A **STRONGER COALITION**
FOR CHILD WELFARE

ASSESSMENT OF CHILD WELFARE REFORM AND CHILD CARE SYSTEM

Research Report

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INTRODUCTION

We would like to emphasize the contribution of persons who participated in the research process that includes experts of the child welfare field, service managers, practitioners and beneficiaries. Contribution of youth and children, who gave us opportunity to listen to their ideas and consider them in the process of research analysis, is especially important.

Also, we would like to thank representatives of World Vision, Maya Mgeliashvili, Child Protection Services and Advocacy Manager, for her contribution in detailed analysis of the research report and Irina Grdzelidze, Coordinator of "A Stronger Coalition for Child Welfare" project, who supported the entire assessment process.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On April 24, 2012, the **Child Welfare and Protection Action Plan 2012-2015** was adopted. The action plan aims to continue the reforms implemented in 2008-2011 and contribute to the empowerment of vulnerable children and their families. The reform is ongoing according to this plan in the field of child welfare today. This reform has more or less touched fields of child welfare such as, prevention/rehabilitation and family strengthening, youth who exit care institutions, juvenile justice, and psychosocial rehabilitation of victims of violence.

The goal of this research is to assess the child welfare reform, assess the main directions of the child care system, identify main needs, and provide recommendations for improving existing child protection policy and practices.

In 2012, the **National Coalition of Georgia for Child and Youth Welfare,** which brings together 40 organizations, was established. The Coalition aims to improve existing child and youth welfare systems in the country and contribute to the protection of their rights. **The Coalition will use this research** for advocacy purposes of child and youth rights at national and international levels.

The research was implemented using qualitative methods such as desk research, focus group discussions and interview with the experts of child care system; 15 experts were interviewed. 37 practitioners, managers and 44 beneficiaries from the child welfare field participated in 10 focus group discussions.

As a result of the research, a number of problems existing in the child welfare systems were revealed. Among other **significant challenges within the system in regards to resources (Input),** it was identified that social worker's institution need to be further developed. In regards to the preparation of children for leaving care system, qualification level of caregivers, social workers and other specialists is not sufficient.

Development of professional skills among probation officers, increasing number of social workers in the field of justice, as well as introduction of a specialized institution of judges for juveniles are important in respect to the juvenile justice field.

Police and school, as the child and family support institutions, are the weakest actors, in respect to the protection of children from violence. Also, it is necessary to increase the number of social workers working in the education field and increase their qualification around the issues of domestic violence.

In respect to the **system challenges of the process,** it needs to be noted that a reactive nature of social worker's institution of the Social Service Agency is the limitation of the preventive work for at-risk children. Involvement of the primary healthcare institutions, maternity homes, and schools need to be ensured in prevention of child separation from family. Also, decentralization of social worker's services is necessary.

In the deinstitutionalization process, rights of children's biological families are discriminated. In terms of the state care, children who are in foster care are discriminated against compared to those living in small group homes. Also, the deinstitutionalization process is not happening for children with disabilities. Discrimination against Roma children, their families, and other ethnic groups is a widely spread practice and is reinforced through limited access of these groups to state services.

Interventions for prevention of juvenile crime need to be systemic and should apply multidisciplinary approaches with participation of representatives of various professions. These interventions need to focus more on children working and living on the streets.

Ineffective communication among the entities working with children in the field of justice is a problem; so is coordination between schools and the Social Service Agency. Through involvement of the Psychological Center of the Office of Resource Officer, schools should play an important role in identification of children with risky behavior and introduction of required interventions. Cooperation between these centers and social workers of the Social Service Agency needs to be established.

Referral procedures for child protection requires in depth changes. Awareness of school teachers, police and primary healthcare workers about these procedures need to be increased. School resource officers are not realistic in assessment of their roles and responsibilities in implementation of child protection referral procedures. Media fails to play the educational role in the field of child protection from violence.

Shortage and poor access to state service for families of the risk groups was identified among the system challenges in respect to the services (output). The government's role in employment of these families needs to be strengthened. Lack of alternative services creates significant challenge in the deinstitutionalization process of children with disabilities.

There are no programmes/services that would prepare youth for independent life after leaving state care. Also, inexistence of housing for youth who exit from the state care institution remains as a problem along with the development of skills required for independent life and their professional education.

A unified database of beneficiaries who have left the state care system and require support does not exist. The state should introduce for them after school extracurricular services. There is no vision of what services should be developed for children with disabilities to support them in the transition period.

Family support services in economic and psychosocial directions need to be developed in respect to the juvenile crime prevention efforts. Also, diverse resocialization services should be introduced for youth who leave penitentiary institutions.

Lack of rehabilitation services for child victims of violence is obvious both in governmental and non-governmental sectors. No services exist that would provide support to the children with mental disabilities and psychological problems in the cases of violence.

In the majority of cases, because of bureaucratic procedures, victims of violence experience difficulties with access to shelters. A monitoring system that would assess quality of service provided to beneficiaries at shelters needs to the introduced.

Based on the research findings, a group of researchers elaborated **public policy recommendations** around the issues of prevention/reintegration and family strengthening, youth who leave care system, juvenile justice, and protection of children and youth from violence.

ANALYSIS OF CHILD WELFARE POLICY AND PRACTICE

The current child welfare system in Georgia is extremely centralized. In 2009-2013 the deinstitutionalization process, that resulted in closure of large scale institutions (orphanages, school-boarding houses) in Georgia and their substitution with the alternative care services (foster, small group homes), remained as the leading policy direction in the child welfare system reform. The main documents of the child welfare reform support alternative forms of care at legislative and practical levels (Georgian Law about Child Adoption and Foster, Child Care Standards, Child Welfare Action plan 2012-2015). However introduction and development of family support and prevention services remain as the main challenge of the reform. According to the 2012 Child Protection Situation Analysis (SoS Children's Village Georgia and GASW, 2012), in 2009-2012, unbalanced approaches towards different groups of children were the main weaknesses of the reform. The problem is the reform focused on the deinstitutionalization process and development of alternative forms of care and failed to reach several groups; children working and living on the streets, children with psychological problems, and children of ethnical minority groups. In 2013, development of systems and services for children working and living on the streets was initiated. This was reflected in the new action plan (Direction #2, article 2.8), as well as in the government's support to the EU and UNICEF funded project, "New Initiative for Children Living and Working on Streets". This project is designed to pilot new systems and services for vulnerable children in Tbilisi and Kutaisi by the end of 2014.

Lack of support for youth exiting care institutions and integrating back into society is still an unaddressed problem within the child welfare reform. According to the UN Committee on Rights of the Child, youth in the care institutions form a separate sub-cluster after leaving the care system and face significant challenges integrating back into society. Such status, first of all, is caused by a lack of integration programmes for the youth who leave care system. The Child Welfare and Protection Action Plan 2012-2015 focuses on support of youth leaving care for independent life. However there is no unified, coherent concept that defines the kind of assistance needed for development of skills required for independent life and integration into society after leaving care.

In 2012, the Georgian government developed the Youth Policy Document, which talks about four directions of working with youth in the 14-25 age group: 1) Participation; 2) Education, employment, mobility; 3) Health; 4) Special assistance and protection. Youth policy is based on the principles of equality and social integration. Based on the mentioned policy document, programmes that would enable working in these four directions with youth who are about to or have already exited a care system needs to be developed.

Number and access to family support and prevention programmes are limited in Georgia. According to the Georgian law about Social Assistance (2006), reintegration support is the only aid among the social assistance programmes that is provided to a child's family in the case of child's return home from care system. According to current practice, reintegration assistance amounts to 90 GEL per child per month and is much less, than the amount allocated per child in relative foster care, which is 200 GEL.

Prevention and family support policies and programmes play a huge role in the prevention of a child's entrance into care institutions. As stated in the guiding principles document "Gate keeping" policy (2012), "gate keeping" is a unity of coordinated actions that ensures access to family support services and assistance and protects a child from being placed in the 24-hour care system. Despite the fact that such documents exist on policy level, practice shows that family support and prevention programmes are very limited. For instance, The Child Welfare and Protection Action Plan 2012-2015 talks about free textbooks for school children in families who are below the poverty line, students of boarding schools, and children in foster care and care institutions. Additionally, it mentions food vouchers for children under two. Both textbooks and food are forms of non-monetary support. As noted in the 2012 research of UN Children's Fund, 77 000 children live in extreme poverty (less than 1 EURO per day) in Georgia, which is 9.4 percent of children living in Georgia. Twenty-five percent of children live in the conditions of relative poverty. These figures show that quite a large number of the child population face the risk of separation from their families. By the recommendation of UNICEF, monetary assistance for all children who are in need should to be introduced to reduce the level of child poverty.

In May 2014, the special committee of, "The sub-programme of emergency assistance for families with children in crisis situations" was established. It is the decision-making body in regards to providing emergency support to the families in crisis through procurement of goods or services. Such support is provided based on the conclusion of a social worker of the Social Service Agency. Emergency support to families in crisis is extremely important in respect to the prevention activities and risk mitigation. Thus, the committee's work and enhancement of its target group to wider scope of beneficiaries can be considered as one of the important preventive interventions.

Protection of children from violence and neglect is one of the priority directions of the Child Welfare and Protection Action Plan 2012-2015. In 2006, the Georgian Parliament adopted law regarding Prevention of Domestic Violence and Protection and Support to Victims, based on which in 2010 three ministries (Ministry of Labor, Health and Social Affairs, Ministry of Education and Science and Ministry of Internal Affairs) signed a joint decree about "Enforcement of child protection referral procedures". The decree defines identification and referral mechanisms for child victims of violence. Additionally, it elaborates on a response strategy in the case of reasonable suspicion of violence against the child. Practical implementation of the decree is the problem currently because in the majority of cases, police officers and social workers of the Social Service Agency cannot agree on qualification of violence cases (SoS Children's Villages Georgia and GASW, 2012). Also, the environment in the country that is tolerant to violence in general creates an additional barrier in the child violence referral process. According to the research conducted by UNICEF in 2012 "Violence against Children in Georgia", almost half of the Georgian population (45%) finds violence against children acceptable. Sixty percent of the population thinks that violent parenting methods are more effective than non-violent parenting methods. The majority of society believes that cases of domestic violence against children are families' internal affairs and do not think it is appropriate to get involved. Even if a person decides to interfere, they do not know what to do. Majority of professionals working with children (60%), who are obliged by the law to identify and refer cases of violence, are not aware of this responsibility (UN Children's Fund, 2012). UNICEF's research also confirmed that a large majority of the population finds police interference reasonable only in cases of physical and sexual violence.

Juvenile justice remains as one of the important problems in the country. The Juvenile Crime Prevention Strategy that was approved by the president's decree in 2012 is one of the most important documents in the context of juvenile justice reform in Georgia. This document identifies primary (early), secondary (crime prevention among risk groups) and tertiary (repetition of crime) crime prevention levels. Moreover, risk factors are identified and respective response strategies are planned and implemented in regards to individual cases at all levels of crime prevention.

Despite the fact that the Government of Georgia announced 2014 as the year of Protection of Children's Rights, weakness of practical implementation mechanisms of responsibilities undertaken towards children in compliance with international and national legislations remains as one of challenges that still need to be addressed. Children's rights is one of the priority agenda items on the Georgia-EU Association agreement and provides recommendations on the following issues:

- Introduction of effective measures against child poverty and prioritizing issues of children from vulnerable groups
- Continuation of juvenile justice reform
- Clear reflection of children's rights in the Human Rights' National Strategy and Action Plan
- Increasing role of the Public Defender and provision of required resources for strengthening work on children's issues and monitoring of situation in relevant institutions
- Focusing on interventions for protection of children from all forms of violence.

The above list of priorities shows that child protection from violence and neglect still remains to be the key issue in Georgia in respect to protection of rights of children. The research "Violence Against Children in Georgia" conducted by UNICEF in 2012 showed that forty-five percent of the Georgian population has quite high tolerance toward violent parenting methods. As a signatory country of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child,

Georgia has the responsibility to present a report on the rights of children in the country to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child every five years. The last report was sent from Georgia in 2008. The report was not submitted by Georgia in 2013; this means that protection of children's rights is not a priority issue in the country.

Georgia is the signatory country of the first and second optional protocols to the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child. The third optional protocol was opened for signing in 2012 and it talks about the referral procedures by a person or group of persons during identification of cases related to the (a) the Convention; (b) optional protocol to the Convention about child sale, child prostitution and child pornography; (c) optional protocol to the Convention about child involvement in armed conflict. Considering the above mentioned, the 2010 decree about "Enforcement of child protection referral procedures" in respect to the identification and response to the cases of violence against children becomes even more important. The international organizations and UN Committee on Protection of the Rights of the Child provided recommendation to the Georgian Government about ratification of the third optional protocol to the UN Convention. Launch of the ratification process of the mentioned protocol was also supported by the Human Rights and Civil Integration Committee of the Parliament of Georgia.

In 2009, Georgia signed the Council of Europe Convention on Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse. This document is known as "The Lanzarote Convention". This document is the first document that requires criminalization of all kinds of sexual offences against children including violence in the families, perpetrated using methods of persuasion and threatening. It sets out that states in Europe and beyond shall adopt specific legislation and take measures to prevent sexual violence, to protect child victims and to prosecute perpetrators.

The 2013 Human Rights Report of the Public Defender reads: "Despite positive tendencies in the country, serious challenges remain in respect with the protection of the rights of children in the country. One of such challenges is the harmonization of the legislation about children's rights with the international standards that means consistent eradication of existing legislative gaps". According to the Public Defender, as well as, recommendations from the international organizations, local legislation and practice have significant weaknesses in respect to compliance with the international standards.

METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

Sampling, Instructions, Research Ethics and Limitations

The sampling of experts was based on the non-probability selection sampling design, in particular, on judgment sampling principles.

Focus group discussions with the beneficiaries and their parents were conducted based on probability sampling design, in particular, on simple sampling methodology. Beneficiaries of only Tbilisi district were selected.

Respondents were informed about the purpose and goals of the research. Respondent beneficiaries were told that the research was confidential, their responses would not be identified and the results would only be used for the purpose of improving child welfare services. Consent on participation in the research was received in advance from the local and international experts; research instruments and protocols were discussed and agreed. This ensured a high level of confidence in the research.

An experienced group of interviewers led focus group discussions and interviews.

The research had the following limitations: (a) it was not possible to interview children in conflict with the law and children with disabilities and their parents; (b) beneficiaries living in Tbilisi only were selected because of the limited timeframe of the research.

Methods

Qualitative methods were applied for conducting the research. In particular, a) desk research, during which child welfare policy – legislative documents, reports, protocols, regulations and other documents were analyzed; b) focus group discussions with representatives of social service administrations, service providers, practitioners from governmental and non-governmental sectors, and service recipients, e.g. beneficiaries; c) interviews with the child welfare experts, including government representatives, policy and legislation makers and decision makers, as well as representatives of international organizations.

Based on the goals of the research two, structured guiding documents were developed at the desk research stage according to the analyzed documentation. One document (included six sections: prevention and reintegration/family strengthening; working with youth existing care system; juvenile justice; psychosocial rehabilitation of victims of violence; youth organizations and reform – general recommendations) was used during focus group discussions with beneficiaries and their parents, and the second document (included eight sections: prevention and reintegration/family strengthening; working with youth existing care system; juvenile justice; psychosocial rehabilitation of victims of violence; juvenile justice; legislative framework; interagency cooperation; Action Plan 2012-2015 and final recommendations) was applied during individual interviews and focus group discussions with the experts.

All interviews were audio recorded and analyzed in detail. The research results were analyzed using the content analysis method.

Participants

Main actors of the child welfare system were selected for participation in the research. More specifically, expert interviews were conducted with 15 experts and 10 focus groups were organized for service providers, representatives of administration and beneficiaries.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Prevention and Integration/Family Strengthening

Analysis of Interviews

Almost all of the 15 experts interviewed believe that the child care reform that capitalized on the closing of large institutions and introduction of alternative forms of child care is progressive and has indeed, "Brought positive results. Problems still remain to be addressed, but it cannot even be compared to the old system" (M. Gedevanishvili, interview). It should also be noted that, "Sometimes information is controversial," and thus, "it is difficult to evaluate child care system reform explicitly positively, especially that a large scale research of this reform has still not been carried out yet" (M. Meskhi, interview).

The head of the Social Affairs' Department of the Patriarchy acknowledges the importance of family for child wellbeing, however, believes that the deinstitutionalization process will be hard to implement for the Patriarchy. "The Church of course takes into account that the law requires deinstitutionalization and transition from large scale to smaller institutions, however this cannot happen very fast" (Z. Varazi, interview). According to the representative of the Patriarchy, the deinstitutionalization process cannot now happen for the children that currently live in the institutions that are run by the Patriarchy. "Children that live in the institutions feel that they are the closest people to each other, and perceive each other as close relatives. If we now tell them that they are to go separate ways in smaller institutions, it will be as traumatic to them as taking children from their mother would be" (Z. Varazi, interview).Thus, the representative of the Patriarchy believes, that the only right way for deinstitutionalization within their system would be to impose a moratorium on child enrollment process and placing new comers directly in small group homes.

The effectiveness of the "Gate keeping" policy, according to which strict child placement/exit principles should be observed for placing a child in a 24-hour care institution needs to be assessed. This policy is based on the idea that the main aim of social assistance and service is to keep a child with his/her family, and use all available resources for strengthening the child's family, so that the family is able to take care of their child. According to the head of the Social Affairs' Department of the Patriarchy, "Family is the ideal environment for raising a child" (V. Varazi, interview). He believes that the reasons for child abandonment by the family needs to be thoroughly investigated and if the reasons lay with the economic hardship, then the role of the social services in family support becomes important. "It is better to support child's parents, than spend money on institutions and foster care" (Z. Varazi, interview).

Also, the importance of engagement of local self-government bodies in this process was emphasized. According to the local government representative, "At this moment they are not engaged in any working groups around these issues" (G. Mamrikishvili, interview). It is noteworthy that Tbilisi City Hall used to have a "Department for Child Care", which has been abolished since 2008 and hence, the role of the government in these important processes has been lost.

According to the head of Guardianship – Custody and Social Programs Department of the Social Service Agency, "The self-government bodies are best positioned to identify children from risk groups" and then make referrals to the Social Service Agency. According to her, "There should be a social worker at the local government, who would perform a lawyer's function. It would be an initial advocacy, giving right direction to the case" (M. Tsereteli, interview).

It was noted that the children living and working on the streets constitute the highest risk group, and the ongoing reform has the biggest gaps in regards to this group. Care for such children has not yet become part of the child care state system. Nevertheless, "Street children are in need of the most care and attention to prevent them from becoming part of the criminal world and posing a threat to the safety of society (M. Meskhi, interview).

According to the Head of the Center of Child's Right of Public Defender's Office, "Children living and working on the streets fall under the highest risk groups. A special program is required for their identification. The Ministry

of Health has such a programme; mobile teams work with the children and organize shelter. However the issue of shelter arrangement was extended in time" (M. Gedevanishvili, interview).

The reform rates in regards to the children with disabilities is also concerning. It is noteworthy that the large-scale institutions for children with disabilities still have not been closed down and their conditions more or less remain the same. According to the head of the Center on the Protection of Rights of Persons with Disabilities, "Only those children with disabilities who have status and are entitled to monetary compensation are identified and visible for the social services". Today only 8890 children have status of person with disability and the rest, particularly those living in the regions, are not identified, and hence they are not entitled to the state support (N. Pirashvili, interview). Because of this, the Public Defender's Office prioritizes working in the regions. The main problem is low awareness of parents, relatives and society in general regarding these issues. In some cases, poverty is the main obstacle to a acquisition of status that prevents getting necessary medical expertise. At the same time, not all polyclinics can determine medical status. Only a few polyclinics specialize on such medical expertise and can grant status. Often, the socially vulnerable cannot afford to address these polyclinics due to challenges with the transportation. It should be noted that provision of support to the children with disabilities is linked to the social vulnerability status. This, "Is unfair, as in fact, the disability status and not the social status should be determined and supported by the state" (N. Pirashvili, interview). To address this issue the Public Defender prepared recommendation, "not to link provision of assistance to the Persons with Disabilities to social vulnerability status".

Role of schools in identification of children from high-risk groups was also emphasized. The head of the Center for Crime Prevention believes that a healthy environment in the education field will contribute to risk reduction and presumably, to identification of high-risk children and timely prevention (J. Kvinikadze, interview). Also, it is important that youth have special centers that help them to organize their spare time. According to him, in this regards, "The Center of the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs is doing a lot in cultural and educational directions" (J. Kvinikadze, interview). In addition to this, the social workers of the Center for Crime Prevention work in three directions. Firstly, they work at schools with the children of final grades (children of 12-18 age) and with the youth engaged in the Leaders House Project. This is meant to develop their social responsibility (volunteerism, support to vulnerable groups, etc) and engage them in various educational, cultural and sport activities. The second direction envisages identification and planning of interventions with the families that have a family member in prison, is a drug addict, does not attend school, is expelled from school, etc., e.g. working with so-called risk groups. The third direction implies diversion and mediation programs (J. Kvinikadze, interview).

Deputy head of the Social Service Division of the Penitentiary Department also emphasizes the importance of schools in this respect (I. Sarjveladze, interview). According to her "targeted groups" that would work on identification of high-risk children should be established at schools.

The head of the Center for Child's Rights of the Public Defender's office believes that, "The children from high risk groups should be identified at schools or kindergartens. This should be done also by the Social Service Agency and, probably, with engagement of local polyclinics - one more entity of the Ministry of Health" (M. Gedevanishvili, interview).

The respondents declare that the situation is difficult in the regions (M. Gedevanishvili, I. Sarjveladze, J. Kvinikadze). It is necessary to plan a systemic approach to child care; meanwhile, "A different approach is required both on administrative and legislative levels in high mountainous areas".

