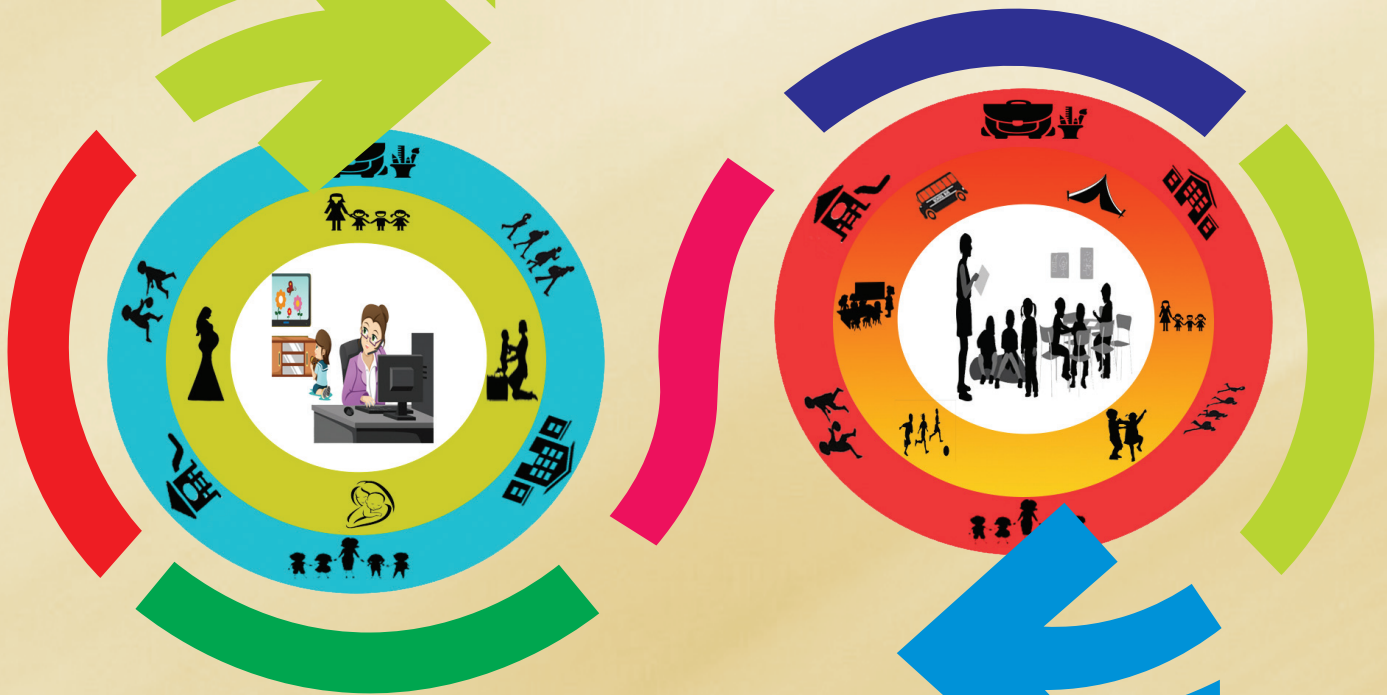




Brot
für die Welt



DEVELOPMENT
OF CHILD CARE
SERVICES TO PROMOTE
WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT
AND ENSURE EFFECTIVE
PREVENTION AND
RESPONSE TO
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

2021
SEPTEMBER

DEVELOPMENT OF CHILD CARE SERVICES
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ENSURE EFFECTIVE PREVENTION AND RESPONSE
TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

September, 2021

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Georgia is a signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which obliges a member state to take all necessary measures to ensure the parents' right to use their services and childcare facilities.

In our country, women have lower access to employment and financial resources than men (invisible economic violence). In addition, according to researches, kindergarten services are inaccessible to 30.8% of the regions' population, which is a significant factor limiting employment opportunities. The Public Defender's 2020 report represents barriers affecting the prevention and effective response to violence against women, obvious among women victims of violence (especially after leaving a shelter/crisis center).

The policy document analyses legal obligations and standards (under international and national law) and discusses local and international best practices. Major barriers and contributing factors to women's economic empowerment, access to employment and childcare services, such as work schedule and flexibility of kindergarten/school hours, employer's attitude towards vulnerable women, need for continuing summer education, daycare centers, non-formal education in kindergartens, etc., the implementation of which will be mainly based on two factors: mobilization of financial and, consequently, human resources and state support. It is impossible without a multidisciplinary approach, which implies coordinated work and cooperation between governmental and non-governmental agencies.

