original south floor stones cracked due to fire.
The palace is in an urgent need of rehabilitation. The damaged supporting walls require consolidation and restoration. New floors and tile roofing will need to be built and doors, windows, balconies and vertical infrastructural units installed; the ground floor is to be lined with ceramic tiles or stone. According to the project, the site shall serve as an open public space with a Sunday parish school, a reception hall, a depository of antiquities, an exhibition hall, a library, etc. The second floor will be used as an apartment for visiting bishops and their retinue. The space under the attic will be accommodated to serve as auxiliary rooms. The palace must have had a cellar and a semi-cellar, which is indicated by the windows located in the lower segment of the south wall. At present, this part of the building is filled with earth and is in need of archaeological cleaning. It is intended to make a wine cellar in the emptied and rehabilitated space.
- D. Cells and subsidiary structures to the south of the palace – these are burnt and ruined. The remains of the building need to be dismantled and rebuilt according to the proposed designs. It is intended to construct a double-storey structure with cells for approximately fifteen monks. The ground floor will accommodate subsidiary rooms, while the first floor will have monks' cells. (see 7.6.3-4);
- E. The Church of the Archangels – the condition is satisfactory. The tiles covering the arms shall be replaced with stone slabs. The church doors and windows need replacing.
- F. The parish school (to the north of Ghvtaeba Church) – a double-storey structure in a good state of preservation. Only interior re-planning and cosmetic repairs are needed. The project envisages its use as a bishop's reception, study, office, a library and archives.
- G. Residential part (now in the ownership of the monastery) to the north-east of Ghvtaeba complex, along the central highway – it is intended to build cells for nuns and subsidiary chambers. During the 2008 hostilities, the nuns of Ikorta Convent, which is parts of Nikozi Eparchy (located in the Ksani gorge now occupied by the Russian troops) visited the

bishop for receiving his support and encouragement. It was then that Nikozi Convent was founded within the Nikozi Complex.

- H. Perimeter wall – the perimeter wall needs to be restored around each of the three segments of the complex. This also includes the conservation of the surviving fragments of the wall and installation of a tile roof along the entire perimeter of the wall.
- I. Irrigation canal and a bridge – a strip along the bank of the irrigation canal running in the east of the complex needs to be repaired and partially lined with stone. The bridge spanning over the village road dividing the main part of the monastery from the area of the Church of the Archangels needs reconstruction. The restoration and reuse of an old water mill by the bank of the canal is desirable.
- J. Engineering infrastructure (water supply, sewage, power and gas supply, telecommunication) needs to be installed on the grounds of Zemo Nikozi Monastery and within structures located there.
- K. Geological exploration at selected locations, archaeological study and topographic survey shall be conducted. The project also envisages paving of the roads leading to the monastery as well as paths within the monastery with stone. In addition, it is intended to build a parking lot.

7.6 Conservation policy and proposals

7.6.1 Broad summary of the vision for the site and its sustainability

Zemo Nikozi Monastery is an Episcopal See founded by a legendary Georgian King Vakhtang Gorgasali (5th century) in place of a pagan shrine. St Razhden the Protomartyr, martyred by the Persians, is buried here. Nikozi Episcopate incorporated the upper reaches of the Liakhvi River, Dvaleti and the Racha highlands. The mission of Nikozi Episcopate was to spread Christianity in the Caucasian highlands, due to which Nikozi Monastery turned into an important religious centre of the entire Caucasian Christendom. This explains the constant interest in the monastery from the side of Georgian kings and bishops. This is further confirmed by the fact that the buildings and structures of the monastery span a broad chronology beginning from the early Middle Ages through the 19th century.

Nikozi Monastery is one of the most outstanding monuments of Georgian culture. It is now listed as an immovable heritage property and is graded as a national monument. The monastery is in the ownership of the Patriarchate. The religious and cultural importance of the monastery is complimented by its potential to attract investments for the development of site tourism.

7.6.2 Conservation philosophy

The main buildings of Zemo Nikozi Monastery (churches, a bell-tower and circuit wall fragments) preserve in an authentic shape and are in need of minor repairs, cleaning and consolidation. Some of the structures (the Episcopal palace, cells for monks and subsidiary compartments) were so damaged in August 2008 that their consolidation is possible only through reconstruction.

7.6.3 Level of Intervention

The intention for the conservation of Zemo Nikozi Monastery is to preserve the planning structure of the site within the cadastre boundaries as well as the architectural and artistic qualities of the buildings therein.