The head of the Projects Division of the International Relations Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs believes that, "Risk indictors are not defined and thus identification of children of high risk requires the skills of a professional" (M. Peradze, interview). A police officer should be able to prevent crime, however, there is no strictly defined criteria for assessment of a high-risk child and it is difficult to determine between "a child with deviant behavior" and "a child in conflict with the law". Thus an important task is to increase capacities of law enforcers regarding identification of high-risk children. This will prevent stigmatization of children (M. Peradze, interview).

According to T. Kuchava (UNICEF, Head of the Juvenile Justice Program), "Identification of cases is an issue within the justice system itself. The system is comparably more coherent in the cases of tertiary prevention, when children are already in the conflict with the law and prevention targets repetition of crime". But, "identification

of so-called problematic children" is rather difficult. Compared to this, the prevention mechanism for violence is much more advanced. "Currently a juvenile justice system is undergoing a reform that puts main emphasis on interagency coordination. In this case, education system, social protection, and child protection should be the main actors and role of each engaged professional needs to be strictly defined. At the same time, at higher level a coordination mechanism that would lead the entire process needs to the formed (T. Kuchava, interview).

The representatives of UNICEF believe that, "Some attempts of identifying early symptoms of violence and taking required steps for response are visible within the referral procedures for child protection. However, this system is not well coordinated either. As revealed by our research[1], actors engaged in this system are not well aware of their roles and responsibilities" (K. Melikadze, interview). We can say that current childcare system responds to non-systemic cases, and well-defined mechanisms that would reveal risk groups at early stages proactively and not reactively do not exist.

It was noted that childcare system is more reactive, than proactive (K. Melikadze, interview). Head of the Department of Inclusive Education Development of the Ministry of Education and Science believes that "The state failed to work effectively" on identification of high-risk children and their families (E. Dgebuadze, interview).

In fact, job descriptions of social workers talk about an "outreach" component, however they respond mainly to referred cases (K. Melikadze, interview). According to the Head of the Rehabilitation Division of the National Probation Agency, "Based on the available resources in Georgia it is possible to create a referral system that would engage social workers of the Social Service Agency in identification of these risk groups as social agents have the biggest access to vulnerable families" (N. Shatberashvili, interview).

A pilot referral mechanism that was initiated by UN Children's Fund is interesting in this respect. Ministry of Health, Labor and Social Affairs, UNICEF and Department of Statistics participate in implementation of this initiative. By the end of August, a pilot of this mechanism is planned, "during which social agents will have opportunity to identify risk factors" (N. Shatberashvili, interview). It is true that social workers are more capable of identifying these risk groups based on their professional skills, however the state does not have enough resource of social workers at present.

Analysis of Focus Groups

Service Providers, Coordinators and Practitioners

Analysis of focus group discussions with the programme leads of the Coalition (Georgian Coalition for Child and Youth Welfare) member non-governmental organizations shows that proactive identification of prevention cases does not take place and in most of the cases state gets involved when crisis in the family has already happened. Prevention services are very scarce in the country (food voucher, day center and early interventions in the case of children with disabilities) and geographically less accessible for all needy beneficiaries.

Participants also noted that even those services that exist cannot ensure actual prevention. The group members expressed the idea that all prevention components should be interlinked with a family strengthening component. It was also noted that the reform has not worked much on identification of violence and neglect cases and response; accordingly, the reform is less successful in this field. Some of the participants even think that the existing limited resources are not sufficiently utilized by the social workers and beneficiaries. In the majority of cases (e.g. day centers) the service providers themselves need to look for the beneficiaries, even though the demand seems to be high "at a first glance." According to the participants, social workers tend to underutilize available external resources because, "They are afraid to assume responsibility and prefer not to refer child anywhere". Also, it was noted that the government does not have evidence of what number of beneficiaries require what types of services. There are no services in the country that would be based on research finding; this creates challenges in the process of service provision. Also, as expressed during the FDGs, awareness raising is part of the universal prevention. Change of awareness should be the priority while working with the families in order to make them assume responsibility of upbringing of their child. At the same time, it was noted that "Social sup-

1 Violence Against Children in Georgia, UNICEF, July, 2013

port services should not make people lazy. The state should embed some motivators in the social assistance, so that support to beneficiaries are provided for a certain period of time, but it should not continue forever".

Thus, (1) the aim of the social assistance should be to make people more active and not vice versa, to make them lazy; or work towards changing their awareness; (2) the state should take into account recommendations from UNICEF that imply provision of targeted assistance to vulnerable families with children, based on the number and age of children; (3) the state should analyze programmes implemented during the last years and distribute funding based on the actual need of each programme; (4) the social service provided by social workers needs to be improved; (5) the system should strive to retain human resources by offering improve employment conditions; (6) healthcare component needs to be improved as primary healthcare is the main mechanism for prevention; (7) services should be based on researches; (8) services should be tailored to local beneficiaries' needs and should not be copies of international experience; (9) labor rights of single parents should be liberalized; (10) consultations centers for family assistance should be established that will support families in child care and effective family management (building capacities of parents); (11) family support services need to be strengthened; (12) effective cooperation between government and non-government sectors need to increase, and also more "outsourcing" is required.

According to the focus group participant, social workers of the Social Service Agency, identification of children that face various risks through different sources (police, school, hospital, NGOs, society members, etc) is not effective because all these actors are not sufficiently engaged in identification of at-risk children. Problems are particularly visible in regards to police and schools.

Cooperation with schools was assessed as successful by some of the participants, while others did not agree. The emphasis was made on failure to accept children with difficult behavior by the schools. Also, problems were noted with poor cooperation by schools in the cases on violence, as they very seldom make referrals and even while working on facts of violence schools often refuse to provide assistance in order to avoid "aggravation of relations with families".

According to the respondents, in order to identify risk successfully at an early stage, engaged entities/organizations and society should assume certain roles and responsibilities. It is particularly problematic that the majority of calls made to the social service agency in the cases of risk identification are anonymous and the person who makes the referral refuses to cooperate further. Cooperation, which is extremely important for collecting additional data and to protect a child's interests. Also, it is important that even in the cases when the identity of a person making a referral is known to the social service agency (for example, school, neighbor, etc.), these entities/persons are only willing to provide information unofficially and refuse to officially indicate their names in order to avoid conflicts with the family.

Participants believe that based on the needs of the socially vulnerable and at-risk families, the following services are needed for strengthening families and reducing risks:

- Qualified specialists
- Building capacities of parents
- Resolution of economic problems
- Employment
- Vocational courses
- Food assistance for children above 1.5 years as well

Difficulties related to the effective functioning of social assistance mechanisms should also be noted. In particular, one of the main challenges is that beneficiaries refuse to take on employment opportunities because they fear to lose social assistance and in the majority of cases the job placement opportunities available for them is not long-term and stable. Under such circumstances, their fear to fail to overcome risks and become even more dependent on the state assistance is often justified.

According to the focus group participant, practitioners working in the non-governmental sector (social workers, psychologists, and other professionals), at-risk children are identified through different measures. Often families

themselves approach their organizations for support. Also, sometimes community members, relatives, neighbors, etc., take initiative. Participants also noted that the role of police and schools is important in this respect, however problems exist with regards to both entities. They do not have the knowledge, competency, nor willingness to engage in family matters and protect children from violence and neglect.

The participants believe that the families are mostly needy of the following type of support to be able to provide adequate care to their children:

- Building capacity of parents
- Information provision on non-violent parenting methods
- Vocational trainings
- Employment

According to the participants, role of non-governmental organizations in family support and identification of risks at early stages is important. However coordinated work and exchange of information among various NGOs, especially regarding the types of services provided by them, is an important factor for successful work.

According to the focus group participants working in the Office of Resource Officer (Mandaturi) of the Ministry of Education and Science (social workers, psychologists and resource officers), referrals to their agency mainly come in by "free flow" (from children or teachers). The participants believe that it is necessary to increase public awareness regarding different risks (including violence). Also, active public engagement in reduction of general tendencies of violence that prevail in the country (media, politics, etc.) is essential.

Participants believe that socially vulnerable families need many different types of services, and especially:

- Vocational trainings
- Support in the cases of three children or more
- Support for single mothers
- Increasing families' capacities in child upbringing and development of correct values and approaches of child development

analysis of the focus group discussions with practitioners working in the field of justice (social workers, psychologists and other professionals), reveals that in some cases (especially in the case of district inspector), involvement does not serve the best interest of a child and undue interference by the district inspector might bring damage to the child and his/her family. According to the participants, the role of social agents of the Social Service Agency is essential in risk identification and prevention processes, however full implementation of this role is impossible at present with the existing number of social workers. It is important that social workers were engaged at the village and community levels and not at the regional level; this would enable them to identify risks at early stages and provide adequate support to the child and family.

According to the participants, higher engagement of the society for risk prevention is of crucial importance, especially when the risk is related to the cases of violence. For this, awareness of the society needs to be raised.

Only scarce resources are available for family support at present. According to the information of the Probation Service and Center of Crime Prevention, it is especially difficult to support families of juvenile prisoners, as employment options are limited for them. Also, representatives of the National Probation Agency explained that they are mainly working on assessment of family needs, but are not able to provide adequate assistance for family strengthening.

Service receivers – Beneficiaries

The members of the Youth Council[2] active under the National Coalition believe that the existing services (reintegration, social assistance, foster) are not effective. They think that the reintegrated family should not be

2 The Youth Council active under the National Coalition is made up of the youth, who are or have been under state care. They support other children to receive various information, share experience and provide necessary support to them. The Youth Council was recently established and plans to register as an NGO.

receiving such low funding from the government, and at minimum it should equal to the funding received by the foster family. Majority of the youth do not see the reason for such resolution of this issue. They believe that if the government is afraid that biological families will not use allocate funds purposefully, they can introduce control mechanisms. And thus, the social worker should be the main controller.

According to them, mainly non-governmental organizations take care of children. They believe that the state/government should be the main caretaker. Only a few of them noted that, "The society and family should be taking care of a child and paying due attention to them".

As to the factors that prevent families from caring for a child, the following challenges were revealed: financial issues, healthcare problems, lack of housing, and employment. Family strengthening needs to be done by the state: provision of trainings, especially awareness raising, and financing. Children need to receive education in order to be able to overcome challenges and start independent lives; thus the project that supports them with increasing capacities (to be able to enroll in higher education institutions) and vocational training courses, are especially important for them.

According to the participants the reform has not touched, "The children who have left the care institutions and currently live in the streets or have possibly committed a crime". Nobody is working with such children. The youth believe that the government should be interested in such children, study their needs and find "common language" with them.

Analysis of the focus group discussions with children living and working on the streets revealed that economic hardship of their families, unemployment, lack of permanent jobs, and health problems are the main reasons for their being on the streets. They believe that, "Hardship is nothing to be ashamed of and coming out on the streets is one of the instincts for survival, even though nobody enjoys it". In some cases parents force their children to beg (violence) – "if you do not bring money, I will not let you home". Some expressed the idea that, "The government should make parents understand that they cannot treat children poorly and support with money, food, so that parents become better and treat their children well" (parent education).

Participants mentioned that often children get used to streets and do not want to leave it anymore; it is difficult to say no to this habit. These children need support with food, clothes, toys, accommodation (place to sleep), and day centers, need to be taught how to read and write.

According to the children who live in foster care and small group homes, children should grow up with their parents, but if, "they cannot afford this, government should support them".

Participants believe that children need adequate environment, food, education, clothing, care, supervision, and housing. In order for them to feel better, the government should take better care of them. This recommendation was especially emphasized during the discussion with one of the small group homes' children. According to them, the rules have become unreasonably strict and the family environment that they used to have has changed. For example, they need to follow a lot of bureaucratic procedures when a child wants to go sightseeing; also they do not like the initiative when couples are introduced instead of a mother. Children think that when, "A person has her own family and children, she would not bother with others (children living in small group homes)". In general, children who were in small group homes and foster care had positive attitude towards the situation they were in. They positively assessed their environment, but still preferred to live with their biological mothers.

According to the participants, the state should take care of children, protect them, care for their health, and give them everything they need. Children think, "It would be better if the state gave the funding they allocate to the foster care to their families, so that they could return to their parents." Participants believe that the government should give families opportunity to take care of their children themselves and, "If a family does not have financial capacities, give them employment".

Reintegrated children unambiguously think that parents should take care of their children, however the government should support families financially, so that families can care for their children. Also, if violence is happening in families, the government should protect children from domestic violence, and identify such cases. Parents

need to understand that "Violence against children is not good". Government should provide psychological support to the abuser, and support parents so that "parents understand their children better" (teaching child upbringing methods to parents, parenting skills).

According to the results of the focus group discussions with the parents of reintegrated children, parents should be taking care of their children. However if the family does not have sufficient material resources, the state should assist.

The main challenge that can prevent a family from providing due care for their child is economic hardship. Also, the participants believe that all this influences child and his/her psychological situation (when "others have and he/she does not").

The state can provide material support to families; the assistance (90 GEL, reintegration assistance) that, "they are getting now is not enough and it should be increased". Also according to the participants, the government "Should support families with what they are lacking", meaning that the assistance should be tailored to the specific beneficiaries and their families. For some this is "rent, for some – furniture, for others just money for children". Also participants expressed the idea that sometimes a working single parent has no place to leave a child and it would have been helpful if the state organized such a service (for example a state nanny, who would be trustworthy and support with child upbringing, or kindergartens for toddlers are reopened).

Discussions were also held regarding provision of social assistance and existing criteria, according to which, families in need are not able to receive assistance.

Conclusion

Government and non-government organizations point out similar aspects while talking about the problems that exist in the child welfare system. In general, representatives of the two sectors acknowledge that the current child care system is reactive and provides non-systemic response to cases. The system needs to become more proactive that means systemic approaches to problems and introduction of well-developed mechanisms. At-risk children and their families should be identified at the earliest possible stage and the preventive measures should be defined based on the systemic analysis of families' needs. At the same time, both sectors understand that existing number of social workers is not enough to identify maximum number of at-risk families and offer them family strengthening services. Representatives of both sectors noted that the primary healthcare (district polyclinics) needs to engage more proactively to prevent child abandonment. Also, both sectors emphasized that services are disproportionately developed across the country, and regions suffer from this. Also respondents noted about the scarcity of preventive services, lack of ability of existing services to ensure prevention and the need to diversify services tailored to family needs.

Representatives of the non-governmental organizations were more open to talk about the existing problems with the cooperation between governmental and non-governmental sectors. For example, the government often fails to spend all the funding allocated for the social programmes, but does not hire non-governmental organizations for provision of services ("outsourcing"). Representatives of both governmental and non-governmental sectors emphasized that identification of cases of violence and neglect is not effective. Low awareness of society is the main reason for this. Society's awareness on issues of violence, children's rights, social responsibility and other critical problems needs to be increased.

Also, it was noted that the actors engaged in the child protection referral procedures fail to understand their role and responsibilities. This is particularly true regarding police and school. The importance of the latest in identification of children with risky behavior is acknowledged both by both sectors. It is interesting that representatives of both government and non-government organizations pointed out the lack of coordination among NGO sector that prevents successful partnerships.

Government and non-government organizations agree that child welfare services should be based on research and evidence and should be tailored to the needs of local beneficiaries instead of being mechanical copies of international practices. It is important to consider "what is working" in the local context; that would enable step-by-step planning of correct measures.

Providing services that would support parents in developing right parenting skills is acknowledged by both social service practitioners and theorists as one of the important needs. Also it is crucial that the government supports families with employment and economic strengthening. At the same time, it was noted that families are often lazy and refuse to take on employment opportunities because they are afraid to lose social aid. This is based more on a psychological than on an actual fear and is linked to the awareness raising issue. Thus it is important that the government focuses on such types of support that would make families more active, increase their economic opportunities, and change their awareness. Both practitioners and theorists share the opinion that schools are the least effective in identification of at-risk children. Also, engagement of law enforcement officers in child protection is not sufficient compared to other actors.

It is interesting that beneficiaries, their parents, and practitioners all agree that families need employment. At the same time they share the idea that families' awareness regarding violence and parenting methodologies need to be raised. They also agree that the current reintegration aid is not enough and the family support service would improve if the reintegration aid was equal to the amount allocated for the foster services. Also consensus exists regarding the need of tailoring state assistance to the needs of beneficiaries. Benefits for single parents and parents with many children need to be introduced.

Only slight difference exists between the opinions of children living and working on the streets and children in the state care institutions regarding their needs. They all want to live with their parents, and at the same time want the government to strengthen their families through employment, vocational trainings, awareness raising of parents on upbringing methodologies, etc. All children unambiguously want to live in a family environment; even those who do not have anyone want the state care to be similar to family settings. At the same time, it is interesting that the members of the Youth Council are stricter towards the government and consider the government to have the highest responsibilities in the child welfare.

It is interesting that parents fail to see the need of increasing their knowledge on effective parenting methods and family management issues. Their main desire is increased economic support by the government. Also they are concerned that often they are not engaged in the poverty programmes due to inadequate assessment criteria and in some cases really needy families are deprived of assistance by the government.

Working with Youth Exiting Care System

Analysis of Interviews

Youth that have exited from the care system have multiple needs (M. Maghlaperidze), they "basically have nothing" (I. Sarjveladze, interview). Moreover, even if they get employed (e.g. get 400 GEL salary), they would struggle to afford basic living conditions. Thus the state needs to do a lot in this direction (I. Sarjveladze, interview). Majority of them do not have shelter and "The government practically leaves our children on the streets" (E. Dgebuadze, interview). "Not only the 18 year-old but even if you put a 38 year old adult in the street, he would be distressed too. Nobody knows what would be the outcome" (E. Dgebuadze, interview) and they should be getting uninterrupted support "as part of one continuous chain, it cannot be separate, it is not right that they bring them to a certain age" and then suddenly "they are abandoned" (L. Zardalashvili, interview), "when they graduate from school, they are still too young to take care of themselves" (E. Dgebuadze, interview). Moreover, the head of the Center for Child's Rights of the Public Defender's office believes, "these children are invisible for the system" (M. Gedevanishvili, interview).

The head of Guardianship – Custody and Social Programs Department of the Social Service Agency is more optimistic, who also noted that the youth who exit from the care system at present indeed have lots of needs, because they have a very difficult institutional history. However, she believes that, "After the reform many of their current challenges will be overcome". According to her, it is necessary that a contact, cooperation, even for advocacy purposes, is maintained with these children for 2-3 years. These children should have a well-defined individual monitoring plan. Some of them might need support with housing, some – professional trainings, education, employment, assistance with the rent, etc., some kind of monetary assistance. The government must

assist the children, who exit care with adaptation and give them certain social benefits, however, development of skills for independent life should start much earlier, before a young person leaves the state care (M. Tsereteli, interview). The Social Service Agency is already working on these issues.

Director of the State Fund for the Protection and Assistance of Victims of Human Trafficking agrees to the above expressed idea that needs of the children need to be assessed before they reach 18. Role of education is extremely important in this respect. The government should "teach children how to fish". In particular, focus should be made on development of professional skills and capacities. However, in the cases of persons with disabilities the state care should also play the key role (M. Meskhi, interview).

According to the representative of local government, some benefits (fifty percent of tuition fee) are introduced for socially vulnerable youth above 18 if they enroll in higher education institutions. Also, social housing is provided for them. However, this service does not meet needs of all youth. He believes that social housing should be available for the youth who leave care system, where social workers can continue to strengthen them; so that in the future they leave the place. The state should prioritize advocacy on the problems that these youth face and promote their employment. Currently however, only computer and English courses and Town Hall's small business promotion programmes exist, that are funded by the local government (G. Mamrikishvili, interview).

According to the representative of the Social Affairs Department of Patriarchy, it is important that the youth who leave state care have housing, where they can get professional education and prepare for independent life. The Patriarchy is engaged in this and plans to become more active. "Church believes that the best would be to prepare these youth and settle them in groups in a village type settlement, so that they can engage in farming and cattle breeding, gain some income". (Z. Varazi, interview).

In order to improve the situation of these children, first,, a state policy needs to exist. For this, a soundly defined government strategy on youth exiting care and fiscal plan needs to be elaborated (M. Maghlaperidze; I Sarjveladze, interview). Non-governmental organizations are capable of offering services to these children for meeting their needs (M. Maghlaperidze; I Sarjveladze, interview). Engagement of the local municipalities is also important (I. Sarjveladze, G. Mamrikishvili, interview). But until the children leaving care becomes part of the state policy, donor funding will not exist in this direction, and accordingly, NGOs will refrain from working on it as well. Also, involvement before 18 years, while a child is still under the state care, is critical (M. Maghlaperidze, M. Tsereteli, M. Meskhi, interview). At the same time, a multidisciplinary group should be working on this issue (M. Gedevanishvili, interview). We also need to learn from other countries' experience. For example, in Spain, the state provides such children with housing and education (M. Gedevanishvili, M. Maghlaperidze, interview).

The head of the Crime Prevention Center believes that their agency should focus on the children who exit care. According to him, "We have contacts with similar organizations. However, we do not yet know what kind of support we will provide; probably we will support them to continue education, offer them vocational trainings. If someone is good at sports, we will support them to develop, engage them in sports, in recreational activities. Will assist them with healthcare issues and with legal documentations" (J. Kvinikadze, interview).