Policy alternatives and their recommendations include several interrelated measures to prevent violence against women and contribute to their economic empowerment, regarding overcoming the barriers to access to childcare services (inflexible schedule, insufficient funding, and human resources, legislative gaps, employers' low sensitivity to vulnerable groups, etc.). The problem solving should be mainly focused on creating an environment for vulnerable women preventing them from returning or staying in a violent environment as much as possible. Therefore, it is essential to raise women's awareness, which means breaking down stigma and stereotypes and raising their awareness about the various services for women victims of violence. It will positively impact the planning and initiation of changes (including legislation) necessary to prevent or respond to violence against vulnerable women. And its crucial prerequisite is **access to childcare services**.

INTRODUCTION

According to the World Health Organization data of March 2021, about a quarter of women aged 19-45 have experienced physical and/or sexual violence at least once in their lifetime (e.g., prevalence indicator in Europe is 22%). Therefore, combating and preventing violence, according to WHO, requires a **multisectoral approach**, which includes: advocacy, promoting women's empow-



erment; provision of complex services (including training of service providers); early identification of women and children victims of violence, etc.

The policy document aims to analyze the factors contributing to women's employment, an essential component of the prevention and effective response to domestic violence against women, part of which is improving child care services. Analyze challenges and barriers and search for improvement mechanisms/alternatives.

The main triggering circumstance of violence against women is **material dependence on the abuser**¹. This factor indicates the need to promote women's employment and economic empowerment, which should be reflected in providing flexible and tailored services to women. Various studies and documents reflect the following shortcomings of the services offered to women victims of violence: (i) lack of services tailored to the victim's needs²; (ii) low level of awareness of services (e.g., 52% of beneficiaries in public shelters and crisis centers had no information about means of protection against domestic violence (before they became beneficiaries)); (iii) Short-term and services partly tailored to the needs.³

These deficiencies force a woman victim of domestic violence to return to the abuser or remain in a violent environment.⁴ Although the state does not keep statistics on how many victims get back to an abuser (or stay in the family in a violent environment), often, due to the difficult socio-economic situation, women victims have no choice and cannot start living independently.⁵

METHODOLOGY

Quantitative and qualitative methods are used in the study:

The qualitative method includes desk research according to the data of different countries (studies, statistics, reports, etc.), **11 Group Discussions**, and **21 In-Depth Interviews** conducted in Kutaisi, Bagdati, Vani, Samtredia, Terjola, Tsalenjikha, Zugdidi, Senaki, Chokhatauri and Kobuleti. **Focus Groups composition:** victims of violence, single mothers, and mothers with many children, school and preschool-age children, persons with disabilities, and small children. **In-Depth Interviews** composition: representatives of the State Care Agency Imereti Regional Centre and the Kutaisi Service Centre for Violence Victims (Shelter and Crisis Centre), SOS Children's Village

1 GYLA, "Current Issues of Domestic Violence Against Women", Tbilisi, 2019, p. 7. available at -https://gyla.ge/files/news/%E1%83%A4%E1%83%9D%E1%83%9C%E1%83%93%E1%83%98/geo_full.pdf

2 Fund "Sukhumi", "The Role and Practices of Local Self-Government in Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence", p. 49, 53, available at - <http://www.fsokhumi.ge/index.php/ka/publikacia/informatia-protiv-nasilia/item/1760-2021-01-31-16-59-06>

3 Fund "Sukhumi", "Monitoring of Services for Victims", p. 14, 16, 28, 36, available at - [http://www.fsokhumi.ge/index.php/ka/publikacia/informatia-protiv-nasilia/itemlist/search?searchword =](http://www.fsokhumi.ge/index.php/ka/publikacia/informatia-protiv-nasilia/itemlist/search?searchword=)

4 ibid, p. 57

5 Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence in Georgia, Public Defender of Georgia, Special report, 2015, p. 4-7, available at - <https://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20georgia/attachments/publications/2015/geo%203.pdf?la=ka&vs=4603>

Family Strengthening Day Centre Leader, social worker, victims of violence, mothers of small children, teacher, head of the Nursery and Kindergartens' Association, social worker of the organization "Mercury", member of the City Council Gender Council, head of the Student and Youth Centre.