At the same time, the improvement of living and working conditions for monks as well as enhancing the area for receiving pilgrims, tourists/visitors and researchers requires the development of site infrastructure, which implies construction of additional structures. Apart from the rehabilitation of the buildings shown on [fig.7.4](#), it is intended to construct new buildings/structures to ensure the proper functioning of the monastery (see the plan of development). Among other additions, it is planned to build the following structures:

1. *A single-storey refectory outside the circuit wall located to the north of the central church by incorporating an authentic wall within the interior.*

2. *Nikozi parish school.* The double-storey building of the parish house of the monastery, located to the north of the central church, fails to function effectively due to the lack of space. It now accommodates a refectory and a kitchen, a bishop's reception and office, a library, crafts centre (weaving loom), working room for nuns, storerooms and a parish school with dozens of youngsters taking classes with great enthusiasm. The main goal of Bishop Isaia is to create appropriate educational and art space for young Orthodox Christian residents of Nikozi and those from nearby villages. It is planned to construct a building to the extreme north of the monastic area, between the central village road and the north boundary of the convent standing by the bank of the canal. A new school building will be single-storeyed with three rooms for class discussions and music (ecclesiastical singing). The building will also accommodate workshops for icon-painting, animation, wood and metal working, rooms for the head of the school and teaching staff, as well as auxiliary and technical facilities.

3. *A new structure for auxiliary rooms and workshops.* A convent was founded in the complex under the martial law in August 2008. Standing to the north-east of the complex, a house with its surrounding area, recently (before the war) acquired by the monastery, is intended to accommodate nuns' cells. The usable space of the building is small and requires the addition of a new structure for auxiliary rooms and workshops. A new, single-storey structure will be built by the west boundary of the convent and will open onto the road leading to the church. It will accommodate sewing, weaving, embroidery and enamel workshops and auxiliary rooms (laundry and dye-works).

4. *A new building for the monks of Nikozi Monastery.* It is intended to build a new residential building in place of monks' cells destroyed together with the historical palace of a bishop as a result of an air assault during the August war. The building will be erected along the south and west perimeter of the circuit wall. This will be a double-storied structure with a three-level turret in the south-west corner. The south section of the ground floor will be assigned for workshops (icon-painting, ecclesiastical candle manufacturing, monastic bakery) and auxiliary rooms (a laundry, a sewing room and a storeroom). The west part will accommodate a refectory and a kitchen. The first floor will have monks' cells and bathrooms. The third level of the corner turret, a mezzanine, will serve as a meeting hall of the members of the monastery.

5. *A small chapel, St John the Baptist's baptistery, an ecclesiastical shop and a shelter.* It is intended to construct a structure onto a circuit wall to the north of the courtyard, within the residential area of monks. The planned building will be three-storeyed: the ground floor will serve as a small chapel; the first floor will have St John the Baptist's baptistery and an ecclesiastical shop. The floor of the baptistery and the shop will be designed on the same level as the courtyard of the central church, from which an entrance will be made. The underground space will be used as an air-raid shelter with a hidden exit. The need for such a shelter arose during the August hostilities, and the site was selected because of the miraculous survival of the monastic brethren, who escaped the unexpected, intensive and destructive air assault in the room located on this site. Since then it has been considered to be the most sacral and safe place.

6. *Nikozi monastic hotel.* It is planned to build a hotel for guests and pilgrims or several separately standing cells to the east of the central church, in the green strip on the right bank of the canal. Several garages will be constructed to the south of the hotel area, along the road, to accommodate monastic cars.

7. *Monastic workshops and technical facilities.* To the end of ensuring the self-sustained functioning of the monastery, it is planned to build several fully equipped workshops, including a carpenter's workshop, stone and metal workshops (equipped with a furnace), power supply facility and a central boiler-room working on alternative fuel. Considering the possible noise that the workshops may cause, it is advisable to construct them at quite a distance from the monastic complex, namely to the east of the left bank of the canal, along the village road.

8. *A souvenir shop, visitors' centre and a café.* With a view to providing improved services to visitors/tourists and pilgrims, it is envisaged to build a shop selling souvenirs produced in monastic workshops, a visitors' centre and a small café in the main square before the bell-tower.

All new structures shall be compatible with the historically set spatial organization (scale, material, tonality, roofing elements, etc). The same approach shall be applied when devising an artistic solution.

7.6.4 Reconstruction

The Episcopal palace has been so severely damaged that reconstruction will be necessary. The building preserves all the basic parameters (height, scale and architectural elements). Therefore, it is possible and needed to restore it to its original appearance. The monks' cells and subsidiary structures are almost fully destroyed. Their rehabilitation appears unreasonable due to the two following reasons: i) the buildings lack any historical or artistic value (they have been built only recently without prior planning); ii) the dismantling of the existing structures and building new ones would be more cost-effective.