Experts emphasize importance of multiagency cooperation for development of services for children leaving care (J. Kvinikadze, N. Shatberashvili, interview). N. Shatberashvili noted: "Government has the leading role. Resources of international donors, non-governmental and commercial sectors should be consolidated towards effective preparation of youth". In addition, cooperation with the Ministry of Internal Affairs is particularly important. It was also mentioned that during child's stay in the care institution social worker should work on strengthening child's family, so that a positive attachment is maintained between a child and his/her family (N. Shatberashvili, interview). Also, it is critical to work on child's mentality, his/her education, "increasing awareness", and social responsibility (J. Kvinikadze, interview). A database that would collect information on children who exit care system, services provided to them, their education and skills, etc., should exist. These data should be complemented with recommendations from the care institution's staff regarding the child and his/her needs, so that the organizations who will continue working with the child can be well informed. Thus, a coordinated data management by various entities is very important. Representative of the Patriarchy's Social Affairs Department acknowledges importance of cooperation among multiple actors and believes the Patriarchy's participation in the process is important. "Church should not be perceived as an opponent of social changes. We should also be

invited; we will participate and express our opinion, others can share theirs. We have two thousand-years of experience in social service . . . Issue of children above 18 is an important matter and everyone should be engaged" (Z. Varazi, interview).

Thus, the majority believes that the government (Ministry of Health, Labor and Social Affairs, Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs, local government and others) should be liable for provision of care and supervision to youth who exit state care system through various means such as: development of skills required for an independent life (so-called essential lifestyle skills), provision of vocational and higher education, support employment, provision of housing (rental of apartment, social housing, etc.), monetary assistance, psychosocial and other types of consultation, regular support and supervision.

Analysis of Focus Groups

Service Providers, Coordinators and Practitioners

Analysis of focus group discussions with the programme leads of the Coalition (Georgian Coalition for Child and Youth Welfare) member non-governmental organizations shows that the Coalition has developed a concept regarding the issue of youth leaving care. The concept provides following recommendations to the government.

- Government needs to elaborate implementation mechanisms for responsibilities defined in the action plan
- Government needs to develop variety of programmes/services for intermediate, semi-independent and independent life
- Government should consider international and national experience for resolution of mentioned issues
- Start working with the children during their stay in the care services
- Continue provision of care for children who have existed care and are above 18
- Introduce tax benefits

It was also noted that small group homes have the responsibility to prepare children for independent life, but a separate programme that would work on this direction is better to exist. The reason for this is lack of necessary qualification among the caregivers, to correctly plan child's preparation for an independent life.

Practitioner social workers of the Social Service Agency unanimously declare that youth who leave care system face many problems including lack of education, employment, housing, psycho-social support, , and yet the "government currently does nothing" for their resolution. Youth leaving care, who do not have legal identification documents (even though their number is not high) face the biggest problem. Also, it should be mentioned that beneficiaries of small group homes have a number of services that prepare for exiting care (psychological service, support for vocational education, etc.), however those who are in foster care do not have access to such services. However, the services that are currently available for the beneficiaries of small group homes are still not enough. No services are available for children with disabilities who leave the care system and if they cannot return to their families, the only place left for them to go are community organizations.

Practitioners working in the non-governmental sector (social workers, psychologists and other professionals) agree with the practitioners of the Social Service Agency in that "the government practically does nothing" for the youth who have exited the care system. It was mentioned that only two organizations – Georgia "SOS" Children's Villages and Association "Our Home – Georgia" together with the fund "Natakhtari" work in this direction. As noted the project of the Association "Our Home – Georgia" provides psycho-social support, assistance on professional orientation and other services to the beneficiaries of small group homes only; unfortunately, children in foster care cannot access their services. However, despite this project, many needs of small group homes' beneficiaries still remain unmet. Because of this, according to participants, "Several small group homes allowed exceptions and left children above 18 years to live with them, as they have no place to go".

It was noted that employment of youth who have exited from the care system is particularly problematic because, according to participants, "A stigma that children from care institutions are not trustworthy and are not wanted at jobs exists in the society".

Also, public school fails to respond to contemporary challenges and does not equip students with "real education" that would assist them in transition to independent life. Office of Resource Officer and Psychological Center of Educational Institutions does not have data regarding problems of children who have exited from the care system. However, in general, they express the same idea that, "Adequate services, such as employment, socialization, education, housing and other, do not exist". Also, it was mentioned that the school administration should not force children with lower capacities to leave school after 9th grade, because this decreases their chances for future career. The only opportunity for them is to continue education in vocational colleges that often is "a very short-term" resolution of the problem and does not guarantee graduates' employment. According to them, the youth who only have "basic education do not have opportunity to get continue studying and mainly spend time on the streets".

Practitioners working in the field of justice: social workers, psychologists and other professionals share the above opinion that services that are required for the youth who leave care system (housing, psycho-social support, education, employment, etc.) are nearly non-existent.

One of the main risks these youth face is the risk of committing crime; for this reason the Center for Crime Prevention works with the youth at the secondary crime prevention stage. However, according to the participants, Center for Crime Prevention only provides mentorship support to youth, while they need much more diverse services for adequate prevention of risks.

Service receivers – beneficiaries: according to the members of the Youth Council active under the National Coalition, it is Important that youth were prepared for independent life and were offered professional orientation during their stay in the state care system (from the age of 15). They believe that children who stay in small group homes get used to comfort and are left unprepared after they leave the system. Moreover, the majority of them stay on the streets and might face the risk of committing crime. According to the Youth Council members, social workers and caregivers should be actively involved in developing skills necessary for independent life among the youth. Additionally, they believe development of peer support programmes to be important.

Children living in foster care and small group homes believe that transition to independent life is difficult after living in a closed system. They think that after the age of 18 they will require assistance from the government with employment and finding housing. The majority of them want to return to their biological parents, while others prefer to remain independent from biological parents, learning and working; they do not want to "loose time" by going back to their biological parents. Also some dissatisfaction was expressed regarding the fact that in the past at one of the small group homes children's preparation for independent life used to start from age of 14, while now children move out only after 18. Children explain this with financial issues, "Because, the earlier they start the preparation programme for independent life, more expensive the service would be". It was also noted (mainly by the children in foster care) that currently the government, "does nothing for preparing children for independent life after 18". On the other hand, it was mentioned that everything they learn at schools is important, but "A child should himself/herself have skills that are necessary for independent life".

Reintegrated children also believe that youth above the age of 18 still require support from the government in finding employment, and acquiring professional education. According to parents of reintegrated families, children who are in the state care are limited compared to others. They do not have opportunity to get good education and acquire profession. Therefore the government should support them and give them better education. The government should respond to individual needs of each of these children. Also, the government has the responsibility to provide housing to all of these children. Without the state supervision, "these children may easily be found on a bad road". Children working and living in the streets talk about the threats that they may face on the streets. These threats include: becoming victim of violence, including sexual violence, becoming a drug addict (glue inhalation, other), committing crime, etc.

Conclusion

It may be concluded that representatives of both governmental and non-governmental sectors see the need of elaborating by the government correct strategy for those children who leave state care after they turn 18. They

acknowledge that the policy for preparation of youth for independent life and programmes/services for supporting transition of youth from care system do not exist at present.

It should also be mentioned that the Child Welfare and Protection Action Plan 2012-2015 contains an article (3.6), about preparation for independent life and social integration that provides the basis for the government, as well for the non-governmental sector, to become more active in this direction.

In this respect, plans and initiatives of the Crime Prevention Center that focus on the youth who exit state care and cooperation with the NGO sector around this issue are important. Need of interagency cooperation also become apparent; it will be decisive in terms of achieving success in this regards. The main actors fail to see the role of the local municipalities; NGO sector has the expectation that after the government elaborates implementation mechanisms of the responsibilities defined by the action plan, NGOs will ensure development of multiple services/programmes (programmes/services for so-called intermediate, semi-independent and independent life) for the youth who exit care system. Social Affairs Department of Patriarchy is ready to get actively involved in working on this issue. According to the experts, the government should apply national and international experience for resolution of these issues. Even though the existing experience is insufficient, the practitioners positively assess experience and achievements of the association "Our Home – Georgia" and the Fund "Natakhtari", as well as Georgia – SOS Children's Villages. Also, the Office of Resource Officer of Educational Institution fails to see its role in this respect. However, the role of school in giving such education to children that would enable them to advance professionally is essential. It is noteworthy that the Office of Resource Officer has professional orientation specialists, who are directly responsible to provide professional consultations to top grade students. However, children who are under the state care are not perceived as part of the public schools and majority of the respondents think that separate structures and services should be responsible for them. Also, practitioners of the Office of Resource Officer less positively assess professional colleges. Neither theorists nor practitioners have specified what kind of services should be developed for children with disabilities, and what should be the state strategy on this.

Thus, it is essential that the government starts working on development of independent life skills and education, as well as development of professional interests early on while the child is still in the care system. Engagement of a multidisciplinary group (social worker, caregiver, psychologist, etc.) will be effective in this regard. Beneficiaries themselves agree that development of skills necessary for independent life and professional development is essential for them, and believe that the government should ensure their further adaptation with the environment (housing, employment, monetary assistance and other social benefits).

Juvenile Justice

Analysis of Interviews

Children in conflict with the law have diverse needs. First of all, children have low awareness regarding "what is a crime, what is considered as stealing, what is hooliganism", etc. It is critical to raise awareness on these issues. Also, it is important to change criminal mentality among the children (I. Sarjveladze, M. Meskhi, interview), develop healthy mindset and strategic thinking (L. Zardalashvili, interview), increase social responsibility (M. Gedevanishvili, interview). Research needs to be conducted with the children in conflict with the law that would study reasons for committing crime. This would enable one to determine the main risks that trigger criminal behavior among the youth. As a next step, it is necessary to work on these risks and develop evidence based services for crime prevention (I. Sarjveladze, M. Gedevanishvili, interview). Also, publishing work is important that is not very advanced right now. Articles on this issue need to be published on regular basis (M. Gedevanishvili, interview).

It is interesting that the Ministry of Internal Affairs has conducted statistical analysis of the most frequent crimes. According to this statistics, "Crimes that go beyond the intention to meet minimum material needs are rare". Thus, it can be concluded that social environment is one of the main challenges that trigger crime; children do not have the minimum required means of subsistence and are forced to steal; on the other hand, there are

cases of drug abuse, mainly easily accessible drugs, e.g. marijuana, that is grown in the regions (M. Peradze, interview). Raising child's awareness in this respect is very important. Thus, it is essential that school and education sector becomes more active (M. Peradze, M. Gedevanishvili, interview). However, teachers, resource officers, parents also need to increase knowledge, so that they can identify whether a child is drug user, or have any risky behavior, to ensure timely interference, "before situation becomes graver" (M. Peradze). It is important to strengthen parents in this direction, so that they can cope with a child's difficult behavior using correct parenting methods (M. Gedevanishvili). Head of the Department of Inclusive Education Development of the Ministry of Education and Science suggests that crime is supported in the family environment where there are: family social-psychological problems, parents are in penitentiaries, parents are drug addicts and alcoholics (E. Dgebuadze, interview).

The representative of the UN Children's Fund, while taking about risk factors of crime, also emphasizes "The importance of considering a child in respect to his/her family, school, social environment, circle of friends". Hence, a holistic multidisciplinary approach should be applied for development of prevention mechanisms (T. Kuchava, interview).

Social service should play a significant role in overcoming social and psychological problems that exist in child's family environment. Because of the lack of normal family environment "Children go on the streets and commit crime". Social service fails to address this problem. Majority of difficult children are sent to Samterdia #15 school that creates a boomerang effect. This happens because "Neither the education system nor social service has 'additional services' that would enable to keep child with the family and promote healthy environment in the family" (E. Dgebuadze, interview).

N. Pirashvili indicates that a low criminological situation cannot be achieved without overcoming poverty and unemployment in the country. The government should support employment of youth above 18, because alcoholism prevails in the communities with unemployed groups of youth. "Youth have huge energy that they do not know how to exhaust" (M. Gedevanishvili, interview).

The prevention work that the government implements at present "is very general" (M. Gedevanishvili, interview). Crime prevention is a serious, global problem which schools society in general should be involved in. However, this is acknowledged only verbally. The education system needs to be improved. Currently schools are not interested in what happens after school hours. It is important to have a child's spare time planned, structured, and interesting so that he/she does not have much spare time left; this should be schools' priority. Schools should be engaged in prevention issues, provide professional orientations; work with children with difficult behavior (M. Gedevanishvili, interview). Because of the lack of services, children are left on the streets, where they commit crime. New directions of state service need to be developed; so-called "after care" service that means services after care institutions, will assist to prevent academic lag and develop social skills among children, so that they have no desire to commit crime. Governments will needs to exist, "Because new state service cannot be established without the government's decree" (N. Pirashvili, interview).

It is important to support adaptation of former prisoners with their new environment, professional trainings, and employment. However, the existing stigma and stereotypes towards the former prisoners prevents the employment process (J. Kvinikadze, G. Mamrikishvili, interview). In a majority of cases, employers refuse to give prisoners jobs. Without employment, reintegration and resocialization into the society is impossible. Also, it is necessary to work on psychological problems of former prisoners (J. Kvinikadze). Children need to be prepared in advance before they are discharged (N. Shatberashvili, interview).

It is important to arrange juvenile institutions (number of beds in the cell, etc.) considering psychological factors of the underage offender (L. Zardalashvili, interview). It is also essential to define age of minority, meaning the age for incurring criminal liability, and if a minor is sent to a penitentiary. The system should further help youth to get involved in the learning process, work, and sports activities (L. Zardalashvili, interview). Moreover, L. Zardalashvili believes that, "The system should maximally try to prevent cases of child imprisonment". The mentioned opinion is shared by the representative of the Social Affairs Department of Patriarchy. According to Z. Varazi, "Child's isolation that is happening in prisons is not right. This is not an acceptable behavior towards a child. Imprisonment is too big punishment for a child". He believes that if a child "Is socially dangerous", different

professionals, like psychologists, teachers, and priests should work with the child, and thus imprisonment is not a necessary measure. N. Shatberashvili thinks that a social worker or probation officer should be engaged prior to a court's decision and defend the minor's interests to help avoid punishment. And if punishment is inevitable, then a child's needs, interests and desires – such as engagement in rehabilitation services should be taken into consideration. If a child becomes full age at the prison, his/her psychological age needs to be assessed, so that in case of transition to adult prison does not damage his/her situation even more (N. Shatberashvili, interview).

At this stage it is impossible to determine how effectively needs of children in conflict with the law are met, because this issue is under researched (N. Shatberashvili, interview). According to the representatives of the State Defender's Office, the physical conditions and care for prisoners have improved at Avchala 11th Juvenile Prison (M. Gedevanishvili, interview). Compared to the past the system is more open today (N. Shatberashvili, interview) and the reforms implemented within the system are visible. For example, according to I. Sarjveladze, at Avchala Juvenile prison children between 14 and 18 years of age "are in a quite comfortable environment". They have access to an education facility, where public school teachers provide classes according to the national plan. The facility is open all day long, and they can move around everywhere. The staff is well trained. There are psycho-social programmes, therapy, consultations by psychologists and social workers, and vocational courses. A multidisciplinary team works with each youth. Most importantly, "individual approaches to serving sentence" are introduced. This ensures adaptation within this institution and acquisition of such general skills that children of the same age are acquiring outside of prison; the environment also promotes prevention of crime repetition. However, it needs to be noted that consultations at international and local levels on improving legislation regarding juvenile crime prevention mechanisms are ongoing. Representatives of the Public Defender's Office emphasize that monitoring of juvenile penitentiaries still revealed many shortcomings, even though the progress is visible (M. Gedevanishvili, N. Pirashvili, interview). Among them is the need to better elaborate individual plans (N. Pirashvili, interview). However, the situation is graver in other penitentiaries. For example, representative of the Public Defender's Office noted that convicted under age and full age prisoners are in the same building in Gldani. Their physical separation is of utmost importance and needs to happen urgently (M. Gedevanishvili, interview).

Another big problem is faced after a child returns home. "A child is taught to work on books, is engaged in a certain regime, social worker has some progress, but after he/she returns home, an alcoholic father forces a child to bring home money. Child has to go and steal, commit a crime". Hence, resocialization services are necessary after serving a sentence. It is essential that child does not return to the same environment, and if necessary, needs to be separated from such family (N. Pirashvili, interview).

The government has drafted prevention strategy that consists of working at three levels: (a) primary/early prevention, that targets all underage children throughout the country; resource officers service and school's approaches are important in this regards; (b) secondary prevention that focuses on under age children that are on the verge of committing crime and ensure reduction of risk factors that trigger crime. It should be noted that in terms of secondary prevention timely identification of at-risk youth and development of effective referral mechanism is important. And the last (c), tertiary prevention, that aims to prevent repetition of crime, correction of child, resocialization and rehabilitation of a convict. Thus, prevention programmes should be divided according to target groups and problem development stages.

The National Probation Agency and Center for Crime Prevention work on resocialization issues at present. Experts emphasize that there are quite good programmes and services (I. Sarjveladze, N. Shatberashvili, interview). Moreover, in the cases of minors, the Probation Service gets engaged at the transition phase a few months before the discharge in order to assess family environment and work with them to eliminate "possible triggers of crime". The Center for Crime Prevention has very good programmes, however, they are not mandatory for the beneficiaries (I. Sarjveladze, interview). Also, head of the Center for Crime Prevention positively assesses the work of the Prevention Service. According to J. Kvinikadze, the National Probation Agency "does a lot for turning a probation period more into the rehabilitation process, so that it is not a formality as it used to be".

Currently many new services are planned at the National Probation Agency. Probation officers are gradually replaced by social workers, "That means substituting a military person with a psychologist. This will be reflected on probationers as well" (J. Kvinikadze, interview).

Experts declare that diversion and mediation programmes are implemented successfully (J. Kvinikadze, M. Gedevanishvili, interview). In this respect, a positive dynamics is visible: 2 diverted offenders in 2010, 83 diverted offenders – in 2011, up to 130 – in 2012, and around 330 – in 2013 (J, Kvinikadze, interview). In 2012 only five offenders repeated crime out of 206 (M. Gedevanishvili, interview). Currently this programme is implemented throughout the country. According to this data, we can say that criminal justice has been liberalized. This means that, "Prosecutors have become more human, and are not put pressure, for example, by the Minister of Justice", "They can make independent decisions" (J. Kvinikadze, interview). Representative of the Ministry of Internal Affairs also positively assesses diversion and mediation, and probation programmes (M. Peradze, interview). According to him, "Children who participate in this programme are luckier than others (compared to those who have committed crime under the age 14, author), because the government has a programme for them. Also, children who are on probation term are lucky, because they are under supervision and the government works with them". M. Gedevanishvili noted, "Unfortunately, in the cases of repetition of crime the diversion cannot happen. It would be good if second diversion was possible because statistical data showed good results in regard with the diversion programme".

Strategy implementation of juvenile justice reform should be a joint and coordinated effort of various entities. Role of the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Corrections and Legal Assistance, Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Labor, Health and Social Affairs, and the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs are important in this respect. Active support from the civil society and international organizations and their participation in the strategy implementation process is also essential.

Representative of the Ministry of Internal Affairs noted that crime prevention is Ministry of Internal Affair's responsibility (M. Peradze, interview). Prevention is part of the law enforcement officers' everyday work. For example, "The increased number of police cars that patrol streets with lights on and might at first glance be irritating, is a tested method; level of crime is reduced, when the police is seen on the streets often. Besides, there are district inspectors, who tour their district zones, visit families, work with them, register families so they know how many family members there are, what are their social status, etc" (M. Peradze, interview). There are a few other programmes implemented by the Ministry for primary prevention. According to E. Dgebuadze, many prevention projects are ongoing by the Ministry of Internal Affairs (events, trainings at schools), however they are not enough.

J. Kvinikadze believes that different government agencies cooperate successfully in this respect. He noted that there is a very successful partnership between the Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Corrections and Legal Assistance and "In general, liberalization of approaches, focusing on human rights and decreasing priority of punishment" contributes to introduction of rehabilitation and resocialization approaches in the penitentiary system.

For example, the National Probation Agency, where a juvenile offender who has come out from the Penitentiary Agency and is on a probation term is engaged, and the Center for Crime Prevention of the Ministry of Justice work very effectively. J. Kvinikadze says: "We have elaborated a joint strategy. Our approach implies that rehabilitation starts at the prison. Then it continues either at the National Probation Agency, or at our agency". Moreover, both above mentioned entities (National Probation Agency and Center for Crime Prevention) offer services to a former prisoner, if on a probation term. Center for Crime Prevention has the most elaborated database of services in Georgia that is based on the results of wide-range research. As a result of this research information, all services that may be offered to former prisoners, probationers, and diverted offenders have been collected. Besides, it is planned to open branch offices in the regions that will enable the Center for Crime Prevention to work at all levels of prevention. Representative of the Public Defender also mentioned that it is critical to devote more attention to the regions, especially to high mountainous regions, because social charge is accumulated there (M. Gedevanishvili, interview), that may become a source of crime (M. Peradze, interview).

Also, there is effective cooperation among other government structures. For example, the Center for Crime Prevention has successfully cooperated with the Prosecutor's Office, through provision of trainings for prosecutors, where effectiveness and importance of child diversion was discussed in details; it was explained "that it gives the youth a chance to avoid responsibility for the first criminal offence" and this chance needs to be used for their own benefit, and eventually, for the benefit of an entire society. Cooperation between the Ministry of

Justice (Center for Crime Prevention) and the Ministry of Internal Affairs will become even stronger in regard to the secondary prevention. In particular, the Ministry of Internal Affairs will provide full information about those children who commit crime under the age of 14 so that the Center for Crime Prevention intensively works with this risk group for crime prevention. In this regard, the opinion of the head of the Projects Division of the International Relations Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, M. Peradze is rather interesting. According to her, children under 14 who commit crime but have not yet reached amenability age, need to be engaged in special prevention activities, so that they become law obedient citizens. However, according to her, "Here we lack resources, not only human, but legal mechanisms". The issue is that such children are not put in "database" and hence nobody works with them. Thus, M. Peradze believes that, "Amenability age needs to be lowered, because otherwise the government cannot work with such children".