Quantitative research: A total of 534 respondents have been interviewed in 10 regions:

Table #1

№	City	Number of respondents
1.	Vani	51
2.	Bagdati	52
3.	Senaki	50
4.	Tkibuli	51
5.	Samtredia	77
6.	Terjola	50
7.	Chokhatauri	51
8.	Kobuleti	51
9.	Tsalenjikha	50
10.	Zugdidi	51

CONTEXT:

Women's economic empowerment should preferably involve increasing women's access to income and identifying how much they control and use their income ("holistic" approach).

Based on the above, it is necessary to identify barriers hindering the economic empowerment of women. Researchers identify several interdependent factors, such as cultural (patriarchal) norms, values, and stereotypes "tailored" to men (e.g. family dominance - subordinate roles); lack access to education and, consequently, career growth; limited access to quality child care services; gender aspects of employment/salary and inequality, lack of resources (e.g. financial, human); lack of coordination and support of existing structures in the public sector, etc.

The following factors contributing to women's economic empowerment identified through the UNICEF study should also be highlighted: childcare reimbursement for formal and informal sector employees, provision of quality care and early education for children, various benefits and adequate salary, etc.



1. THE SITUATION IN GEORGIA

Like global data, women's and men's jobs, salaries, and working conditions are different in Georgia. In addition, women spend more time taking care than men.

For women, low access to employment and finances (and/or restricted access) can be considered as "invisible economic violence" involving stereotypes (e.g., according to Geostat, men own and dispose of a more significant part of almost all types of assets, such as real estate, land and large equipment). Gender disproportion is more pronounced in rural areas; **unpaid labour of women** (child care/housework - 45 hours per week); **lack/absence of public support to those who are** referring to the relevant support services or assistance centres; indifferent attitude of employers - they do not see and do not perceive the need for economic empowerment of women.

A study conducted in 27 EU countries has revealed a positive role in the introduction of supporting mechanisms for employed mothers - a directly proportional link between a sense of general well-being, self-realization, and employment. Studies in Georgia indicate that, for example, 30.8% of the population in the surveyed regions did not have access to kindergartens, which limits women's ability to engage in activities and provide financial support.

The 2020 report of the Public Defender of Georgia and the assessment of the Action Plan Against Domestic Violence by the Georgian Young Lawyers' Association highlight several key issues that are the main barriers to the prevention and effective response to domestic violence against women:

- ***The state does not offer special programs for single parents and those with many children. The programs at the local level fail to provide them with comprehensive socio-economic support;***
 - ***There is a low level of awareness about state services addressing domestic violence against women;***
 - ***The difficulty of detecting economic violence is apparent (identification from a gender perspective);***
 - ***There is a problem of coordination between the various agencies working on the issue of violence against women;***
 - ***Targeted services for children victims of violence are not introduced;***
 - ***No focus is made on long-term goals, and there is no emphasis on the issue of economic empowerment of single mothers (only the issue of instant assistance on the ground, and not the economic provision of the victim, in the long run, is identified);***
 - ***The needs of employed mothers are not taken into account. For example, there is no flexible work schedule and conditions plan;***
 - ***The change has not affected the so-called private sector; the issue of maternity leave pay etc.***

The above-listed barriers become highly acute to women victims of violence leaving the shelter/crisis centre when women cope with all challenges on their own, especially when they have to choose between taking care of small children and professional development/employment. The 2018 UNWOMEN and Fund "Sukhumi"

reports represent key factors that will increase women's participation in the labour force and, consequently, reduce their vulnerability to domestic violence. They include a) availability of kindergarten and childcare services (including geographical), quality, price, and working time (after 6 p.m.); b) offering a flexible work schedule by the employer.

Various studies and international experience indicate the effectiveness of a multidisciplinary approach, which involves creating multisectoral services to support victims. This entails not only expanding, improving, and coordinating existing services but also creating special programs for children, strengthening an educational component, vocational training etc.

2. LEGAL OBLIGATIONS AND STANDARDS OF THE STATE

2.1. INTERNATIONAL LAW

Economic empowerment of victims of violence against women and domestic violence, an effective mechanism for preventing and responding to violence, remains a significant challenge for the world and Georgia.