7.6.5 Preliminary proposals for appropriate use

Alternative use being considered: the project envisages converting a double-storey house into a parish school, a hostel and hotel of the monastery (for pilgrims, tourists/visitors and researchers). This will facilitate the development of service industry on the site.

It is intended to adapt the Episcopal palace for its reuse as an open public space with a Sunday parish school, a library, a depository for antiquities, an exhibition hall, a presentation/reception hall (seminars/workshops, exhibitions and summer schools), a library, etc.

The project also envisages the opening of a souvenir shop to sell locally produced items and a café.

7.6.6 Opportunities for social reuse and sustainable development

Thanks to its unique religious and historical significance, as well as effective location, Zemo Nikozi Monastery offers huge potential for tourism development. Rehabilitated following the aforementioned proposals, it will create opportunities for religious and secular services thus encouraging the development and promotion of the monastery. The intervention will allow to create temporary jobs during the implementation of physical works and regular workplaces afterwards, for the follow-up maintenance. Dozens of local dwellers will be engaged in public services, the tradition of pilgrimage will revive and tourism will increase. It will also promote museum and educational activities (summer schools), as well as the revival of local crafts and manufacturing of traditional artistic items for ecclesiastical use. It is assumed that commercial interest will increase in selling the locally produced items (knitting, woodwork, goldsmith's art, icon-painting, etc). As a consequence, Zemo Nikozi will return its traditional function of a religious, cultural and educational centre of the village and the region in general.

7.6.7 Broad assessment of priorities for consolidating/covering, repair, conservation, restoration, rehabilitation

The top priorities for the consolidation and rehabilitation of Zemo Nikozi Monastery are as follows:

- i) prevention of its further collapse and encroachment;
- ii) preparation for rehabilitation and proper functioning.

These will require:

- removing, selecting and storing of the material;

- architectural and archaeological research and survey;
- project design;
- building the new structures presented in fig. 7.6.3.
- extensive restoration of the structure both inside and out which will need to be assessed together with a team of restoration architects and structural engineers and in permanent consultation with an art historian.

7.6.8 Public access

Despite substantial damages caused by the August 2008 hostilities, the Monastery has not suspended functioning. It is open to the congregation and religious services are conducted according to the established rule (typicon). During religious festivals, a large number of pilgrims gather from different parts of Georgia. If the planned rehabilitation and reconstruction works are successfully implemented, the monastery will turn into a religious, cultural, educational and tourism centre.

7.6.9 Other benefits

Organized visits to religious sites of cultural interest; arrangement of scientific conferences and workshops; implementation of educational programmes; holding of events, including those of commercial interest.

7.7 Finance

7.7.1 Broad assessment of budgetary needs and phasing

Without alternative: reconstruction/rehabilitation – total 3 284 800.00 €

Preparatory works - total	103 700.00 €
Enabling contract to clear structures and the area	10 400 €
Photo recording of the existing condition, collecting archival material relating to the structures, comparative analysis and art historian report, development of recommendations for the rehabilitation	3 500 €
Creating a modern digital topographic survey base for the complex and its surroundings (resolution 1:1000 and 1:1500, WGS – 84-UTM coordinates)	6 900 €
Hydro-geological survey of the design area, conclusions and recommendations	8 600 €
Archaeological survey of the area and report	17 300 €
Structural survey of the monastic buildings, including the study and assessment of foundations	17 300 €
Making architectural and archaeological drawings of each structure by indicating local damages (sketch-maps, sketch drawings – resolution 1:50)	39 700 €

Compiling design documentation for rehabilitation/reconstruction - total	345 300.00 €
Developing a layout plan (resolution 1:2000)	1 700 €
Master plan (resolution (1:1500, 1:1000))	34 500 €
Functioning zoning scheme of the complex grounds by indicating restricted, public and open spaces	10 400 €
Design drawing for each structure of the complex: plans, sections, façades, developed views (resolution 1:100, 1:50), fragments and details (resolution 1:20, 1:10)	117 500 €
Structural drawings and calculations (resolution	117 500 €

1:100, 1:50)	
Design documentation for exterior and interior infrastructure rehabilitation and installation (power and water supply, sewage, heating/ventilation, weak currents, storm water and drainage systems)	34 500 €
Detailed design of vertical planning of the area	6 900 €
Lighting design (internal and external systems)	3 400 €
Design for security system (fire-prevention, security)	3 400 €
Landscaping and improvement design (paths, minor architectural forms, planting of greenery and other landscaping elements)	13 800 €
Project for the organisation of works	1 700 €
Construction works - total	2 041 000.00 €
Preparation of a construction site	36 000 €
Dismantling of the remains of destroyed structures	28 000 €
Consolidation/reconstruction of walls and foundations	215 000 €
Construction of new structures (8 new objects see. fig.7.6.3)	1 365 000 €
Repair/installation of roofs	165 000 €
Repair/building of ceilings, walls and floors	120 000 €
Installation, technical equipment	112 000 €
Installations needed for new services - total	518 300.00 €
Electric lining (internal and exterior lighting, heating, telecommunication, etc)	241 000 €
Water and sewage lines and installation	138 200 €
Installation of storm water and drainage systems	69 100 €
Landscaping/improvement work	70 000 €
Other costs - total	276 500.00 €
Contingencies	276 500 €