According to the head of the Center for Crime Prevention, cooperation is planned with the Office of Resource Officer of the Ministry of Education and Science, where a Psychological Center has been opened. Representative of the Office of Resource Officer confirms that "many government entities address them to start partnership in future" in this respect. However, he believes that no effective steps have been made yet. L. Zardalashvili says: "It would be helpful is a group (government and NGO) gathered to discuss such activities, plan it and find funding, which is not much. I mean different types of activities (for example a camp), that cannot be financed by own means". According to him, the Office of Resource Officer has two main roles: (1) Identification of violence (students and resource officers will be trained on this), and (2) introduction of various recreational, information activities (trainings, hiking, seminars). Director of the State Fund for the Protection and Assistance of Victims of Human Trafficking believes that the current Office of Resource Officer is not as effective as it used to be in the past. Control at schools needs to be intensified (checking of knives, smoking, etc. and other risky behaviors). According to him, "A clear concept on how to implement prevention activities in the education system is lacking" (M. Meskhi, interview).

Efforts of the Ministry of Labor, Health and Social Affairs in respect to Juvenile Justice field should be described separately (J. Kvinikadze, interview). However, experts' opinions on this issue differ. For example, E. Dgebuadze, representative of the Ministry of Education and Science, noted that, "Social service should be working more actively, studying the situation in depth and providing more effective response that would prevent separation of children from their families". A family strengthening services needs to be introduced (E. Dgebuadze, interview). On the other hand, representatives of the Social Service Agency indicate at passiveness of the Ministry of Education in the context of the child welfare reform (M. Tsereteli, interview).

Representatives of Social Service Agency are engaged in all working groups that work on prevention, diversion, etc. (M. Tsereteli, interview). Also, emphasis was made on the ongoing programmes (establishment of day centers) that directly focus children living and working on the streets that is the highest risk group for committing potential crime. N. Pirashvili emphasizes that majority of children living and working on the streets commits crime. They need to be identified, with engagement of all ministries, and the government needs to start working with them. Day center services and other diverse services need to be open. Also, it is necessary that the Ministry of Education and Science considered "children living and working on the streets" as children with special education needs, who have serious academic lag. Today the term 'children with special education needs' implies children, who: 1. Have physical and mental development disorder; 2. Have eyesight and acoustic disorder; 3. Have speech, behavior and emotional disorder; 4. Are in need of long term medication/hospitalizations; 5. Represent ethnical minorities; 6. Are socially vulnerable, and 7. Are under the risk of being expelled from the education process because of the difficulties with the learning process. Children living and working on the streets are not considered by this definition, as not all children on streets fall under the category of social vulnerable, national minority or person with disabilities. Addition of the category of children living and working on the streets to the above definition would enable the government to devote more attention and resources to addressing problems of these children. Also, increased role of the Ministry of Internal Affairs is necessary; they need to interfere and take such children (who are forced to beg on streets by their parents) to special day centers (N. Pirashvili, interview).

It is interesting that none of the interviewed experts mentioned about the role of the local government in regard to the crime prevention. According to the representative of local municipality, more effective programmes

need to be introduced, especially for rehabilitation of people addicted to harmful substances (majority of whom are former prisoners). For example, so called "Team Challenge" programme that is developed in partnership with Australia, is more effective than substitution therapy. This programme envisages psychological rehabilitation of drug addicts. Within this programme they will get support with employment and housing. G. Mamrikishvili believes that "political will for overcoming addiction and reducing risk of crime" is essential. Representative of the Center for Children and Youth of Public Defender noted that their center is planning to get engaged in number of programmes that work with children in conflict with the law, however so far it is just a plan (M. Gedevanishvili, interview).

Strong cooperation between governmental and non-governmental organizations is necessary for introduction of different programmes. It is necessary that NGOs "get engaged in improvement and providing feedback on existing services", so that their opinion is considered by the government (I. Sarjveladze, interview). According to the head of the Juvenile Justice Programme of UN Children's Fund, the government has thorough understanding about what needs to be done for in the justice field for crime prevention. Thus, "More technical support in development of services is needed" from the NGO sector (T. Kuchava, interview). Head of the Rehabilitation Division of the National Probation Agency believes that recently "non-governmental organization are more actively engaged and offer rehabilitation services, sport and recreation programmes" (N. Shatberashvili, interview), however, it is necessary to diversify existing services, because "there are not enough services" (N. Pirashvili, interview).

The government "buys" services from the non-governmental organization or provides recommendations to donors. Thus, there is mutual interest in this respect (J. Kvinikadze, interview). By doing so, "It is possible to receive a higher quality and diverse service" (J. Kvinikadze, interview). The government's role is to work with NGOs, persuade them in the importance of this work, so that they "focus on these issues, increase their qualification in this direction and provide better services" (J. Kvinikadze, interview). According to L. Zardalashvili, non-governmental sector can lead on provision of after-school activities, introduce programmes that support crime prevention and development of correct mentality, strategic vision and non-violence approaches among the youth; however, it is "such a serious issue, that not only our institution, but the entire ministry cannot cope with it". NGOs should offer youth educational, sport and recreational activities, time management and healthy lifestyle trainings, activities that raise their awareness (N. Shatberashvili, interview). NGOs are the main providers of services for children living and working on the streets (e.g. Caritas). Children are slowly attracted to the day centers and engaged in the socialization process; after that, they are offered different services. The day centers should play a transitional role for street children. Crisis intervention centers need to improve. NGOs should plan active role in implementation of various pilot projects in this direction (N. Pirashvili, interview).

Non-governmental organizations play role in strengthening civil society and raising civil awareness. The society should understand that a juvenile offender is a victim of society; the cause of the crime lies 'externally', "crime is a result of the external conditions" (M. Gedevanishvili, interview).

Non-governmental organizations should take the leading role in developing evidence-based recommendations for the government structures, so that the next steps are taken at legislative and legal levels.

Analysis of Focus Groups

Service Providers, Coordinators and Practitioners

Analysis of focus group discussions with the representatives of the ***Coalition*** (Georgian Coalition for Child and Youth Welfare) ***member non-governmental organizations*** working on juvenile justice issues shows that:

- It is necessary to introduce **legal education component** at schools
- **Enhance provision of information through media outlets** to society
- Develop and provide **diverse rehabilitation and prevention** services

The participants noted that when a child becomes involved in the law enforcement system, he/she automatically becomes a victim of violence, because the system is not tailored to a child and the law enforcement bodies still use outdated methods.

The psychological centers of the Ministry of Education in Tbilisi, Kutaisi and Batumi were considered as an achievement in this field. Also, the Office of Resource Officer was acknowledged positively.

Member of the focus groups that consisted of the ***practitioners (social workers, psychologists, and other professionals) working in the field of justice*** emphasized the problems that exist in the field of juvenile justice at present:

- Exchange of information among the actors working with children in the field of justice is rather limited. Children's cases do not get referred or gets sent rather late from the penitentiaries to the probation service or the Center for Crime Prevention. It is important that after a child is brought to penitentiary information about the child's case gets automatically sent to the Probation Service or Center for Crime Prevention, so that respective agency starts work with the child's family and start child's preparation for a discharge
- Also, it is important to harmonize existing legislation with the international standards in regard to registration, storage, exchange and elimination procedures of information about a child in the preventive and probation system. Above issue is not regulated that makes partnership between different agencies difficult
- Preparation of juvenile offenders for exiting penitentiary institution is not sufficiently implemented. Currently, working with the beneficiary is brought down to one visit only. Engagement of the National Probation Agency and Center for Crime Prevention is important; so is needs to be a well-planned case transition process
- Social workers of the penitentiary department are restricted from working with the families of juvenile offenders. Probation Service or Center for Crime Prevention works with the family, however their work is rather limited too. For example, probation service mainly assesses family needs, but is not able to provide sufficient work for family strengthening
- If a child after the exit from penitentiary does not have a probation term, situation becomes even more complicated; in this case he/she is referred to the Center for Crime Prevention; cooperation with this center, unlike the Probation Service, is voluntary
- Children, who exit penitentiary institutions very often commit crime again and return to prison, because they do not have access to those services that they need to continue normal life outside of a penitentiary institution. They often have shelter, but do not have supportive families, have no professional skills necessary for employment. Majority of vocational courses provided at the institutions are not based on the market demands. Also, social workers and psychologists fail to prepare and strengthen them during their stay at the penitentiary, because of procedural limitations and other reasons.

Participants positively assess the Rehabilitation-Resocialization Strategy 2014-2015 Action Plan of criminal justice system that was recently adopted and defines main responsibilities of all involved actors.

Focus group participants consisting of ***practitioners from the Office of Resource Officer of the Educational Institution (social worker, psychologist and resource officers)*** mentioned that the Psychological Centers active under the Office of Resource Officer in the past (when it was managed by the organization Global Initiative in Psychiatry) closely cooperated with the diversion programme and its beneficiaries. However, currently this cooperation is not as close.

Participants of the focus group with ***social workers of Social Service Agency*** believe there are multiple problems in the field of juvenile justice. Firstly, participants noted that the services offered by the Center for Crime Prevention and Ministry of Corrections and Legal Assistance to the juvenile offenders are inadequate and insufficient. An important limitation is that social workers of the penitentiary institutions cannot work with the families of a child who serves a sentence. Another difficulty is that a child, once convicted or on probation term, is not obliged to take psychologist's or social worker's consultations. There are no encouragement mechanisms (reduction of term, etc.) for the cases when a child works with the mentioned professionals. Another big problem in the field of juvenile justice is lack of communication among involved agencies. For example, there has been a case when a juvenile offender was discharged from the beneficiary straight to the streets, instead of referring information to the Social Service Agency, despite the fact that he had no place to go.

According to some respondents, existence of a separate system of court/judges for children is very important in regard to reformation of the juvenile justice system.

Neither of the focus group participants ***with the practitioners*** (social workers, psychologists and other professionals) from ***the non-governmental sector*** had direct experience of working in the field of juvenile justice, therefore, they refrained from assessing this system. One participant noted that, according to her observations, "Children who were in the care system a few years ago, are often interrogated at the prosecutor's office at present".

Service receivers – beneficiaries

During the focus group discussions conducted with participation of members of ***Youth Council active under the National Coalition*** regarding reasons for juvenile crime the following were identified: hunger and poverty, lack of care, and need to meet basic needs (government does not provide any services to children above 18). According to the youth, they "do not have anything, so they steal in order to have it". A child commits crime because he/she has no other choice. Also, they noted that a child often commits a crime to prove himself, "sometime it is dictated by others"; there is an entire system of a criminal world, "institution" in the streets.

According to children living and working on the streets, they face lots of threats on the streets, including committing crime, "glue" inhalation, and violence. Society perceives them as criminals. Often they are accused of stealing for no reason. According to them, "Sometimes they are unfairly accused of different crimes (e.g. stealing something), only because they are on the streets".

Opinions of the children from foster care and small group homes fully coincide with the above ideas regarding the causes of juvenile crime. According to them, "in majority of cases children steal because they are hungry, they do not have any means or support to live normal lives". Besides, children find themselves on the streets thanks to their parents, who force them to beg, "work" and thus, they automatically become part of "the street world". The government and parents should teach and explain to children "what is good and what is bad", "what are the consequences of bad behavior". According to them, it is important that a child knows this, "the rest depends on a child".

The reintegrated children also confirm that children commit crime "because of poverty, as they do not have any means". A child's family environment is another reason. According to them, if there is no love in the family, this influences a child and his/her behavior ("when there is no love at home, I doubt anything good will come out of it"). Government should be stricter in identifying "bad circles" and "catch offenders". Also, it is important to support "poor, violent families that have various problems, so that they become better and provide better conditions for their children".

According to the ***parents of reintegration families,*** juvenile crime is based on ***poverty and lack of love among family members***. In order to avoid this ***government should support families in child upbringing***, because various problems inside families increase chances of child's involvement in criminal activities. Also, it was mentioned that in some cases child is inclined to commit a crime and the government cannot change anything.

Conclusion

At the government level, the ongoing reforms in the juvenile justice field (mediation and diversion programmes, #11 Avchala Juvenile Penitentiary, probation programmes) are assessed very positively, and in some cases even with exaggeration. The international sector also positively refers to the reforms implemented in this field. The common idea expressed by all actors refers to considering a child within (as part of) an ecosystem, because children should be considered in respect to their families, school, friends and society. Therefore, when we discuss risk factor of crime, and accordingly, prevention targets, it is necessary to develop family strengthening services in economic, psycho-social directions, raise public awareness, change mentality of schools and community, increase involvement of schools; this would enable them to take better care of students' spiritual and physical health, and their time management, etc. Thus, prevention should systemic and should apply multidisciplinary approaches and engage representatives of different professions.

Assessments of the reform by practitioner social workers and high level governmental structure representatives in many cases do not coincide. Social workers, psychologists and other specialists, employed in the penitentiary, justice and probation system are more realistic in assessing the situation and outline existing problems that they currently face in the system. Firstly, this is the lack of work with the families. For example, social workers of the penitentiary system cannot at all work with the families. Another apparent problem is ineffective communication among different systems working in the field of juvenile justice (cases do not get referred on time/at all from the penitentiary system to the probation service or Center for Crime Prevention). This prevents social workers of the National Probation Agency and Center for Crime Prevention to work with child's family; this gets negatively reflected on the results and in majority of cases end with the return of a child to the prison. The probation service mainly assesses family's needs, but is not able to work on family strengthening due to lack or inadequacy of services. The juvenile returns to the same problematic family environment that triggered his/her delinquent behavior. Also, as noted, development of variety of resocialization services is required.

Moreover, practitioners unambiguously declare that children are not sufficiently prepared for the exit from the penitentiary institution; in the best case, work with the beneficiary is limited only to one visit. Moreover, case referral is very ineffective and social workers do not work adequately with the juvenile offenders within the penitentiary system. Besides that, services of the Center for Crime Prevention is voluntary, which means that if a juvenile is not on a probation term, he/she can refuse from participation in the psycho-social rehabilitation and resocialization activities; this has a boomerang effect on his/her future. According to practitioners, some encouragement mechanism needs to be introduced for former prisoners to ensure their involvement in various resocialization services and cooperation with professionals.

The vocational courses offered at the penitentiary institutions do not answer demands of the labor market that means that after returning from prison juvenile is left not only without family support, but also without employment. A young person cannot develop in such conditions. On top of it the stigma that exists in the society pushes the youth back to the penitentiary, where, paradoxically he finds himself more "self-realized", "needed", compared to while being free.

Thus, it is necessary that representatives of top management listened more to the practitioners, in order to better see the challenges that follow implementation of the reform and tertiary prevention. The two-year action plan for rehabilitation and resocialization strategy of criminal justice system that in detail describes participants' responsibilities is assessed very positively.

In addition, organization of joint working groups with the Office of Resource Officers is planned; all experts and practitioners acknowledge importance of such work on the level of primary prevention. Representatives of the Office of Resource Officer are less informed about this and more pessimistic. Higher school engagement envisages increased involvement of students in extracurricular and sport activities that would result in meaningful allocation of spare time, awareness raising, development of civil awareness, professional interests and lastly, development into a law obedient citizen, with correct values in life. Thus, school is the most appropriate environment for primary prevention activities. According to one of the experts, a concept of prevention needs to be elaborated for the education system. Also, some believe that after school extracurricular services need to the introduced at the government level.

Social and psychological empowerment of families needs to become part of the primary and secondary levels of prevention. This is where the role of the Social Service Agency becomes important: support families to apply correct, non-violent parenting methods and deal with social problems. Some agencies express dissatisfaction in regards to these issues towards the Social Service Agency, because it does not always follow the referred cases and respond to them effectively. On the other hand, representatives of Social Service Agency express discontent towards the Office of Resource Officer and schools, where identification and referral of cases of violence happens very rarely because "schools do not need additional headache". However, as already mentioned earlier, schools that operate "according to safe environment approach" should identify children with risky behavior and introduce required interventions (for example, psychological centers that operate under the Office of Resource Officer need to be involved. However specialists of these centers, including social workers, do not work with the families and often do not cooperate with the Agency's social workers). According to the current situation, none of the entities assume direct responsibility for working with the children with difficult behavior. As to the

Samtredia school model, experts have different opinions about it and do not assess it positively. The shortcomings in this respect are obvious, and they need to be addressed at primary and secondary levels of prevention.

The issue of children living and working on the streets needs to be considered in the context of secondary prevention; the reform in regard to these target groups is very slow while this category of children are considered as potential criminals and future offenders. Often society is extremely stigmatized towards this group and expects them to commit a crime. Children who live in such prejudice try to meet these expectations. They do not feel secure in such society. Thus, diverse services need to be introduced and developed for children living and working on the streets; they need to be integrated into the school system; also, it is necessary to consider children living and working on the streets under the category of children with special education needs. Ministry of Internal Affairs should become more active in order to identify such children and take them to 24-hour state care; the government should work on educating their parents and improving their social conditions. Children living and working on the streets prefer that the government provided psychological and economic support to their families. Official statistics show that juvenile crime is mainly caused by social-economic problems.

Youth under the age of 14, who have already committed a minor hooliganism and stealing, are the main target group for the secondary prevention activities. Special services tailored to their interests need to exist that would contribute to reduction of multifactor and risks that triggered delinquent behavior. Also a database of such children needs to be created. To address this issue partnership between the Center for Crime Prevention and the Ministry of Internal Affairs is planned. Also, it is important to develop services for drug dependent youth, and for the youth who leave 24-hour care institutions (employment, housing, etc.).

At a first glance, the government works actively at the tertiary prevention level, as the main emphasis is made on humanization of the criminal justice system, resocialization of prisoners and former prisoners, their reintegration into the society and increasing number of social workers to make the system more "human". However, as noted above, there are many shortcomings in this respect that need to be addressed to implement the reform successfully.

It is interesting that none of the interviewed experts consider role of the local governments important at any levels of prevention. However, local government expressed readiness to get involved. Despite the positive assessment of various government entities and cooperation between governmental and non-governmental sectors by the top management structures, weaknesses exist in this respect as well. In particular, increased cooperation and coordination needs to happen. The non-governmental sector is considered as an important player in developing and providing services, however they are not yet capable of ensuring high quality services (educations, sport and recreational activities, extra curriculum activities, effective time management, healthy lifestyle trainings, etc.).

Majority of experts find it necessary to develop a court system that would be focused on juveniles; this implies following the approaches: physical arrangement of prisons considering psychological needs of juveniles, definition of age of minority, definition of amenability age limit for criminal justice, involvement of social worker or probation officer prior to court decision, engagement of a juvenile offender in the learning process, sports activities at the penitentiary institutions, considering interests of children and psychological age of an offender, particularly when he/she turns full age and needs to be moved to an adult prison, introduction of specialized judges, who work on the cases of minors, etc. The main emphasis should be made on the efforts to prevent youth form entering penitentiary institution. Mediation and diversion programmes are indeed good experience in this regards. Also, it is important to harmonize existing legislation about registration, storage, exchange and elimination procedures of child's information in penitentiary and probation systems, with international standards.

Lastly, experts talk about necessity to develop prevention mechanisms, improve legislation according to international standards, research and develop evidence-based services, introduce psychosocial services in the regions and enhance publishing work, empower media.

Psychosocial Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence

Analysis of Interviews

Government has and should have the leading role in identification and rehabilitation of victims of violence. At the same time, the government should have a systemic approach, same as in the case of deinstitutionalization, because violence is "extremely widespread problem that exists everywhere" (M. Gedevanishvili, L. Zardalashvili, interview). It should be noted that due to the "referral procedures for child protection", the process of identification and psychosocial rehabilitation of victims of violence has improved compared to previous years. However, in the beginning expectations regarding identification of children of victims of violence were much higher (N. Shatberashvili, interview). Also, violence is very much hidden in villages (L. Zardalashvili, M. Gedevanishvili, M. Maghlaperidze, interview).

According to the experts, identification of not all types of violence is possible at this stage. In majority of cases, the most extreme cases of violence are identified and responded to; this does not include forms of sexual violence that is much hidden. The cases of referrals to the police hot line regarding cases of violence are increasing. But, at the same time, people prefer to remain anonymous. Identification of cases is also done by the Office of Public Defender and non-governmental organizations (M. Tsereteli, interview). It is necessary that the institutions working with the children – schools, kindergartens, got actively engaged in the "screening" process (I. Sarjveladze, interview); the same is true about family doctors, neighbors, child's entire social environment, etc. (M. Gedevanishvili, M. Maghlaperidze, interview), only social workers of the Social Service Agency will not be able to identify all cases (I. Sarjveladze).

According to the representative of the Office of Recourse Officer, it is very difficult to identify cases of violence in Georgia. Ninety-five (95) percent of the society does not know what violence is. "Violence is everything that one is forced to do against its own will, if it is not necessary for saving life at that moment" (L. Zardalashvili, interview). Representative of the Social Service of the Patriarchy believes that the critical question is "what is considered as violence". "If a child is beaten with a stick, tortured, not given food and is punished like this, it is violence and needs to be immediately addressed . . . but if a mother gets angry and pulls ear, it is not violence" (Z. Varazi, interview). Experts say that professionals, as well as wider society, have different understanding of violence.

Georgian mentality (M. Meskhi, M. Tsereteli, interview) and lack of information (N. Pirashvili, interview) are two reasons why identification of violence is complicated. Besides, "Even if a person knew about the case of violence, relative and family ties prevent its identification" and "often it is hidden" (I. Sarjveladze, interview). Identification of violence in families is more difficult, because "family violence is closed, stigmatized and tabooed" (M. Gedevanishvili, interview). Also, number of referred cases is low because protection that can be offered is limited (N. Shatberashvili, interview).