Georgia entered a qualitatively new phase against domestic violence and violence against women in 2017, when it ratified the **Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence** (hereinafter referred to as **Istanbul Convention**).

It is the first international, legally binding instrument. **One of the main objectives of the Istanbul Convention is protection and support victims of violence against women and domestic violence**, achieved through a comprehensive and coordinated policy. In particular, the state has made a positive commitment to allocate adequate financial and human resources **to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence**.

Chapter 4 of the Convention is dedicated to the protection and support of victims, including obligations regarding **establishing specialized and general support services**. Article 18 of the Convention sets out several general principles that are noteworthy regarding the **provision of victim protection and support services**. The third paragraph requires that the taken measures increase **women's empowerment and promote economic independence**. At the same time, where appropriate, it should allow **different protection and support services to be located in the same building, addressing specific needs of vulnerable persons**, including **child victims, and being accessible to them**.

Parties should make these services available to victims regardless of their socio-economic status and provide them free of charge, where appropriate. In addition, Article 20 of the Istanbul Convention defines general support services, which include **assistance provided by public authorities, such as social services and health and employment services that provide long-term assistance**. It is essential in this article that these services are **tailored not only to the victims but to other members of the community** as well.



Georgia is a signatory to the **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child**, which obliges a State Party to take all appropriate measures to ensure that **working parents have the right to benefit from child-care services and facilities for which they are eligible.**

Article 11 of the **UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women**, one of the first notable international acts to ensure equality between women and men, sets out in detail the obligations of the state **to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of employment.** To encourage the provision of the necessary supporting social **services to enable parents to combine family obligations with work responsibilities and participation in public life, mainly through promoting the establishment and development of a network of child-care facilities.** In addition, to eliminate discrimination in the economic, social, and other spheres, the Convention sets out a provision of the following rights: **a) the right to family benefits; b) the right to bank loans, mortgages, and other forms of financial credit; c) the right to participate in recreational activities, sports and all aspects of cultural life.**

The primary source of international labor law is the conventions and recommendations of the International Labor Organization (ILO). 17 ILO conventions have been ratified by the Parliament of Georgia.

The ILO Convention on Employment Policy should be emphasized among them. It obliges parties to pursue active policies **to stimulate economic growth and development, raise levels of living, and provide workforce requirements and overcoming unemployment and under-employment.**

The International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights and its Part III should be emphasized among the international treaties governing labor law. It sets out in detail the obligations of the state parties on what they must do to protect the labor rights of each individual.

2.2. NATIONAL LEGISLATION

National legislation also responds to the international obligations of the state. To harmonize with the Istanbul Convention in 2017, amendments were made to 25 legislative acts of Georgia, including significantly expanding the scope of the **Law of Georgia on Violence against Women and/or Elimination of Domestic Violence, Protection and Support to Victims of Violence.** **In addition to the fight against violence, the law also provides guarantees for the social, and legal protection, and assistance of victims to create a basis for the protection, assistance, and rehabilitation of victims.**

Article 6 identifies the mechanisms for the prevention of violence against women and/or domestic violence, including **a set of social, economic, legal, and other measures aimed at preventing the causes and preconditions of violence against women and/or domestic violence, the prevention of violence,** prosecuting the abuser, correcting his attitudes and behavior, rehabilitating and adapting the victim.

Besides, **the Law of Georgia on Gender Equality** shall ensure the creation of favorable working conditions for pregnant, and nursing mothers, which excludes their work in a hard, harmful, and dangerous environment, as well as at night.

The Organic Law of Georgia - **The Code on the Rights of the Child**, adopted in 2019, aims to **ensure the welfare of children**. Article 28 of the Code **sets up the need for a family support program**. In particular, **the family support programs' content, form, and duration should be tailored to the best interests of the child and his/her family**. It may cover one or more activities, including:

- ✓ **Proposing the opportunity to obtain vocational education and employment opportunities for a parent;**
- ✓ **Supplementary social services** (day-care center, mediation and conciliation services in family disputes, a course of medical services for the treatment of addiction to alcohol and/or drugs, or in the case of other psychological and emotional needs, **social and economic support to employed and single parents**) including **community-based services**.

The main legislative act regulating labor relations is the Organic Law of Georgia **Labor Code of Georgia** regulating labor and its concomitant relations in the territory of Georgia unless they are otherwise governed by other special laws or international agreements of Georgia.