7.7.2 Assessment of possibilities for attracting investments

Official assessment of possibilities for attracting investment has not been done so far. However, having in mind the aforementioned future uses, we believe the site could attract investors, taking into consideration other sources of financing, donations, grants, matching funds and tax policies.

7.7.3 Assessment of possibilities for recovering investments

Official assessment of possibilities for recovering investments has not been done so far, but we believe that the investment will be returned through services, work places, etc.

7.7.4 Have you already tried to raise funds for this site or monument? If so, provide details

See 5.5

7.7.5 Have you already received funds for this site or monument? If so, provide details.

Zemo Nikozi Monastery periodically receives donations from the government, community and successful local entrepreneurs, as well as from the Georgian Patriarchate.

7.8 Recommendations

7.8.1 The Building or Site

The primary purpose of the proposal is to protect this listed cultural heritage site graded as a national monument from further deterioration and bring it back into an appropriate use for religious and broader secular purposes.

The current proposals are to create additional infrastructure for pilgrims and tourists, namely a hotel with cells, a refectory/kitchen, souvenir (including items produced in the monastery) and book shops, a hotel and a hall for cultural and educational activities (seminars, workshops, conferences, exhibitions, summer schools, Sunday parish schools, etc).

Urgency, timing and phasing of works

See 7.6.7

Broad budget assessment

See 7.7.1

7.8.2 Requirement for further assessment/further documentation/survey works/feasibility studies/detailed costing

As part of the further feasibility study, the following will be required:

- Collecting, selecting and storing of the material and providing safe access to the building;
- Research and architectural survey, plans, sections, elevations , scaffolds or carrying out survey as necessary;
- Structural research;
- Architect and structural engineer

7.8.3 Management

Through its Ministry of Culture, Monument Protection and Sport, Georgia carries out supervision in terms of respecting legal regulation for the protection of cultural monuments. It also exercises the function of providing methodological guidance of works in respect with monuments. Implementation of any kind of work on a monument requires a permit, which is established under Georgia's Law on Cultural Heritage. A project/design for such works shall be reviewed and agreed upon by the Ministry of Culture, Monument Protection and Sport, on one hand, and the Board of Art, Architecture and Restoration at the Patriarchate of Georgia, on the other. The ultimate aim of the protection of cultural heritage monuments is to prevent their physical deterioration, encroachment and methodologically inappropriate intervention causing damage to monuments, as well as preserve/find compatible uses for monuments. All this ultimately enhances the viability of monuments and enables users to carry out constant management.

7.8.4 Summary of Recommendations

Zemo Nikozi Monastery is an immovable listed site graded as a national monument. As a cultural heritage site of outstanding historical and cultural significance located in the conflict region, it receives particular care from the side of the state authorities. Legal issues relating to the ownership of the complex are clear and defined which should make any activity less complicated.

As mentioned above, the rehabilitation and development of the monastic complex is of utmost importance as it will help to alleviate artificially created tension between the neighboring Georgians and Ossetians affirming the same religion fully restore one of the most outstanding works of Georgian architecture create many jobs for local residents during the implementation of physical works and afterwards, for regular maintenance; also involve local specialists of various fields in site rehabilitation work and turn the monastery into an attractive destination for pilgrims and tourists/visitors; 5) facilitate not only socio-cultural revival of the village of Nikozi, but also its economic revitalisation through the restoration of the original function and importance of the monastery, which in its turn, may have a positive impact on the local economy. This is especially important against the background of suspended trade ties with the Tskhinvali region, which has affected the regional economy. The population living in Zemo Nikozi and nearby villages earned most of their livelihood thanks to the active trade ties with Tskhinvali. The Georgians and Ossetians had until recently been engaged in intensive trade with cattle and agricultural products through barter and weekend market fairs. The August hostilities put an end to all kinds of contacts, which has had a negative impact on the regional economy and thus affected the quality of the local population. Zemo Nikozi definitely requires a new impetus and rehabilitated Zemo Nikozi Monastery may play an important role in this regard.

The outstanding religious, historical and cultural value of the monastery, as well as its excellent location and inspiring landscape among the snow-capped mountains of the Caucasus make the site attractive for investment and commercial use. The site appears to have a great potential in this regard.