Social Service Agency, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Ministry of Education and Science are involved in the referral system; however, the latest, despite the officially defined responsibilities, plays a more passive role. Teachers fail to identify different forms of violence and apply adequate procedures. In general, teachers are not well acquainted with the child protection referral document (M. Tsereteli, interview); school teachers do not have the skills and knowledge that are required for identification of violence cases (M. Gedevanishvili, M. Maghlaperidze, interview). According to the research conducted in 2008, "At Georgian schools there are no systems envisaged for identification of cases of violence against children; teachers do not know how to act in cases of violence" (M. Gedevanishvili, M. Maghlaperidze, interview).

Moreover, at this stage the Office of Resource Officer "does not work", they do not pay attention to identification and referral of cases of violence, and social workers of the psychological centers of the Office of Resource Officer are not even responsible to work with families (M. Tsereteli, interview). Police officers' mentality is also a problem, often they fail to identify forms of violence (M. Meskhi, interview), because physical punishment against children is widely spread and is considered acceptable (M. Gedevanishvili, interview). According to the research[3] conducted by the UN Children's Fund, physical punishment is considered as an acceptable parenting method for

3 Violence Against Children in Georgia ,UNICEF, July, 2013

the majority of the Georgian population. Many police officers have been trained, however, their number is not enough. Many more need to be trained so that "they can be on sufficient level" (M. Maghlaperidze, interview).

Representative of Social Service Agency says that violence against children should be discussed in the family violence context. This means that working with the families need to be intensified (M. Tsereteli, interview) along with more visits to families.(N. Shatberashvili, interview). However, it is a fact that with existing scarce human resources working with families in this direction is not possible (M. Tsereteli, interview). On top of that, in order to improve the identification process of victims of violence, guidelines need to be specified and referral procedures improved (M. Tsereteli, M. Meskhi, M. Gedevanishvili, N. Pirashvili, M. Maghlaperidze, interview). Clear and simple instruments need to be developed and professionals trained in it, so that the identification of victims of violence, and accordingly response, becomes easier (I. Sarjveladze, interview). "Sanctions and regulations must be clearly written out, because our country cannot learn without sanctions" (N. Pirashvili). By the imitative of UNICEF, certain changes are being made to the referral document that will increase opportunities of public schools to effectively engage in these procedures. Currently the public schools almost do not use the referral forms at all (E. Dgebuadze, interview). The UN Children's Fund initiated increase of the number of actors that are involved in the referral. This engages wide spectrum of people, all institutions that a child is involved in. However, this is not enough. The important thing is that it works (M. Gedevanishvili, interview).

Everyone should participate in development of new referral procedures: local government, Ministry of Labor, Health and Social Affairs, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Education and Science, UN Children's Fund, and the non-governmental sector. The mechanisms that will enable early preventive interference need to be elaborated. The following weaknesses are identified in regards to implementation of the referral legislation:

- Ineffective and weak cooperation among professionals working in the same sector or in different agencies. For example, when a police officer and social worker cannot reach agreement at the place of incident, often the victim is left unprotected; or, a teacher and recourse officer cannot reach a consensus at the school, when a resource officer informs teacher that referral is not made, or vice versa. Thus, shortcomings of inter-agency cooperation needs to be addressed (N. Shatberashvili, interview), in order to ensure coordinated work (N. Pirashvili, interview)

- Cultural factors, especially when a child is an indirect victim in the family, influence specialists of different agencies. This is particularly true regarding schools and police (N. Shatberashvili, interview)

- Lack of information about the referral mechanism (N. Shatberashvili, interview)

- Tolerance of society towards violence. Cultural awareness can be raised through movies, so that society understands the result that their indifference can bring (N. Shatberashvili, interview)

- Right accents need to be made in the media, for example, instead of showing a victim child, a perpetrator needs to be exposed so that "people see who they sympathize with" (N. Shatberashvili, interview). Media outlets need to work on raising awareness of people through provision of correct information instead of "useless shows" (M. Meskhi, N. Shatberashvili, interview).

One representative of a municipality noted that coordinated work among the local government and above mentioned entities that are officially involved in the referral is important for an effective identification of victims of violence (G. Mamrikishvili, interview). One or two social workers, who would receive primary information, identify a victim of violence, and engage in the referral as required need to be employed at the local municipal level.

Director of the State Fund for the Protection and Assistance of Victims of Human Trafficking emphasizes that identification of violence is problematic because a unified standard does not exist. However, psychosocial rehabilitation at this fund and at the shelters of the non-governmental organizations is less effective with participation of psychologists and social workers (M. Meskhi, interview). It was also noted that these shelters need to be monitored and their compliance with international standards checked (N. Pirashvili, interview). All shelters are full and if there are no places left, beneficiaries are referred to the Shelter for Trafficking or to the non-governmental sector; priority is given to victims with children (M. Meskhi, interview). The victim should not be removed

from her/his family; and the perpetrator should be provided with rehabilitation services as well (N. Shatberashvili, interview). So far the state service for perpetrators do not exist; in order to start considering this issue cooperation between the National Probation Agency and the Penitentiary Department is necessary; however at this stage it is not planned (M. Meskhi, interview).

Moreover, effective support mechanisms after leaving the shelter should exist; the victim should not lose the status so that the support he/she is entitled to is easily accessible. (N. Shatberashvili, interview).

According to the head of Guardianship – Custody and Social Programs Department of the Social Service Agency, establishment of so-called "emergency" – crisis center for the victims of violence is required for more effective rehabilitation and quick response; at this center the victim would receive 24-hour service. Development and provision of such services is possible with the support of NGOs. Also, increasing number of social workers at the Social Service Agency is important (M. Tsereteli, interview); "Existing resources of social workers cannot cover those needs that exist in the country" (I. Sarjveladze, interview). Besides, it is necessary to re-qualify social workers and work on their professional development, so that they are able to work effectively on the cases of violence with targeted families (M. Tsereteli, E. Dgebuadze, interview). It is possible to separate child from family only in the cases of physical and sexual violence; in other cases all possibilities should be used to improve family's psychological environment and teach parents non-violent, peaceful resolution methods, etc .(M. Tsereteli, M. Maghlaperidze, interview). Head of the Social Affairs Department of Patriarchy shares the same opinion; he noted that parents need trainings on parenting issues, on how to manage child's behavior by non-violent methods (Z. Varazi, interview).

Children with disabilities represent a high risk group that is often subjected to violence from family members. Special identification and rehabilitation approaches need to be elaborated in this respect (G. Mamrikishvili, interview). For example, there were cases of violence, when "family members would not talk to a girl who had problems with eyesight, saying that she would not understand them as she could not see" (N. Pirashvili, interview).

Children, who are used by their parents for begging are also victims of violence; children, who "are one of two years of age and are left on the streets all day and everybody knows that they are "full" of medicine and are sleeping. This is violence, is not it?!" Government does not respond to this (M. Maghlaperidze, interview). Thus, the absolute majority of children on the streets are victims of violence.

Forms of violence against children are different. For example, according to the representative of the Public Defender, "This year increased number of cases of violence against children are referred to the Public Defender exposing representatives of school administration, directors and teachers" (M. Gedevanishvili, interview).

It is necessary to study reasons of violence, and reduce and eliminate the reasons that cause violence. The general picture shows that violence is typical in socially vulnerable families where social reasons, including unemployment, causes irritation among people and then this aggression is directed towards family members. Sometimes it is caused by difficulties with psychological heath, in which cases support and rehabilitation needs to be offered to families (E. Dgebuadze, interview).

Non-governmental and governmental sectors successfully cooperate (resource sharing, legislative work, etc) around these issues, however it is important that cooperation becomes systematic (M. Gedevanishvili, interview). The main role of non-governmental structures is to initiate public discussions regarding the issue of identification of violence (M. Gedevanishvili, interview).

According to the experts, it would be helpful if the human resources that currently work in the non-governmental sector would shift to the government sector (G. Mamrikishvili, interview). Also, non-governmental organizations should work on offering different rehabilitation programme/services (N. Shatberashvili, M. Tsereteli, I. Sarjveladze, M. Gedevanishvili, interview), prevention-education programmes (M. Gedevanishvili, interview). Also, in order to improve identification of violence, the non-governmental sector should support the government with re-trainings of all actors involved in the referral (N. Shatberashvili, M. Tsereteli, interview). It is important to engage gender organizations in working on the issues of violence. Increasing civil awareness and provision of non-formal education is the responsibility of the non-governmental sector (M. Gedevanishvili, interview).

Analysis of Focus Groups

Service Providers, Coordinators and Practitioners

In the **focus group discussion with the Coalition** regarding issues on violence, it was stressed that still a lot of work needs to be done in this direction. ***Cooperation between the sectors needs to be* intensified.** Opportunities for **monitoring of families** need to exist. Social workers should have adequate qualifications, skills, and responsibilities. Also, **mechanisms for preventing social worker's overload** should be there and the system should ensure staff stability and even increase in numbers.

It was also noted that the **role of the Ministry of Education and Science** in regards to the identification of cases of violence is very weak. The main problem remains with the lack of response to the cases of violence by teachers. Also, police officers are not adequately engaged.

However, the participants mentioned that **number of identified cases has increased,** which means that identification and referral mechanisms of cases by social workers have improved.

It was stressed that responsibilities of social workers need to be differentiated. Also, **it is important to raise social awareness** regarding issues of violence and it needs to be done on a regular basis. **Mechanisms for rehabilitation of perpetrators** need to be developed.

According to the focus group analysis with the s**ocial workers of Social Service Agency**, the situation in this respect is very difficult because only a few services for the child victims of violence exist. It is difficult to find psychological and child rehabilitation services. Public Health Fund was pointed out among the non-governmental organizations working on the cases of violence, however, the fund's psychologist currently only works with the victims of sexual violence.

Social workers of mobile teams, who work with the children living and working on the streets, **negatively assess cooperation with the law enforcement bodies**. According to them, legislation does not oblige and enable police to protect a child adequately. According, a lot depends on the good will of the police officer/district inspector to act for protection of child's rights. Participants also noted that police officers are often ignorant of even those responsibilities that are defined by the law, and this creates additional challenges for social workers. For example, police officers do not know how to fill out a report, or issue a restraining order, even in the cases of physical violence. Often the police officer themselves violate child's rights with their unprofessional interference. Despite the fact that about 200 police officers have been trained on the issues of child protection, their role in implementation of the referral procedures in still very weak. However, it was also noted that law enforcement agencies cooperate more effectively if an official letter from the Social Service Agency is sent to their high level officials/department.

Practitioners working in a non-governmental sector (social workers, psychologists and other professionals) noted that they generally support their organization's beneficiaries, who are victims of violence, with their own means (mainly psychologists employed by them). However, the state is very limited in the services of psychologists, as well as other rehabilitation services that are required for the victims of violence.

Only a few organizations from the non-governmental sector work with the child victims of violence: Public Health Fund (working on the cases of sexual violence), organization "Green Room" and Tamar Gogoshidze's Center. Participants believe that better cooperation between state and non-state actors is very important in regards to rehabilitation of child victims of violence. Also, it is essential to apply multidisciplinary approaches while working with the victims of violence. In addition, participants believe that children need to have information who to address and how to act in the cases of violence.

Social workers, psychologists and resource officers working at the Office of Resource Officer of the Education Institution talked about roles and responsibilities of the Office of Resource Officer. In particular, they noted that schools and the Resource Officers' that are under the Ministry of Education and Science focus on provision of education and protection of children from violence. Office of Resource Officer reveals existing risks at schools. Risks are mainly related to children's behavior and their emotional problems. In less difficult cases the resource

officer talks to a child directly, however, if a problem requires different kind of resolution, child is referred to the center for psychological support. In case of necessity (if it is difficult to manage the situation), the resource officer calls police. Also, in cases of violence referral is made to the Social Service Agency. Psychological center assesses the case, develops a plan and implements required measures (with the support of a social worker, psychologist, psychotherapist or psychiatrist). Individual and group meetings are conducted, as well as working with parents and family members starts. Social Service Agency is informed about the need for a family visit, who then visits the targeted family.

Office of Resource Officer works with the child victims of violence according to the above scheme (offers them existing services). Limitations exist in the cases of children with intellectual disorders and psychological problems, whom they cannot offer any services. According to the participants, provision of psychosocial rehabilitation services for this target group in the cases of violence is a huge problem, because the state does not have free services and those that exist in the non-governmental sector are very limited as well.

According to ***practitioners, social workers, psychologists and other professionals working in the field of justice***, they provide psychological support to their target groups. They believe that in the cases of violence against juveniles, involvement of Social Service Agency, as the entity for care and guardianship, is important. At this stage Probation Service and penitentiary institutions cannot officially refer to the Social Service Agency, however informal referrals have been made in the past.

Service Receivers – Beneficiaries

Members of the ***Youth Council active under the National Coalition*** talk about the violence among children that frequently happens on the streets and among the children, mainly boys, living in the state care institutions. They believe that perpetrators need to be assisted as well.

Children living on the streets noted that violence, fights among children is very frequent. Often it is necessary to part the involved sides if the conflict turns into a big fight. According to them, neutral people and not police, should get engaged in the fight. Children say that "big people" fight with children as well, also often, they are accused of something for no reason (for example, stealing). Often children on the streets become victims of sexual violence as well.

According to c***hildren in foster care and small group homes***, violence can happen in any family. They noted that they feel themselves protected. However, cases of violence among children happen. They believe that that government should provide psychological support to victims of violence, and separate them from parents in the cases of violence. It was also mentioned that perpetrators also need psychological assistance. Participants believe that if families improve their economic conditions, cases of domestic violence will decrease. Currently the government does not have information on number of families where violence is happening and therefore they cannot support them with psychosocial rehabilitation services.

Parents of victims of violence do not know that "violence" is bad. The government should assist them to raise their awareness and get psycho-social rehabilitation as well as teach them non-violent parenting methods. "Lack of understanding between parents and children is the reason of violence".

Parents of reintegrated children believe that **tensions inside the family are the main cause of violence**. When parents are stressed, this is reflected towards a child as well. Also parents stressed **importance of fair punishment of a child, so that punishment is justified.** It was also noted that **perpetrators do not need assistance** and they should be put in worse conditions. Parents did not have any information about the services that the state or non-state actors offer in regard to issues of violence.

Conclusion

Representatives of the government and non-government sectors see the need of in-depth changes with regard to referral procedures of child protection. All stakeholders should be involved in updating of the referral procedures, including Social Service Agency, local governments, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Education and

Science, UN Children's Fund, and non-governmental organizations. By the initiative of UNICEF, important changes are being introduced that imply detailed definition of referral procedures and guidelines that will enable prevention of violence at early stages. All structures should be engaged in identification of violence, starting from family, neighbors, and relatives to kindergartens, schools and district doctors. Responsibilities for identification of violence should not lie only on the social workers of the Social Service Agency. Also, need for increasing number of social workers and their requalification on the issues of domestic violence was stressed. Experts from the NGO sector emphasized that specialization of social workers in specific fields will increase quality and professionalism of their work. At the same time, it is noteworthy that the police, as one of the main mechanisms of protection from violence, and school, as the institutions for child and family support, were evaluated as the weakest actors of the current system.

Significant weaknesses were revealed with regard to the rehabilitation of victims of violence that are especially apparent for the practitioner social workers. This relates to the issue of rehabilitation of child victims of violence. The research shows significant shortage of such rehabilitation services both within governmental and non-governmental sectors. Only few NGOs specialize on rehabilitation of child victims of violence and they work only on specific directions (sexual violence). Also, there are no services that would assist children with intellectual development disorder and psychological problems in the cases of violence. Despite the fact that the Social Service Agency has psychologist's service, it cannot meet the existing demands. It is also necessary to introduce monitoring system within shelters for victims of violence. Different types of rehabilitation services that are necessary to be introduced were named, including crisis centers for victims of violence, other support services for victims after they exit the shelter, etc.

The main reasons for ineffectiveness of the current child protection referral document were discussed. Firstly, it is a social mentality; the society fails to understand what violence is and what its forms are. The majority of the population finds physical punishment acceptable. And awareness of the people working within the structures responsible for identification of violence is also low; this of course negatively influences the existing reality and many cases of violence against children are not responded to. It is necessary to raise awareness of police officers, teachers regarding the referral procedures. And social workers should be more systematic in visiting families, so that all cases of violence are identified at early stages. Non-governmental sector also talks about the monitoring mechanisms. Both governmental and non-governmental sector agrees that Office of Resource Officer is not effective and fails to perform its functions. Representatives of the Office of Resource Officer are not realistic in assessment of their own roles and responsibilities within the process of implementation of child protection referral procedures and the child protection system. All these lead to problems in interagency cooperation that is acknowledged by the majority of experts. A well-coordinated and systemic cooperation among government structures that are officially involved in implementation of these procedures, as well as partnership with the local government and among state and non-state sectors is necessary. Also, role and responsibility of media in raising public awareness was discussed. It was mentioned that existing media outlets fail to stand criticism with this regard.

It is interesting that the majority of beneficiaries talk about violence among children, and about the forms of violence that children face in the institutions and on streets from adults. Children expect the government to introduce strict control over parents who commit acts of violence against their children and if they cannot be corrected, ensure child's separation from parents. Experts talk about the need of state rehabilitation programmes for perpetrators, however there are no steps taken in this direction yet. There is a possibility of partnership among the Social Service Agency, National Probation Agency and penitentiary departments for developing rehabilitation services for perpetrators. In general, social workers should do the maximum possible to promote a healthy psychological environment within the families that have violence issues and only in the case of obvious physical violence should they remove the child from the family.

Two most vulnerable groups stand out that fall under the highest risk of violence: children with disabilities and children living and working on streets. The government should take more effective steps for these target groups.

Role of the non-governmental sector was also defined very clearly by both sectors: introduction of new rehabilitation and education programmes and services to the government, as well as support with requalification of staff.

Results of Content Analysis

Content analysis method was used for analyzing data collected with the purpose of assessing child welfare and child care system reform and identifying existing gaps and needs within the system. In particular, mixed method of content analysis was applied that implies both qualitative and quantitative analysis. After transcripts of individual and group interviews were created, the main sets (coded) of concepts were identified that were then classified into the main categories and subcategories. After this, frequency of each set of concepts was counted. To have ensured objectivity two independent experts conducted the coding of the content.

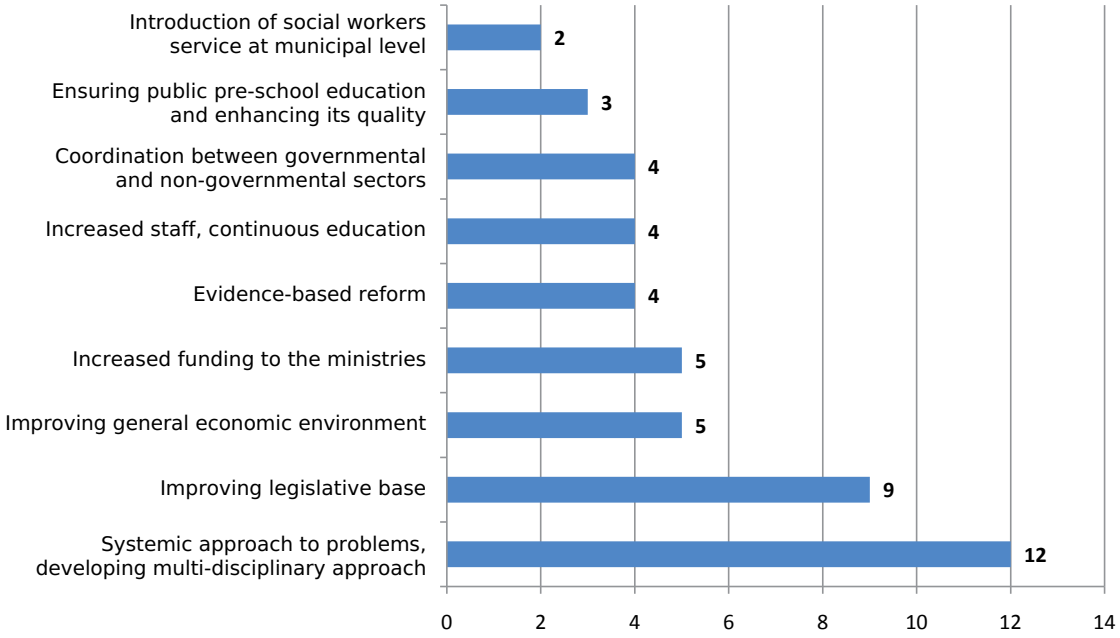
The transcripts were analyzed in four main directions: 1. Prevention and reintegration/family strengthening; 2. Youth leaving care system; 3. Juvenile Justice; 4. Psychosocial rehabilitation of victims of violence. Below are the results of content analysis of these four main directions.

Prevention and Reintegration/Family Strengthening

Specific needs in respect to the government and non-governmental organizations were identified in the context of prevention and reintegration/family strengthening. Separate categories were identified in regard to the government, such as systemic issues, families, children with disabilities, children living and working on the streets. Diagram below provides the most frequently used sub-categories.