In 2020, significant legislative changes were made regarding women's rights, where **the separation of leave due to pregnancy, childbirth, and child care (so-called maternity leave) is particularly significant**. It has also become possible to redistribute leave due to pregnancy, childbirth, and child care between the child's mother and father.

In addition, in 2020, the Parliament of Georgia adopted a new law (lex specialis) **On Facilitating Employment**, which regulates state activities related to facilitating employment, and **designates institutions responsible for facilitating a policy labor market and employment**.

One of the basic principles of the law is **the individualization of employment promotion measures. Concerning vulnerable groups and the population of mountainous regions**, who face difficulties in terms of the availability of employment, **the state shall ensure the use of particular approaches**.

At the same time, under the Law of Georgia Tax Code of Georgia, **income tax shall not be levied on taxable income up to 3 000 GEL earned by a single mother during a calendar year**.

According to the Public Defender's report on the situation of human rights and freedoms in Georgia, **the issue of the legal status of single parents and those of many children remains a problem, as the state does not offer special socio-economic support programs, and local programs do not provide full support**. According to her, it is still a challenge for the father to take child care leave in the public sector because, in 2020, only women will enjoy this right. Unfortunately, at this stage, the government has not approved a new National Action Plan on "Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence and Measures to be Implemented for the Protection of Victims (Survivors)". **Therefore, the new action plan must focus more on developing existing childcare services tailored to women's needs and promoting new services to strengthen women's economic empowerment**.

3. BEST PRACTICES

What do international and local practices offer in terms of promoting women's employment and economic empowerment? Through an analysis of the several countries' practices, we identified two main factors on which best practice should be based: (i) the diversity of childcare services and (ii) the need for a flexible work schedule for employed women.

Example of America: There are different types of child care services such as on-site child care; backup care allowing a parent to receive day care services during a child's illness or vacation; summer school and vacation services; support for parents who have non-standard working hours; resources and referrals - the employer contracts with child care agencies and selects the best and most flexible option for employees; child care discounts/reimbursements (discount on center services or reimbursement), etc.

Example of Ukraine: Like Georgia, many women in Ukraine are out of the labor force and receive lower wages than men. Although the state provides women with certain benefits, experts think it is essential to create working conditions where it is possible to balance work and family responsibilities. For this purpose, under an agreement between the state and employers in 2008, family matters were regulated based on fundamental principles, norms, and labor relations agreement of social and economic policy. Good practice involves a flexible work schedule that allows the employee to work at hours convenient for him/her or from home. Some companies have opened childcare facilities for their employees or funded similar facilities. A caregiver of a child under 14 has a reduced working day by 1 hour, which will be considered as a full working day, etc.

Georgia: SOS Children's Village Family Strengthening Program Day Centre. The center is supported by the German Ministry of Economics (co-funded by the state (e.g. City Hall)) and is located in Kutaisi. It operates for children of 1-3 years and is designed for 20 beneficiaries. The day center works from 09:00 to 21:00, without days off (except holidays announced by the state and August). The parent can also receive the service during the part of the day she/he needs (and not for 12 hours). The center provides beneficiaries with four meals a day. The schedule, menu, and all other services are individually tailored to each beneficiary. The center employs two different staff groups working in shifts. Access to the day center can be based on a social worker's recommendation after assessing socially vulnerable, large families or those victims of violence. The center's services are also available for vulnerable mothers in the shelter. Since employers less consider the situation of vulnerable mothers, the center can negotiate with them (to start work 10-15 minutes later), which is often successful.

Majorel Georgia (former Arvato) established its first office in Georgia in September, 2016. Today they have 4 offices – two in Tbilisi, Kutaisi and Batumi. The policy of the company for parents of young children is defined in the relevant documents (internal regulations, procedures). The paid maternity leave includes 9 months: to be paid in full for the first 6 months (in addition, the employee is paid a bonus for the amount he/she earned in the last 6 months before taking maternity leave (on an average basis)). A woman on maternity leave is given 50% of her salary for the next three months. In addition, paid leave days can be used at her discretion i.e. after the end of the maternity leave. In case of using unpaid childcare leave provided by law, their jobs are preserved. For pregnant, nursing mothers, as well as parents of young children, a flexible work schedule is provided - fully or partially remote mode. Majorel Georgia is currently working on the issue of maintaining

the so-called Hybrid work schedule for mothers and/or fathers in this category after the pandemic. In addition, the company complies with the requirements of Article 24, paragraph 6 and Article 28, paragraph 3 of the Labor Code of Georgia on the restriction of short working days for breastfeeding mothers (mothers of children under 1 year) and night work for pregnant women, nursing mothers and parents of children under 3 years.

4. ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT AND CHILD CARE SERVICES: BARRIERS AND CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

1.1. MAIN BARRIERS

An analysis of in-depth interviews and group discussions reveals that most of the surveyed women (victims of violence, single mothers, mothers with many children, mothers of children with disabilities, and mothers of one or two children) take care of their children without assistance. Only some of them are helped by a family member, and only those with relatively better material status afford babysitter`s service (periodically). All of them enjoy kindergarten and school services. Some of them are housewives, whereas those employed talk about the need for child care services and the problems regarding leaving a child in case of employment.

Quantitative data support the qualitative research results. In this case, the most frequently used services include **school** (66.1% of cases), **kindergarten** (55.6% of cases), and **family members** (24.3% of cases). Ten respondents (including six employed) use babysitter`s service (marked with other answers), and one out of 10 is a victim of violence. 4 are mothers of many children. Others are mothers of one or two children. If we consider the total number of respondents in terms of employment, we get a similar picture. The majority of employees (58%) use the kindergarten service (along with other services).

Diagram # 4.1.

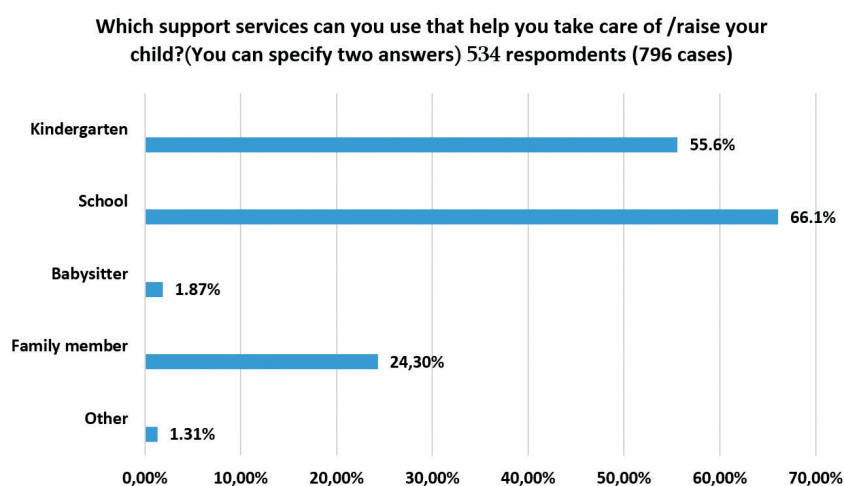
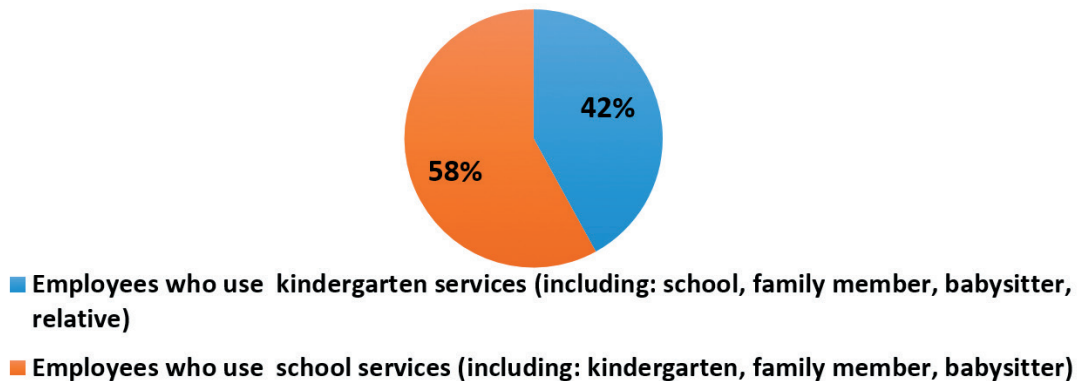


Diagram #4.2.

**Employees who enjoy mainly school and kindergarten services (number of cases - 395,
Total number of employed respondents - 315)**



Notice 1: Percentages are calculated from the number of employed people (395 cases).

Notice 2: There are 20 cases of gender-based violence victims among employed and kindergarten service beneficiaries (42% of cases).

Notice 3: There are 21 cases of gender-based violence victims among employed and school service beneficiaries (58% of cases).

Based on the qualitative data, kindergarten and school existing services are insufficient to promote women's employment. The document represents the main challenges and shortcomings that accompany the unavailability and/or lack of services and appear to be barriers to women's economic empowerment and employment:

Incompatibility of employment schedule and kindergarten/school duration. A woman has to choose between unemployment and extra money from her budget for employment (for a private institution or babysitting service). Employment opportunities are limited even for women who have their own business and a relatively flexible schedule. For example, a woman victim of violence living in Kobuleti who has a small business and seasonal work, and a victim of violence and a single mother, self-employed in Vani, because the kindergarten is mainly open to 4-5 p.m. Some qualitative study participants emphasized their satisfaction with the existing kindergarten and school services.

However, they indicate that these, even well-provided, services are insufficient for women's employment and economic empowerment. **According to the study data, to promote women's economic empowerment and employment, it is desirable to increase kindergarten working hours (e.g. to 6-7 p.m.), since the vulnerable employed women's working schedule (who work mainly in low positions and overtime) is completely incompatible with those of schools/kindergartens.**

The problem of inflexible work schedules is especially **acute for parents living far from the district center**. It is challenging for a parent to deal with daily problems and expenses when there are no child care services in the municipalities: *“The shelter administration provided my job, and today I can sustain my child. But it requires a lot of effort and time from me. ... I want to have the opportunity to maintain myself and my child. In the summer, when there are no kindergartens, where should I take my child? My parents do not want to see me. I ran away from my husband. What should I do in this case?”* - Zugdidi, a woman victim of violence (in-depth interview).

The employer's attitude is problematic. In most cases, the situation of women of the vulnerable group is neglected. This problem is addressed in a Sapari report, which analyzes the gender policies of nine Eastern European companies. Companies do not see the need to empower women, and promoting employment does not go beyond maternity leave.

Some respondents involved in the qualitative survey state that **they constantly have to apply to the employer for benefits due to inflexible schedules, which affects the relationship between the employee and the employer**. Some service providers and women from vulnerable groups have the same opinions. They point out that **the public sector employees can benefit from a relatively flexible schedule, although they also face problems. And women from vulnerable groups are mainly employed in the private sector, where their needs are not considered.** (social worker, “Mercuri”).

Women point to the second, **institutional side of the issue, which is linked to teachers' low salaries and insufficient human resources, affected by lack of finances and hinders the development of services**: *“There are a few employees who stay after 5 o'clock in the kindergarten. However, with the salary they have, they are less willing to have much workload, and it is not surprising to me”* - Vani, a single mother, a victim of violence.

The SOS Children's Village Family Strengthening Day Care Centre leader believes that public kindergartens do not meet the requirements of the setup service. Consequently, no changes will occur if the groups are still staffed with many children.

The absence of summer gardens, which is one of the main barriers to employment (for private and public sector employees), is vital for all participants in a qualitative study (in group discussions or in-depth interviews). Only in some municipalities, there are summer kindergartens in big cities (e.g., two summer kindergartens in Zugdidi) that only work in June, which is insufficient. Vulnerable groups cannot afford private kindergartens. Participants emphasize **that this service should be free, at least for vulnerable groups**. Even respondents who do not have to work during the summer due to their work (e.g. a school doctor and junior police officer) still need child-care services during that period, for example, seasonal employment, which will strengthen them financially. *“If there were summer groups in the garden, I even thought about leaving the children to the mother more boldly. I thought about a close neighbor. I would pay her to take the children to the garden and bring them to the mother. I could have worked in Turkey, or at the seaside for a few months”* - Terjola, a victim of violence (without status). **The study highlighted the need to expand and increase access to summer garden services, not only in cities but also in rural areas.**



Within the qualitative study, the respondents particularly highlighted **the need for extended groups at schools**. It should also be noted that some schools have extended groups. However, the parent has to pay some money to receive the service, making the service inaccessible to vulnerable groups. **The respondents also mentioned the need for summer camps for school-age children**. As in-depth interviewees noted, some parents show a distrust regarding security. Like kindergarten services, all study participants indicated that **extended school/summer camp services should be free, at least for the vulnerable groups**. The problem is that an extended group service is mainly provided in big cities. Therefore, for example, a single mother who is a victim of violence and has changed her residence to escape from violence is forced to return (presumably at the risk of meeting the abuser) to give her child a better education.