Government Sector

Diagram 1. Systemic Issues

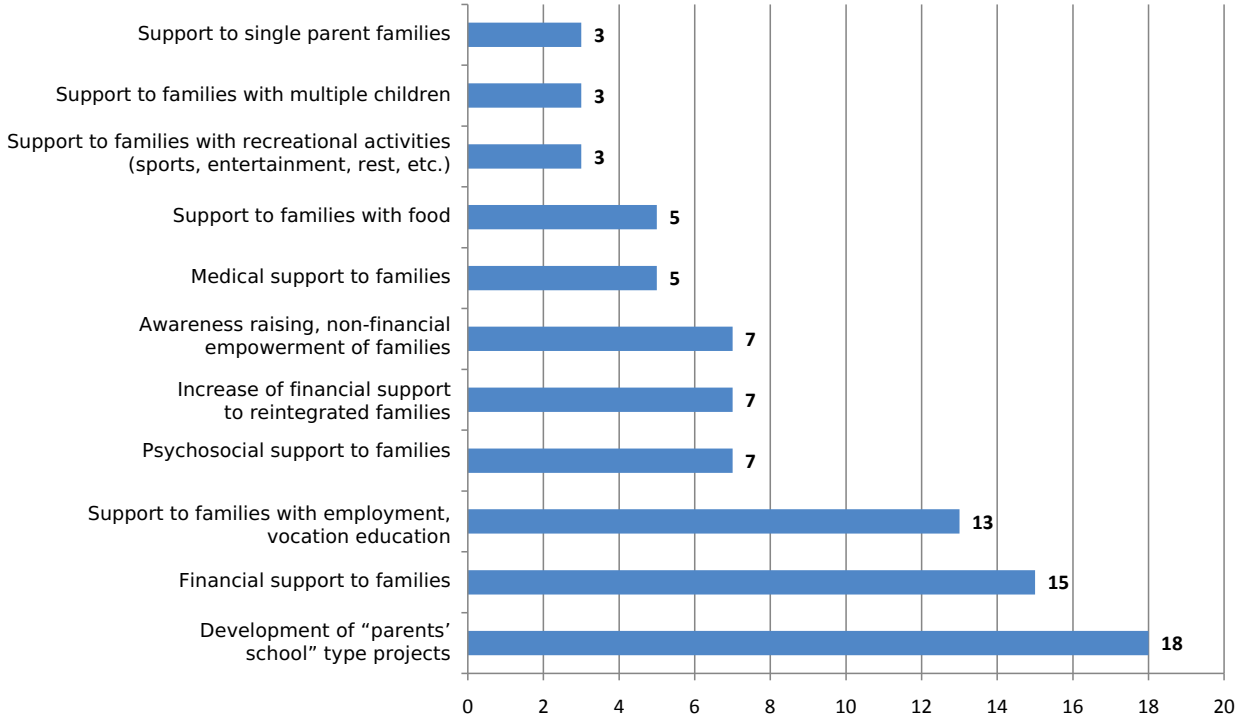


In addition to the above described categories, the following issues were identified: development and improvement of monitoring system for reintegration and foster care; narrowing specialization of social workers in specific directions; development of guidelines for social services to improve the referral process; establishment of charity fund for children and youth; higher engagement of public healthcare system; support with employment and development of employment market; provision of sexual education for vulnerable children and children in care system; state control over child institutions run by different religious denominations; development and regular update of database on children in need of state care; addressing issue of care institution for infants; community mobilization and development, awareness raising.

Thus, support to systemic approach, multidimensional approaches to problem resolution, application of ecosystem approaches were acknowledged as the most important issues in this field. Improvement of legislative base of child welfare system was also emphasized. It is interesting that the need of provision of financial support by the government (such as financial empowerment of families, especially, increase of social aid to reintegrated families) and improvement of economic environment were stressed. The need for increased number of social workers, development of their professional skills and improving working conditions were identified. Focus was also made on development of social workers' service at municipal levels. All these can be done only in the conditions of partnership and cooperation between governmental and non-governmental organizations and support to evidence-base reform.

Families

Diagram 2.

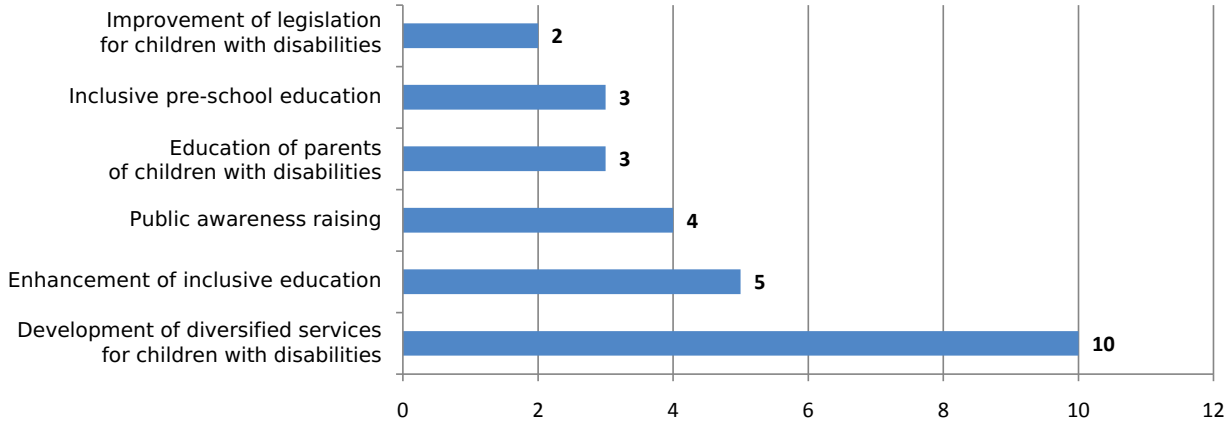


Also, the following issues were named: A need to develop mediations programmes for domestic violence; support to small business development; advocating for the rights of low income families with the banking sector (introduction of preferential interest rates and mortgage); inclusion all poor families in poverty programmes ("many families do not get registered because of pride"); development of additional services for children of poor families in the regions by municipalities: full tuition according to preference (music, sports, student courses – English, computer, etc); access to toddlers kindergarten and other services in the regions.

It can be concluded that emphasis on "the family category" by the respondents indicates importance of the role of family support and empowerment in ensuring quality child welfare and care system. Also, it needs to be emphasized that in regards to family empowerment more focus is made on psychological support, awareness raising of families than financial, materials investments. Families should not become psychologically dependent on the government and "become lazy". Also, emphasis was made on supporting single parent families and families with multiple children. Another direction that was emphasized by the respondents was government support to those families (awareness raising), who do not apply to social support because of their pride and live in extreme poverty. It was identified that development of preventive directions is directly linked to empowerment of families through provision of diversified (material, psychological, medical, nutrition, recreation, etc.), needs-tailored services.

Children with Disabilities

Diagram 3.



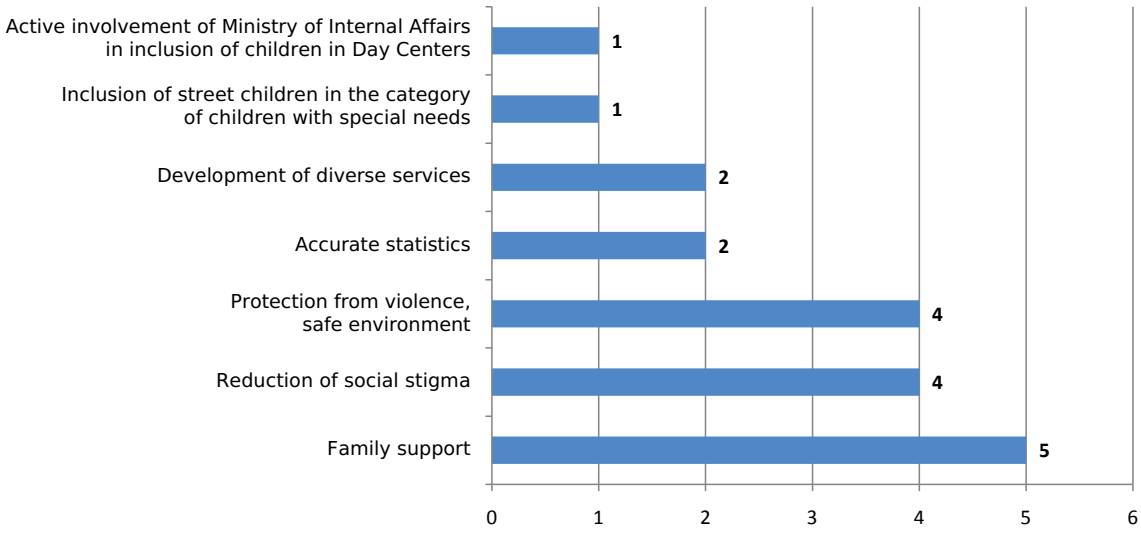
Diversified services include development of day centers, home care services, early intervention services (early diagnostics, screening and others). These services ensure early intervention with the children with disabilities and their families, inclusion of these children, and correct management of their situation. Improvement of legislation implies that disability status and social vulnerability status should not be linked with each other.

Moreover, it is necessary to address issues related to institutions for children with disabilities – improving conditions of institutionalized children with disabilities based on thorough assessment of their needs; problems related to sexual education of children with disabilities and their physical adaptation to environment were also discussed.

Thus, in respect to the children with disabilities, diverse and effective services need to be developed. Also, actual implementation of existing formal inclusive education needs to be happening in rural and urban settings. Importance of early interventions for pre-school children with disabilities, development of pre-school day centers and toddlers' kindergartens and their inclusion in the services were emphasized. In general, majority of respondents recognize the need to increase knowledge about the importance of services that are required for children with disabilities.

Children Working and Living on the Streets

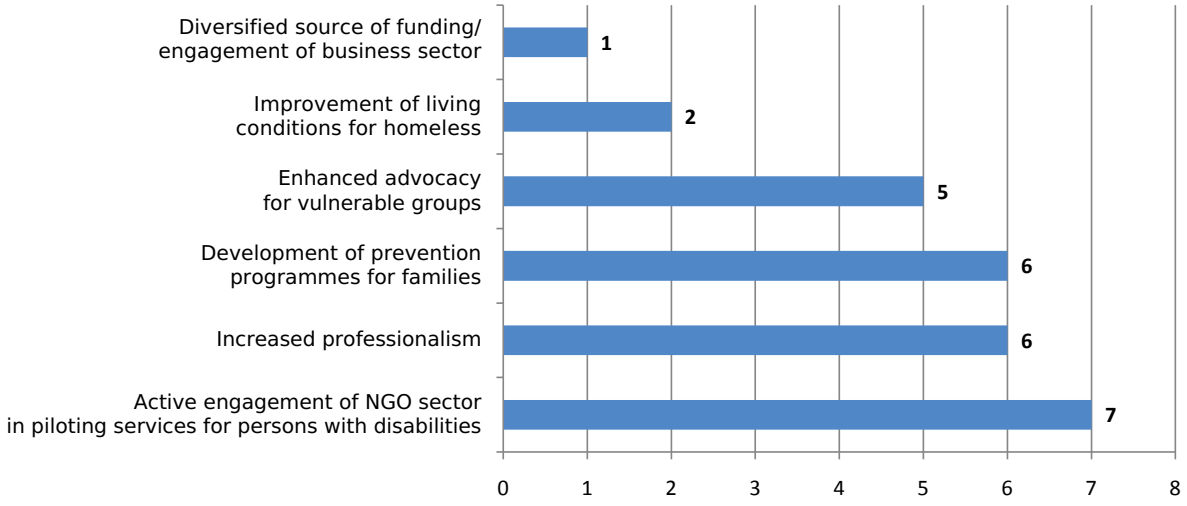
Diagram 4.



Thus, it is apparent that the problem related to children living and working on the streets is recognized, but the ways of resolving this problem are not clear. The beneficiaries believe that their families need to be supported through financial assistance, teaching of parenting methods, and rehabilitation of perpetrators. Children on the streets prioritize a safe environment, free of violence. Violence exists not only in their biological families, but also on the streets, where they have to live. Violence is done by all levels of society, especially by the police. Also, there is a need to recognize these children as children with special needs and the government should introduce programmes in regards to them.

Non-governmental Sector

Diagram 5.



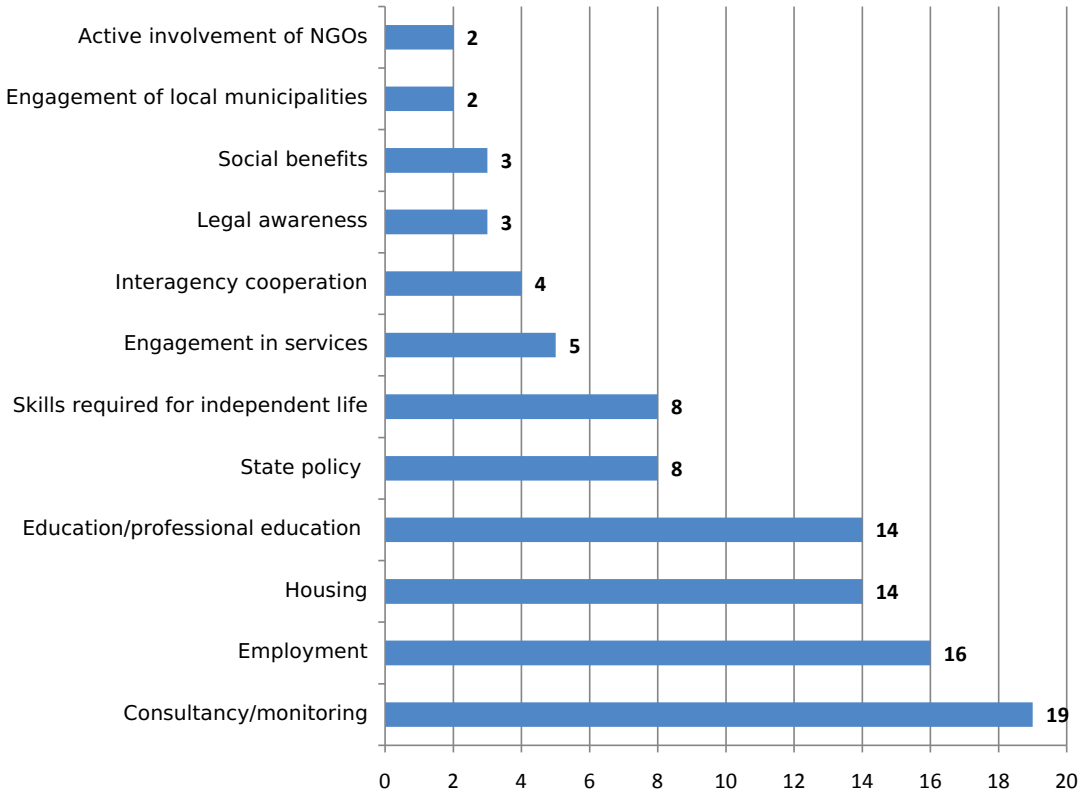
Prevention services for families implies development of preventive mechanisms, intellectual support to families, educational activities (trainings, vocational courses), psychological support, rehabilitation of children, and resocialization programmes.

Thus, the role of the non-governmental sector is viewed in regards to introduction of diverse services for vulnerable groups and prevention programmes for families. Need for increased professionalism and diversification of funding sources of NGO sector, particularly, through engagement of private sector, was also emphasized.

Working with Youth Exiting Care System

The following specific needs were identified in regards to the youth who exit from the care system in the context of the state sector.

Diagram 6.



Thus, the need for the mentorship type programmes for the youth leaving care was identified. The mentorship implies support, monitoring, advocacy, teaching budget management, financial management, adaptation to new environment, working with families, psychosocial support, professional orientation, assistance with legal documentation, assistance with healthcare issues, promotion of healthy lifestyle, engagement in sports activities, etc. Also, development of peer support programmes was emphasized. Engagement in services mainly implies active cooperation of social workers with child's family during child's stay in care, enhancing attachment between parents and child, while development of skills required for independent life fell under a separate subcategory; working on development of these skills should start during child's stay in care institution.

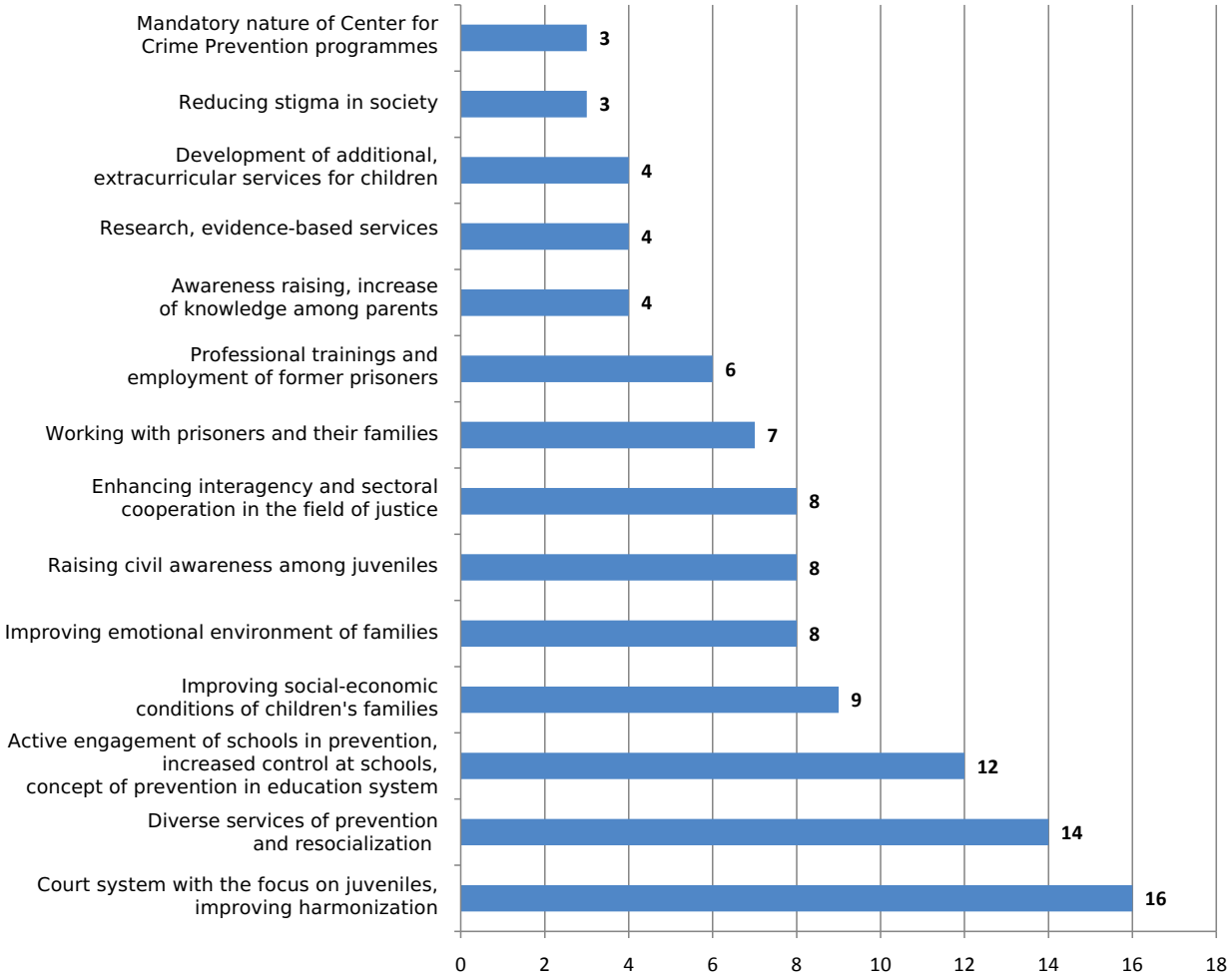
State policy envisages need for development of different types of models, in particular, diverse services/programmes for supporting intermediate, semi-independent and independent life. The state policy should recognize child care as a continuous process. Almost all respondents stated that the government assistance to youth who exit care institutions should continue above 18 years of age and different services should exist. However, the opposite idea was expressed that the "status of youth who have exited care" should not give these youth any benefits, but the government should take such care of each and every child (care system, general education system, etc.) that additional benefits were not required. This increases risk of stigmatization of these children in the society.

Juvenile Justice

Specific needs were identified in the field of the juvenile justice in regards with the government and non-governmental sectors.

Government Sector

Diagram 7.



The need for developing a court system that is focused on juveniles (physical arrangement of prisons considering psychological needs of juveniles, involvement of social worker or probation officer prior to court decision, engagement of a juvenile offender in the learning process, sports activities at the penitentiary institutions, definition of age of minority, definition of amenability age limit for criminal justice, considering interests of children and psychological age of an offender, particularly when he/she turns full age and needs to be moved to an adult prison, introduction of specialized judges, who work on the cases of minors, etc.) was identified in the analysis. Also, need for changes on the legislative level was emphasized; this includes introduction of encouragement mechanisms for former prisoners for engagement in the resocialization services, and institutionalization of alternative punishments (home imprisonment, free labor for public works, preparation of youth for discharge at the penitentiaries, etc.).

Need for implementing activities on the primary level of crime prevention was identified in the context of juvenile justice. In this respect, the role of schools and the education system, e.g. arrangement of camps, hiking, other recreational and information activities, legal education and professional orientation programmes, introduction of social worker's institute were pointed out. Also, need for development of after-school extracurricular services was stressed.

An interesting parallel was drawn between psychosocial problems of families and anti-social behavior of children. Improvement of social conditions of families as well as improvement of their psychological and emotional situation was underlined.

During tertiary prevention, it is important to prepare the child for discharge at the penitentiary institutions that envisages active engagement of social workers with the families, effective cooperation and coordination of social workers of penitentiary institution, Center for Crime Prevention and National Probation Agency. Increasing motivation, goal development, vocational and professional education that would respond to the demands of local labor market should be emphasized while working with juvenile prisoners. There is need for development of diverse and adequate resocialization services (including, coping with psychological health problems, effective programmes for drug addicts, housing, regional program, local government programmes, etc.). Additionally, professional courses and employment for former prisoners, were identified for the tertiary prevention level. This is possible by conducting research that would enable development of evidence-based services in the country.

Also, the need for requalification of social workers and psychologists of the penitentiary system, as well as hiring of new qualified staff, were pointed out. Role of media was emphasized in changing legal awareness of society. Development of holistic, multidisciplinary approaches, in which all systems - school, family, friends and the entire society, are involved was stressed in respect to development of prevention mechanisms.

Non-governmental Sector

Diagram 8.

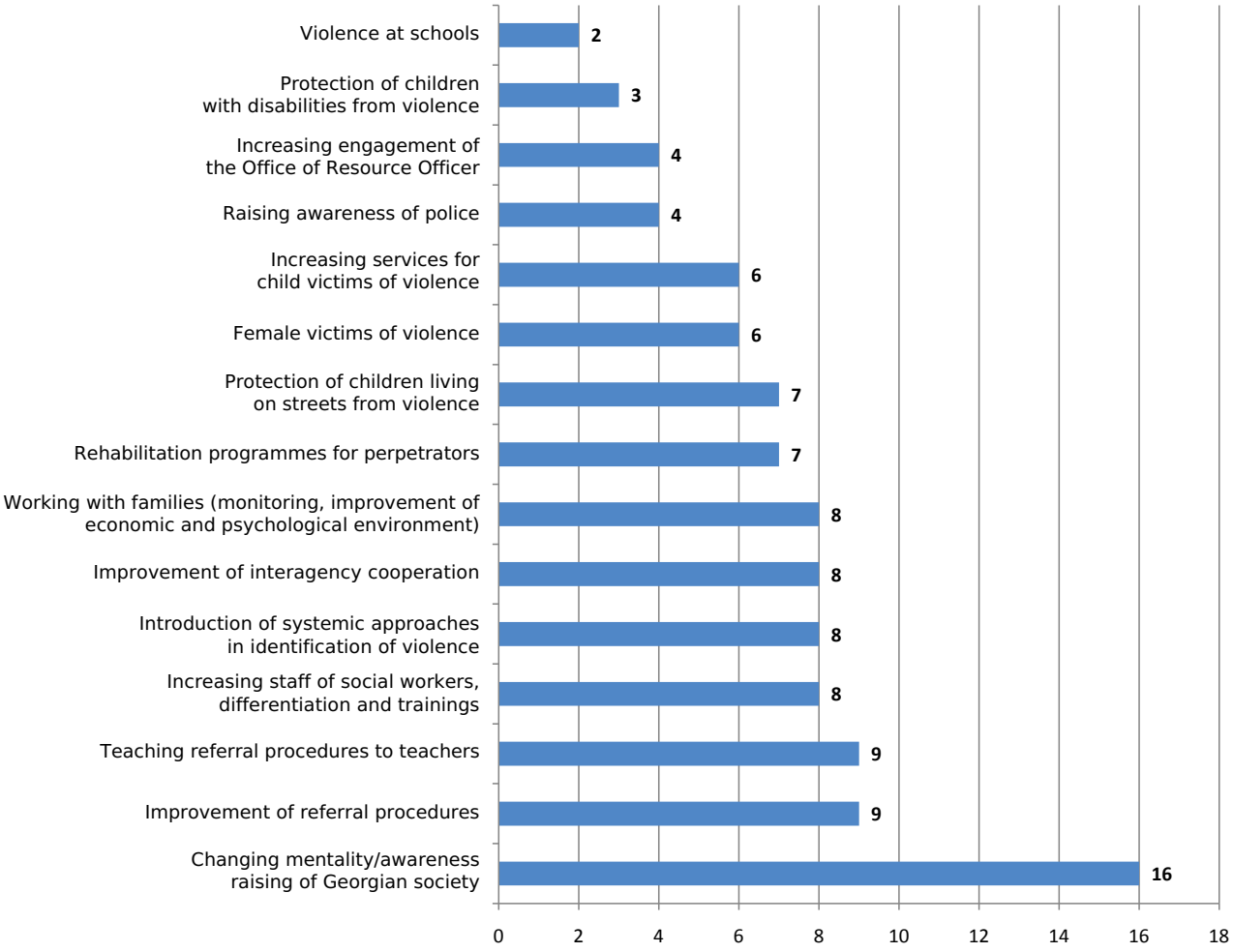
Thus, the role of the non-governmental sector in the juvenile justice field was identified. In addition to the fact that there is high demand on development of high quality and diverse services, specific types of services that need to be piloted were named. It includes: educational, sport, recreational activities, activities that raise juvenile's awareness, after school activities, and trainings in effective time management.

Psychosocial Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence

Specific needs for rehabilitation of victims of violence in respect with the government and non-governmental sectors were identified.

Government Sector

Diagram 9.



Thus, the following needs were identified: raising awareness regarding violence (especially in the regions. Moreover, it is important to teach children about what to do and who to address in the cases on violence); improvement of referral procedures of violence and response mechanisms (elaboration of detailed guidelines, improving referral procedures, that would enable early involvement). In this respect, teaching referral procedures to teachers, raising their awareness, training in child protection from violence, and rights of children, were pointed out. Additionally, increased engagement of the Office of Resource Officer is important. It is interesting that violence at schools from the side of school administration and teachers remain as an important issue. Development of police officers' skills and development of detailed guidelines is critical for effective implementation of child protection mechanisms.

Interestingly, need for requalification of social workers and differentiation of their responsibilities was pointed out in respect to working with family violence cases. A social worker who is focused on early identification of violence, rehabilitation of victims of violence and support to perpetrators, will be able to work more intensively with the families of victims of violence. He or she can also support psychological and economic rehabilitation (the latest is often named as a cause of violence), support perpetrators with the stress management, and teach

non-violent methods of problem resolution. Lack of rehabilitation services for child victims of violence (specifically, psychological services) and services for perpetrators, both in governmental and non-governmental sectors were emphasized.

In this respect, application of systemic approaches where the child's entire social environment should be engaged is essential; this includes kindergarten, school, family doctor, neighbors, etc. Accordingly, multidisciplinary approaches should be applied while working with the victims of violence.

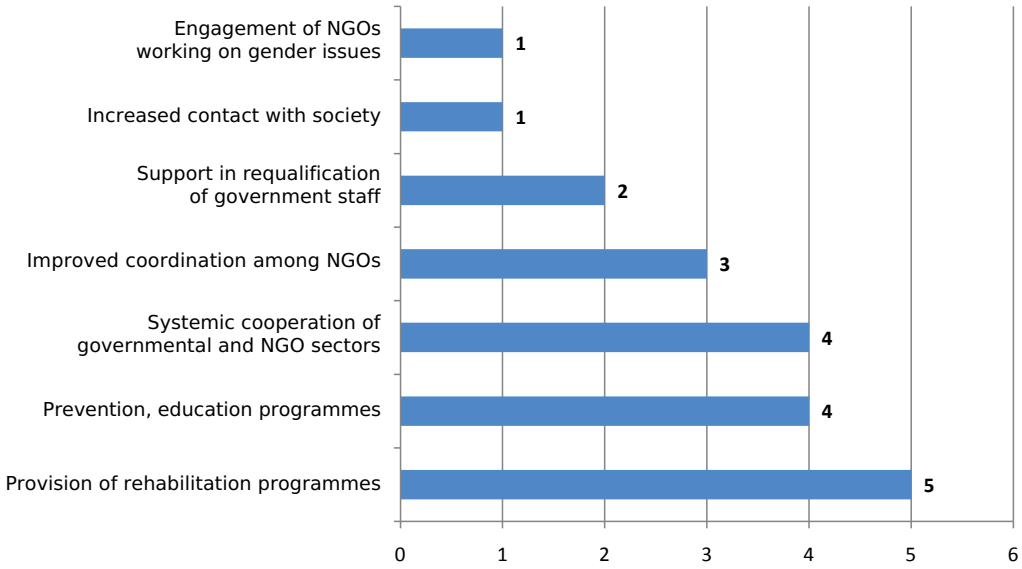
Coordination and effective cooperation among different agencies is necessary. Special emphasis was made on ensuring coordinated work of the Social Service Agency, National Probation Agency and penitentiary institutions in the cases of violence of juvenile offenders. Similarly, importance of identification of violence at the local municipality level through development of social workers' service at local levels and early interventions before the referral is made to the Social Service Agency was stressed.

The main groups of child victims of violence were pointed out. This includes children living on the streets, who face violence from different groups of society, especially from the police, as well as their parents and peers. Besides this group, it was emphasized that children with disabilities also often become victims of violence. It was noted that psychosocial rehabilitation services for the children with intellectual development limitation and psychological problems do not exist.

Female victims of violence were identified as another important group that faces violence. Different types of services for victims of violence need to be developed for effective protection of victims. Effective support mechanisms after victims leave shelter need to exist; monitoring of shelters, their compliance with international standards need to be checked; more shelters, especially in the regions and violence crisis centers need to be established.

Non-governmental Sector

Diagram 10.



Thus, the role of the non-governmental sector in reduction of violence was identified. Firstly, focus should be made on provision of rehabilitation programmes/services, as well as on prevention education programmes and support in requalification of the government staff. Also, there is need for enhanced systemic cooperation between NGO and government sectors in respect to rehabilitation of child victims of violence, as well as increased coordination and information sharing among NGOs.

CLOSING JUDGMENTS AND CONCLUSIONS

The child welfare system should be based on values including raising children in a family environment. The core values that are shared by the actors engaged in the system determine the main processes. The system has a few problems in this regards, for example, discrimination against a child's biological family in the deinstitutionalization process. Also, the system has gaps in the context of resources as well as existing services.

Prevention/Reintegration and Family Support, Empowerment

Common Views and Approaches of Actors

Representatives of governmental and non-governmental organizations have **shared views regarding problems that exist in the child welfare system.** Experience in coordinated work between these sectors contributes to it. The common foundation of their views is the child's right to grow in a family, or family like environment.

A different opinion is found in the **Social Service of the Patriarchy, where more focus is made on substituting families for a child,** than on ensuring child's well-being in the family context; however, they also agree about the irreplaceable role of families in child upbringing process. On the other hand, the recent willingness of the Patriarchy for cooperation and dialogue with other actors of the child welfare field is assessed positively.

Governmental and non-governmental organizations also agree that **child welfare services should be based on research and evidences,** and should be tailored to the needs of local beneficiaries and not be mechanical copies of international practices. The best practices need to be considered in the local context and next steps planned gradually.

Despite the similarity of views and experience in partnership, **cooperation between governmental and non-governmental organizations is still problematic.** Often the government fails to utilize funds allocated for different social programmes because they refuse to outsource services to non-governmental organizations. Moreover, coordination among NGOs is not adequate either which then prevents effective cooperation.

The decision making process regarding child and youth welfare should be participative. This is acknowledged by governmental, as well as, non-governmental actors. However, some problems exist in this respect that is manifested in discontent of the youth about the **level of their engagement** in planning of their own lives.

System Gaps in respect to Resources (Input)

250 social workers working in 22 directions under the Social Service Agency of the Ministry of Labor, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia are the backbone of the child welfare system. **The institute of social workers needs to be further developed.** Currently existing services cannot respond to the challenges that the child welfare system faces. Low number of social workers, difficult working conditions, staff turnover, and lack of access to continuous education are often causes of poor interventions from their side. Bureaucratic state official's functions of social workers often limit diversity of their interventions.

System Gaps in Respect to Process

Preventive Approach

Current **child welfare system is reactive.** The government fails to identify at-risk children and their families. One of the reasons for this is **reactive nature of the social worker's institute of the Social Service Agency.** It responds only to referred cases and the work for identification of potential cases in the field is not happening. This limits timely identification of at-risk children and prevention work.

Also, the need for increased involvement of primary healthcare and maternity homes in prevention of child separation from family is apparent. For years, fallacious practices of medical staff have contributed to separation of children from their families (especially in the cases of children with disabilities and other health issues).

Schools also need to be engaged more actively in the prevention work. Schools are one of the weakest actors in the child welfare system at present, where prevention work is not happening at all. Problems exist with regard to acceptance of children with difficult behavior by schools.

Discrimination Issue

Discrimination against children's biological families is another problem that stands in the prevention process of child welfare field. On one hand, the state policy aims to keep children within their families and develop mechanisms for family empowerment. However, at the same time, a **child's biological family, guardian or caregiver receives almost five times less financial support**[4] for child's deinstitutionalization and reintegration with family, compared to a foster family. The Public Defender's Office has evaluated this as an apparent example of **unequal treatment,** as it contradicts the equality principle defined by the Article 14 of the Constitution of Georgia. If the government declares prevention of child abandonment and deinstitutionalization as one of the main goals within child welfare reform, it is obvious that provision of worse conditions to biological parents than to foster families is not an intelligent measure for achieving this goal (declaration of the Public Defender).

On the other hand, introduction of **"reintegration rules" by the government is assessed positively.** According to this rule, the reintegrated families will receive uninterrupted state aid for the duration of minimum two years. Also, establishment of emergency support fund for families with children in crisis situations by the government is a positive step; this fund aims to provide assistance to families with children in crisis situations in the child care process.

There are different types of discrimination problems. Discrimination against Roma children, their families and other **ethnic groups** is a widely spread practice and is enforced through limited access to state services for these groups.

Children in foster care are discriminated compared to children living in small group homes in respect to the state care. Unlike children in foster care, children in small group homes have access to services, though limited, that prepare them for exiting care. Non-governmental organizations that run small group homes try to be more active in creating opportunities for independent life of their beneficiaries than the government that manages the foster care system. The government should offer these children additional services that would support their families to prepare children for independent lives.

Need for Decentralization

The need of **reforming social services at municipal level**, in particular, with regards to identification and prevention of risk groups and development of family support services, is apparent. Current social services of municipalities fail to respond to the needs of citizens. It becomes necessary that social workers function not at district[5], but at village and community levels, so that they identify risks at early stages and provide child's family with adequate support. It should be noted that the representatives of local municipalities find decentralization of social worker's service important in the conditions of adequate financial support.

4 Reintegration assistance to child's biological family is 90 GEL per month for a healthy child and 130 GEL for a child with disability. If, instead of a biological family, child is given in foster care, the financial aid is 15 GEL per calendar day (450-465 GEL per monthly) for a healthy child and 20 GEL per calendar day (600-620 GEL monthly) for a child with disability.

5 Same way as it is currently administered at the Social Service Agency

System gaps in respect to Services (Output)

Services for Risk Group Children

Support services offered by the government to the families from risk groups are quite limited and inaccessible. This is especially problematic in the regions outside of Tbilisi, particularly in high mountainous regions. Practitioners and theorists of the social service agree that it is important to offer parents such services that would support them develop correct parenting skills.

This need is also recognized by **children living and working on the streets and children in the state care.** They want to live with their families, and at the same time expect the government to work on their families' empowerment, mainly through employment and professional courses. Children and youth emphasize need **for increasing parent's awareness on parenting methods.**

Deinstitutionalization and Lack of Alternative Services

Lack of alternative services is a significant issue in the deinstitutionalization process of children with disabilities. The government does not provide sufficient attention to the problem of children with disabilities. Effective identification and closure of large-scale institutions for such children is an apparent problem in the regions. Closure of infants' homes and provision of alternative care for infants with health problems is another issue that needs to be addressed urgently.

Need for Employment Support Services

In order to achieve effective child welfare system it is important that general social-economic situation improves in the country is; thus, **the role of the government in employment of targeted families is essential.** Often families who receive social aid turn down employment opportunities. Fear to lose social aid often is the reason for such "sloth". Small scale economic activities that in majority of cases are not stable may cost them losing social aid. Besides resolution of this problem, **labor market programmes** that would support families to become more active, change their mentality, engage them in small business and at the end contribute to their empowerment are needed.

Working with Youth Exiting Care System

Child Welfare and Protection Action Plan 2012-2015 undertakes responsibility[6] for preparing children and youth for independent life and their social integration. This document sets a framework for activities in this direction for governmental, as well as non-governmental sectors.

System Gaps in Respect to Resources (Input)

Youth who have been deinstitutionalized unambiguously give preference to family environment over institutions. It is obvious that children want to life in family environment. Even those who do not have anyone want to live in a family-like environment. However, they also talk about the need to increase **qualification of caregivers, social workers and other specialists.** They also see the need of introducing adequate state programmes.

System Gaps in Respect to Process

Deinstitutionalization process turned out to be critically difficult for the teenage beneficiaries. They were not prepared for independent life. Despite deinstitutionalization, **integration into the society remains as the main challenge** for the beneficiaries of the child care system.

The non-governmental sector expects and is ready to **develop different types of service/programmes for children who exit from care system** after the government elaborates **implementation mechanisms** for re-

6 Article 3.6

sponsibilities undertaken in the framework of the action plan. The government, while working on mentioned issues, needs to utilize available national and international experience. Even through the national experience is very limited, practitioners positively access experience and achievements of the association "Our Home – Georgia" and the fund "Natakhtari", as well as SoS Children's Village. It is important that the mentioned experience is shared and replicated in other regions of Georgia.

The role of school is important in giving children **such education** that will support them in **finding employment**. The Office of Resource Officer has specialists of professional orientation, who are directly responsible to provide professional consultations of student of top grades. However, **problems of children in state care are not perceived as issues public schools need to address** and many believe that separate services and structures need to take care of them. Such approaches pose threat of alienation of children, who are in the state care system. In a number of cases discriminative practices towards the children in state care system increases such risk.

Children with disabilities were left beyond the deinstitutionalization process that made their social rehabilitation in the transition process impossible. After turning 18, persons with disabilities will be moved to the boarding type state institutions that are based on medical models. Another alternative to this are community organizations. However, due to lack of preparedness of persons with disabilities, as well as the community organizations themselves, often psycho-social conditions of persons with disabilities deteriorate in the new environment. The theorists, as well as practitioners working in this field, **do not have a clear idea about what the government's strategy should be** to support transition period of children with disabilities.

System Gaps in Respect to Services (Output)

Representatives of both governmental and non-governmental sectors see the need of developing state strategy in respect to the children, who leave care institutions after they reach 18 years of age. They agree that **the state policy for preparing youth for independent life and programmes/services for youth who have exited care system does not exist**.

Beneficiaries believe that development of **skills required for independent life, professional education** are of critical importance for them and think that the state should ensure their further adaption to environment (housing, employment, financial support and other social benefits). Youth name **lack of housing** as one of the priority issues that raises the issue of social housing high on the agenda.

The non-existence of joint database of beneficiaries, who **leave state care system** and need support for starting independent life, is another significant problem. Therefore, systemic analysis of the needs of beneficiaries who leave state care is not happening.

Currently, the Guardianship – Custody and Social Programs Department of the Social Service Agency stops working with a child as soon as he/she turns 18. In some cases, social workers informally, on its initiative maintain contact with the young persons, however a **formal mechanism of "tracking"** does not exist.

Theorists and practitioners working in this field do **not have clear idea about the types of services that need to be developed** to support the transition period for children with disabilities.

Juvenile Justice

System Gaps in respect to Resources (Input)

Increasing qualification of specialists is extremely important for successful implementation of the reform. In particular, enhancing professional skills of probation workers, increasing number of social workers in the field of justice and introduction of institute of judges, who specialize on the cases of juveniles are essential.

System Gaps in respect to Process

Reforms that are ongoing in the juvenile justice system are positively evaluated both by governmental and non-governmental actors. However, it needs to be noted that practitioners are more critical in assessing existing situation and problems. The main characteristics of the reform refer to viewing child in the ecosystem context. Child development needs to be considered in respect to family, school, friends and entire society. Thus, when we discuss risk factors of crime and prevention targets, need of psychosocial and economic empowerment of families becomes apparent. It is necessary to raise public awareness and make schools more actively engaged, so that they work more on spiritual and physical stability of its students, teach them time management, etc. Therefore, effective crime prevention requires **application of systemic and multidisciplinary approaches** with participation of various professionals.

Ineffective communication between different law enforcement bodies working with children (problems with timely referrals of cases from the penitentiaries to probation or Center for Crime Prevention) is a significant problem. **This prevents engagement of the social worker of the National Probation Agency and the Center for Crime Prevention with the child's family.** Such challenges often result in repetition of crime and child's return to the penitentiary.

Experts believe that establishment of **working group with the Office of Resource Officer** might be effective at the primary level of crime prevention. Representatives of the Office of Resource Officer are not informed about this initiative and are skeptical about it. On the other hand, it is apparent that schools need to become more active by ensuring increased engagement of students in extracurricular and recreational activities.

Also, cases of some level of miscoordination between the Social Service Agency and schools are revealed. **Often the Agency does not follow cases in details and fails to respond effectively.** On the other hand, schools' resource officers very rarely identify violence cases and refer them to the Agency. At such moments, schools should play the key role in identification of children with risky behavior and take required measures (for example, psychological centers that operate under the Office of Resource Officer needs to be involved). However, specialists of these centers, including social workers, do not work at all with the child's family and almost have no contact **with the social workers of the Social Service Agency.**

According to current situation, none of the state actors assume direct responsibility for **working with the children with difficult behavior;** experts' opinions vary regarding the Samtredia School model. Obvious gaps exist in this direction that need to be addressed at primary and secondary levels of prevention.

Issue of **children living and working on the streets** need to be discussed in the context of secondary prevention; these children are considered as potential criminals and represent the high risk group. However, their stigmatization by the society only aggravates the problem. Society expects them to commit crime. Children who feel this anticipation towards them try to meet the expectation that others have towards them.

Another problem is that **even experts do not recognize the role of the local governments at different levels of prevention**. However, representatives of local governments express readiness to engage in the prevention processes. In addition, despite the existing practice of cooperation between government and non-government sectors, more coordinated actions and partnership is required in respect to the prevention.

Experts find it necessary to develop a **legal system that is focused on the juvenile offenders**. This approach implies the following: physical arrangement of prisons considering psychological needs of juveniles, involvement of social worker or probation officer prior to court decision, engagement of a juvenile offender in the learning process, sports activities at the penitentiary institutions, definition of age of minority, definition of amenability age limit for criminal justice, considering interests of children and psychological age of an offender, particularly when he/she turns full age and needs to be moved to an adult prison, introduction of specialized judges, who work on the cases of minors, etc. The main emphasis should be made on the efforts to **prevent youth from entering penitentiary institutions.** Mediation and diversion programmes are indeed good practices in this regards. Also, it is important to harmonize existing legislation about registration, storage, exchange and elimination procedures of child's information in penitentiary and probation systems, with international standards.

Efforts of introducing standards of psychosocial rehabilitation services for service providers, who work with the youth in conflict with the law or with delinquent behavior, are positively assessed. These standards present recommendation guidelines and have been approved by the Criminal Justice Reform Interagency Coordination Council. However, the state monitoring and support mechanisms that would ensure compliance of services with mentioned standards do not exist yet.

System Gaps in Respect to Services (Output)

Need for development of family support services in economic and psychosocial direction is clear when talking about risk factors of crime and prevention targets. The Probation Service mainly assesses families' needs, but does not provide **adequate work for empowerment of families due to lack of services.** After leaving the penitentiary a young person returns to the same family with the same problems that had played a critical role in his entering the prison. To address this, diverse resocialization services need to be developed.

The non-governmental sector is considered as an important player in development and delivery of services, however, so far as it does not have the capacity required for offering high-quality services (educations, sport and recreational activities, after school activities, effective time management trainings, etc.).

Mediation and diversion programmes represent good examples of prevention activities. Also, it is important to introduce **after school state services** for youth.

Protection from Violence

System Gaps in respect to Resources (Input)

Police, as the main mechanism of protection from violence, and school, as the institute that support child and family, are the weakest actors of the existing system. Police fail to respond adequately to the cases of violence because the absence of specialized staff, while school teachers and resource officers have very low awareness regarding child protection from violence.

In respect to child protection from violence, it is critical **to increase number of social workers and train them** on domestic violence issues. Experts believe that specialization of social workers in specific fields contributes to their professionalism and effective work.

System Gaps in respect to Process

Child protection referral procedures require in depth changes. It is important that all stakeholders get involved in updating of the referral procedures. By the initiative of UNICEF, detailed referral guidelines and procedures will be elaborated. This should enable prevention of violence at early stages. All structures should be engaged in identification of violence, starting from family, neighbors, and relatives to kindergartens, schools and district doctors. Responsibilities for identification of violence should not lie only with the social works of the Social Service Agency. Also, need for increasing number of social workers and their requalification on the issues of domestic violence was stressed.

It is necessary to raise awareness of teachers, police and primary healthcare workers regarding referral procedures of child protection. At the same time, social workers should visit families more regularly to ensure identification of violence at early stages. Introduction of family monitoring mechanisms is also needed.

In the majority of cases, **resource officers fail to perform their functions**. Representatives of the Office of Resource Officer **are not realistic in assessing their roles and responsibilities** in respect to implementation of child protection referral procedures and the child protection system. All these bring us to the problem of interagency cooperation. A better coordinated and systemic work is required among the agencies of central government, as well as, in terms of cooperation with local municipalities and non-governmental sector. It should also be noted that media fails to play the educational role in the field of child protection from violence.

System Gaps in Respect to Services (Output)

Significant weaknesses were revealed with regard to the rehabilitation of victims of violence that are especially apparent for the practitioner social workers. This relates to the issue of rehabilitation of child victims of violence. The research shows **significant shortage of such rehabilitation services** both within governmental and non-governmental sectors. Only few NGOs specialize on rehabilitation of child victims of violence and they work only on specific directions (sexual violence). Also, there are no services that would assist **children with intellectual development disorder and psychological problems** in the cases of violence. Despite the fact that the Social Service Agency has psychologist's service, it cannot meet the existing demands.

In majority of cases, because of bureaucratic procedures, victims of violence experience difficulties with access to shelters. A monitoring system, that would **assess quality of service provided to beneficiaries at shelters needs to the introduced.** There is no effective support provided to the victims after they leave shelter. Victims should not be deprived of their status after they leave shelter. No rehabilitation services exist for rapid response in the cases of violence, such as crisis centers for victims of violence, or other support services; further, there are no rehabilitation services available for perpetrators of violence.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Prevention/Reintegration and Family Support, Empowerment

Coordination

Coalition member organizations should create a foundation for **systematic dialogue between government and non-government actors regarding issues related to overcoming challenges existing in the child welfare system.** Engagement of the **representatives of the Patriarchy** in the dialogue should happen; this will enhance coordination among the government, NGOs and social services of the Patriarchy.

The Coalition should play the facilitator's role in partnership between state and non-state actors and contribute to creation of a positive and constructive environment in this direction. It is important that the final drafts of the Coalition's Strategy and Action Plan reflect effective mechanisms of partnership and its practical implementation mechanisms.

The government should introduce **regulations for child registration in 24-hour care service** (to ensure effective "gate keeping") for all service providers (including the church).

Coordination between family support services and the referral system needs to be improved, so that the system becomes proactive and is able to apply systemic approaches to the problem. In order to achieve this, children and families from the risk groups need to be identified at the early stages.

To ensure effectiveness of the risk group identification process, the identification system should become multi-sectorial. Municipality services, primary healthcare (policlinics, village doctor), as well as schools, need to participate in the process. The function of identification of risk group children and families should also be included in job descriptions of social agents.

Development of Services

Diverse services that are tailored to the needs of children and their families need to be developed and their accessibility ensured. They need to be developed based on the systemic analysis of family needs. Below are the services that were identified as needed:

- **Development of family support services, in particular family consultation services, at schools** is recommended, especially in the regions where such services are limited. This would be part of the prevention work that the Ministry of Education and Science needs to contribute towards child welfare policy. To achieve this, **school based social workers** need to be introduced. The concept of this work recognizes role of families, schools and neighborhood as important aspects of child's life. This is one of the best prevention mechanisms in child welfare.

Through consultations at schools parents should be acquainted to positive parenting methods, improve their mentoring skills and teach them how to react correctly to child's difficult behavior. This would support families in child upbringing process as well as ensure timely identification and protection of children from risk groups. It is recommended that the mentioned service was outsourced by the Ministry of Education and Science to non-governmental organizations. It is necessary that firstly the Ministry conducted situation analysis to identify target schools.

Also, it is recommended to enhance engagement of the Office of Resource Officer of the Ministry of Education and Science, review their job descriptions and ensure their professional requalification.

- **Day center services of children under the age of two (toddlers' kindergartens) is recommended to be developed at the village level. This can be done** through outsourcing the service to the non-governmental organizations by the local municipalities. While working with the government on this recommendation,

one of the suggestions was to add a toddlers' service component to kindergartens. The non-governmental sector and donor organizations may take the lead in infrastructure development and elaboration of requalification courses for staff.

Prevention and support social services and social service institutions need to be developed at the municipal level. The social workers of mentioned services will work on identification of at-risk children in communities, refer identified cases to prevention services and ensure child referral to social workers of the custody and guardianship entity (the Social Service Agency).

In general, **community level social workers need to be developed by the municipality social service** that would focus on community mobilization, education and development. Its main function would be community outreach and prevention activities. The Social Service institution of the Social Service Agency needs to become decentralized according to specialized directions (e.g. family violence and protection of children from violence, foster care, etc.).

Development of an effective system of services needs to be based on research and evidence. Piloting and management of new services need to be closely linked to beneficiaries' actual needs. Services should be assessed and modified as a result of annual monitoring efforts. Evidence based research is the most effective approach for identification of existing risks in the child welfare system.

Increase of Social Assistance

The government should increase financial assistance to children's biological families, in particular:

- **Increase reintegration assistance** for a child's biological family to eradicate existing discriminative practice. At the same time, monitoring and support mechanisms for the reintegrated families need to be enhanced by the State Social Services.
- **Financial aid (benefit) needs to be introduced for the families with children who live below the poverty line in order to prevent a child's entrance into 24-hour care. The** poverty eradication programme score (e.g. below 57000) can be taken for poverty measurement. State social workers should monitor families that receive such assistance.
- It is advised to introduce **financial assistance to single parent families and families with three or more children** by the government. This assistance should be part of the prevention package offered by the government and along with the other family support services, be regularly monitored by the state.

Development of Employment Support Services

State role in employment of target families need to be strengthened for achieving an effective child welfare system. In particular, it is necessary to develop **labor market programmes** that will make families more active, change their mentality, involve them in small business and eventually contribute to their economic empowerment.

Education and Awareness Raising

Knowledge regarding services required for children with disabilities need to be increased among government and non-government organizations involved in the child welfare field. Public awareness regarding development of community based alternative services need to be raised.

Situation analysis and research need to be conducted in respect to the conditions of children and families of Roma community and other ethnic minorities. This will enable the state and public sector to increase their awareness and elaborate strategy for integrating children of these minority groups into the society. Successful international experience in this respect will significantly increase chances of integrating ethnic minority children into the society.

Children who are in state care often change care institutions. Frequent change of the care forms negatively influences child development. In order to address this issue the reasons leading to this and elaboration of evidence-based recommendations is necessary.

Capacity Development

State social worker's institute needs to be enhanced, that implies **provision of social workers with required resources and increasing their qualification**. It is important to take active advocacy efforts for increasing number of social workers, their wages, improve working conditions, safety, and legislative base for professional supervision.

Ministry of Labor, Health and Social Affairs, Social Service Agency and Ministry of Finance should work jointly for enhancing role of social workers; for this purpose high quality practices of the Social Service Agency and development of adequate **community based services** should be ensured.

Professional capacitates of the Patriarchy's Social Service need to be increased with the focus on sharing experience in achieving child welfare reform's goals and objectives.

Influencing decision-making

Child participation and engagement is necessary at all stages of everyday life (individual, group, community). The practice of the Youth Council and other consultation groups under the National Coalition and state agencies is encouraged, however such participation should be treated with due caution, in order to **avoid risk of manipulation through their participation.**

It is important to reflect **child's active participation in individual development plans** and services elaborated by the state. It is possible to elaborate a child-friendly form of development plans where children themselves make comments and remarks.

The Coalition should take the lead on launching advocacy efforts for the social protection right that is fundamental in achieving success in the child welfare field. Right on social protection implies access to basic income and healthcare services, shelter and housing, water and sanitary conditions, food and education. Therefore, implementation of the right on social protection is possible through provision of such social protection system that offers minimum level of basic benefits to all persons and families.

Working with Youth Exiting Care System

Evidence-based Policy

Based on the research results, the government should develop **concept and policy document for transition of youth who exit care system to independent life and their integration into society.** The concept should analyze the main needs of these youth. The concept should also **set the age of the state social service's work with the youth at a minimum of twenty-three years[7].** Based on the mentioned document variety of programmes/services for intermediate, semi-independent and independent life should be developed; engagement of donor community in piloting and delivery of these services should be ensured.

A database of **youth leaving the care system** needs to be drafted that would contribute to accurate identification of their needs by the government. This will create basis for development of needs-based package of services, as well as for effective piloting and monitoring implementation.

It is essential that the government starts to work **on development of skills required for independent life and rising professional interests at early stages, while a child is still in the care system.** Work by a multidisci-

7 Currently the guardianship and care service of Social service agency stops working with youth at the age of 18

plinary group (social worker, caregiver, psychologist, teacher, etc.) would be effective in this respect. It is important to identify challenges that schools face in regards to these children and study the factors that prevent their integration into the society.

While working with the youth it is important to develop a **transition plan** that the multidisciplinary group will work on and be developed with active participation of the youth.

Development of Services

It is necessary to develop various **mentorship support programmes** that would focus on preparation of youth for independent life. Ongoing psychosocial support and monitoring of their stability (budget management, professional education, job searching and others) is essential for supporting youth that exit state care. It is recommended that social workers get more actively engaged in these issues; also, a youth worker's role need to be introduced who would carry out regular monitoring and support youth with the issues they face in everyday life. The youth themselves emphasize the need of **developing peer support mechanisms.**

Provision of support to children who leave the state care system in the transition period to independent life should become one of the targets of the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs. This Ministry could be the leading agency in management of issues related to these youth above the age of 18.

It is necessary to **support youth leaving care with housing.** The most optimum resolution of the housing issue could be provision of short-term transition housing or rental of apartment. The transition housing should be integrated into the community and fit to the needs of individual development. Before planning any actions in this direction the number of children that enter 24 hour care system because of the lack of housing need to be identified. The Coalition should take the lead on advocacy efforts on this issue.

Both government and non-government actors need to **increase their knowledge regarding the specific services required for the children with disabilities.** Programmes for increasing capacities in social and everyday life of children with disabilities above 18 who are in the state care should be introduced for raising their quality of life.

Coordination

Interagency cooperation **is critical for preparing children for independent life and social integration.** As it is a cross-cutting issue, **it is recommended to establish a working group with participation of all relevant stakeholders (**Ministry of Labor, Health and Social Affairs, Social Service Agency, Ministry of Education and Science, Center for Crime Prevention, Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs, Child and Youth National Center, representatives of civil society, etc.) which would enable coordination all available resources and opportunities.

Youth support individual approaches should be applied for eradication of problems that develop in the transition process and for ensuring the state financing mechanisms for this process. Active cooperation of the structures of the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs with the Ministry of Labor, Health and Social Affairs is very important in this respect.

Juvenile Justice

Development of Services

Crime prevention services need to be developed in **the context of the ecosystem**. Prevention services need to depend on a holistic approach and be constructed on the interventions that focus on positive change of juvenile's immediate environment and reduction of existing risk factors to minimum. More active engagement of schools and office of resource officer is advised at the primary level of crime prevention. After-school extracurricular activities that would assist children to organize their time appropriately, develop social skills, and ensure children's supervision in a healthy environment need to be introduced at schools. **School based crime**

prevention activities need to be developed and diversified; this includes information campaigns, introduction of legal education component at general education institutions, sport activities, hiking and professional orientations. Thus, **schools are the most appropriate environment for introduction of primary level crime prevention interventions.** Schools are critical in terms of raising public awareness among youth. It is necessary to develop youth crime prevention concepts within the education system. Center for Crime Prevention and Probation Service should focus more on working with families in order to increase the role of families in the crime prevention process.

Development of psychosocial services is critical at the secondary and tertiary levels of crime prevention. Different types of services for children living and working on the streets need to be developed for the secondary crime prevention. It is also important that the Ministry of Education and Science considers "children living and working on the streets", who often have significant academic lag, under the category of children with special education needs[8]. Addition of the children living and working in the streets to the above definition would enable the government to devote more attention and resources for eradication of this problem. Also, it is necessary to prepare these youth for **the resocialization process and develop diverse services in this regard.**

Development of social worker's institute at the local government level is required; this would play a critical role at all levels of juvenile crime prevention. At the municipal level social workers should ensure identification of risk groups and their referral to relevant services and resources.

Efforts of introducing standards of psychosocial rehabilitation services for service providers, who work with the youth in conflict with the law or with delinquent behavior, are positively assessed. These standards are recommendatory. The government should elaborate mechanisms for practical application of these standards, and state monitoring and support mechanisms that would ensure compliance of services with mentioned standards.

Coordination

Effective communication, clear distribution of functions and improved coordination is critical among the actors working with children in the field of justice, in particular, Penitentiary Department, National Probation Agency and Center for Crime Prevention. Coordination and partnership mechanism among social workers of the Office of Resource Officer's Psychological Center and social workers of the Social Service Agency need to be developed for effective crime prevention at primary and secondary levels.

Social workers, psychologists and other specialist, employed in the penitentiaries, justice and probation system are more realistic in assessing the situation and outline existing problems that they currently face in the system. Representatives of top management should listen more closely to practitioners so that they are able to see and analyze the challenges that follow the reform implementation process. Participation of practitioners should be ensured in all working groups for policy development and service planning.

Institutional Changes

The court system reform should focus on the interests of juveniles. Involvement of social workers or probation officers in the process prior to court decision should increase their feeling of stability. Also, introducing institute of judges that specializes on the cases of juveniles is important. Special qualification of such judges would make the court system more sensitive to the psychosocial aspects of juveniles and make the system considerate of their interests.

Also, it is important to harmonize existing legislation with the international standards in regard to registration, storage, exchange and elimination procedures of information about a child in the preventive and probation system.

8 Today the term 'children with special education needs' implies children, who: 1. Have physical and mental development disorder; 2. Have eyesight and acoustic disorder; 3. Have speech, behavior and emotional disorder; 4. Are in need of long term medication/ hospitalizations; 5. Represent ethnical minorities; 6. Are socially vulnerable, and 7. Are under the risk of being expelled from the education process because of the difficulties with the learning process.

Protection from Violence

Coordination

Referral procedures for child protection requires in depth changes both in terms of identification and response processes. Involvement of all stakeholders of the referral system in the update of the procedures will contribute to effectiveness of the procedures. Simple and clear guidelines for all engaged actors will improve the process of identification and protection of victims of violence. Identification of child victims of violence with disabilities by the system because of limited communication abilities of the victims is problematic and practically does not happen at all. The referral document and protection mechanism should consider these factors.

A separate structure that would work on the issues of violence needs to be established under the Ministry of Internal Affairs. This would manifest willingness of the ministry to prioritize the topic of violence. Until the Ministry structurally demonstrates prioritization of this issue, efforts of other actors will not make significant difference; however, at present the Ministry does not have sufficient resources (including human resources) allocated for addressing the issue of violence.

Capacity building

It is necessary to **raise awareness of police officers and law enforcement bodies, primary healthcare workers and teachers** regarding the referral procedures and response to the cases of violence. Social workers need to be paying more regular visits to families so that the cases are identified at early stages. Access to effective professional supervision is critical for social workers that would assist them in the violence identification process. Non-governmental organization have the leading role in development and provision of required trainings courses so that teachers, doctors, social workers and law enforcement officers understand their functions in the process of identification and response to violence.

It is important that engaged staff is prepared and specialized teams of police officers that work on the issues of child and family violence are formed. Besides increasing awareness of teachers and resource officers, introduction of school-based social worker's institute would be an effective mechanism for protection of children from violence.

Development of Services

It is necessary to **establish and develop rehabilitation services for child victims of violence.** Services should be available in respect to violence prevention, as well as rehabilitation of victims. Interests and needs of the most vulnerable children (children living and working on the streets) need to be considered in the process of development of these services.

Only in extreme cases should victims of violence be separated from their families and rehabilitation services should be accessible for the perpetrators of violence as well. Therefore, it is necessary **to introduce services for the perpetrators**. **Further development of existing psychological services of the Social Service Agency and National Probation Agency, who should work with the child victims of violence and perpetrators** is necessary.

Awareness Raising

Public awareness on the issues of violence needs to be raised. The National Coalition for Child and Youth Welfare that should elaborate **strategy for public awareness** in respect to advocacy, continuous education, strengthening family support services and external monitoring should play an important role. It is also essential to conduct researches to study causes of violence.

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ATTACHMENT:
DETAILED INFORMATION ABOUT RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Table 1. **List of experts who participated in interviews**

#	Expert	Organization	Position
1	Mari Tsereteli	Social Service Agency	Head of Guardianship – Custody and Social Programs Department
2	Marina Meskhi	State Fund for the Protection and Assistance of Victims of Human Trafficking	Director
3	Gia Mamrikishvili	Tbilisi City Hall	Head of Social Service
4	Nino Shatberashvili	National Probation Agency	Head of Rehabilitation Department
5	Levan Zardalashvili	Ministry of Education and Science	Head of Psychological Center of the Office of Resource Officer and Deputy Head of the Office of Resource Officer of Educational Institution
6	Eka Dgebuadze	Ministry of Education and Science	Head of the Department of Inclusive Education Development
7	Meri Maghlaperidze	Children and Youth National Center	Head of the Civil Integration Division of Civil Education and Integration Programmes Department
8	Joni Kvinikadze	Center for Crime Prevention	Head
9	Inga Sarjveladze	Penitentiary Department	Deputy head of Social Service Division of Penitentiary Department
10	Natia Pirashvili	Public Defender's Office	Head of the Center of the Protection of Rights of Persons with Disabilities
11	Maya Gedevanishvili	Public Defender's Office	Center of Child's Rights
12	Keti Melikadze	UN Children's Fund	Head of Social Welfare Programme
13	Teona Kuchava	UN Children's Fund	Head of Juvenile Justice Programme
14	Maka Peradze	Ministry of Internal Affairs	Head of Programmes Division of International Relations Department
15	Zurab Varazi	Patriarchy	Head of Social Affairs Department

Table 2. **List of focus groups with experts and practitioners**

#	Focus Group	# of participants	Field of expertise
1	Office of Resource Officer of Educational Institution	7	Social workers, psychologists and resource officers
2	Non-governmental sector (First Step, World Vision, SoS Children's Village, Life Chance, Anika, Save the Children	9	Social workers, psychologists and other professionals
3	Field of Justice (Center for Crime Prevention, National Probation Agency, Specialized penitentiary for juveniles)	8	Social workers, psychologists and other professionals
4	Social Service Agency (Service Centers of Old Tbilisi, Vake-Saburtalo, Isani-Samgori, Gldani-Nadzaladevi and Didube-Chughureti)	7	Social workers, mobile team social workers
5	Coalition member NGOs (Children of Georgia, Public Health Fund, Global Initiative in Psychiatry, SoS Children's Village, World Vision)	6	Programme Directors and Coordinators
	Total	37	

Table 3. **List of focus groups with beneficiaries and parents**

#	Focus Group	# of participants	Age
1	Children living and working on streets	12	Above the age of 11
2	Parents of reintegrated children	3	-
3	Reintegrated children	5	Above the age of 11
4	Children in foster care and small group homes	11	Above the age of 11
5	**Members of Youth Council of National Coalition**	13	-
	Total	41 children and 3 parents	