Inaccessibility of babysitting services creates additional difficulties. In addition to the fact that most of them cannot afford these services, it isn't easy to find qualified staff in the region (Zugdidi, group discussion).

The issue of involving children in **multidisciplinary after-school sport and art clubs and the distance of these clubs is acute**. Clubs are financially and/or geographically inaccessible to women from vulnerable groups. Furthermore, for families who use this service, it is a very heavy burden. These clubs are mainly concentrated in big cities. Consequently, access to services, along with financial inaccessibility, is hampered by their remoteness and limited mobility of women (especially employees). For instance, a municipal youth center, where vulnerable children can receive non-formal education, may be inaccessible to many due to transportation system problems and distance. **Therefore, it is vital to ensure the functioning of the clubs on the school premises (it is also confirmed by the head of the Municipal Youth Centre)**.

Lack/absence of day centers with adjusted and flexible schedules. It is essential to develop daycare centers on a municipality basis. In the case of submitting the relevant documents, priority will be given to children victims of violence (Head of the Imereti Regional Centre of the State Care Agency). The head of the World Vision Homeless Children's Day Center points out that there needs to be at least one institution similar to their center in Kutaisi, where the beneficiary will receive various individually tailored services. *"I am sure that it will have the same workload as I do (our mobile group walks in the streets and has all the information). I have officially registered 20-day center beneficiaries funded with a state-provided voucher. However, we have 26 beneficiaries. There was more demand this month, and we will probably have more beneficiaries"*.

Due to the lack of access to childcare services, **women also have to give up education and career growth**:

«Children's holidays are not such a painful issue for me anymore. But I was lucky to find a job with a flexible schedule. But, on the other hand, I have given up on my career growth ... because my children need me more. I was lucky, but many parents are not. Combining work and child care is a very challenging issue»- Vani, a mother of many children (in-depth interview), works at a school as a doctor.

«The country does not think that it may lose an excellent resource due to the malfunction of these services. Many successful graduate women sit at home and raise children. They cannot develop their career» - Tsalenjikha, mother of many children (in-depth interview).

«I am very eager to study, get the profession and a job. However, I find it hard to go to lectures. Once I attended a lecture with my children or left small children outside with elder ones. I want my children to have strong and independent mothers. There are some things I need to strengthen, for example, summer gardens, extracurricular activities in schools, camps or other» - Senaki, mother of many children (group discussion).

The service providers' approaches coincide with the vulnerable women's views. The organization "Mercury" social worker notes that **going through training courses, internships, and/or finding a job means the need for additional services that will increase their employment prospects**. Because due to the lack/inaccessibility of child care services, the beneficiaries will have problems after leaving the shelter. **An alternative may be financial assistance, which will help mothers obtain various services** (for example, hire a babysitter). In addition, when women have the opportunity to be self-employed but need to purchase appropriate equipment, which is a financial problem for them, it is essential to support them with grants to develop their business (mother of many children from Chokhatauri, has mastered the profession of a cosmetologist, although at this stage she could not be employed due to lack of appropriate equipment).

The following excerpts from qualitative study in-depth interviews and group discussions highlight the need to develop child care services. In Bagdati municipality, a group of parents applied to the self-government (regarding the introduction of additional child care services). As a result, a nursery group (for children under 2) was opened in a particular kindergarten. It proved to be an essential contributing factor to their economic empowerment. (Bagdati, single mother, in-depth interview).

“I work in the public sector, but working time is fixed and I work till 5 p.m. The kindergarten also closes at 5, and I need time to get there. Therefore, even from the employers' point of view, it is not done correctly”- Vani, group discussion, mother of many children, employed.

“At that stage, I had to refuse employment and professional development. I could not leave a 9-month-old child in kindergarten. He did not know how to walk and how to talk. It would be hard for a teacher and a child as well. But for the self-government readiness to stand by such parents, many women would be unemployed” - Bagdati, single mother (in-depth interview).

“Either you have to adjust to the employer, or you should be self-employed and control your time. But you need some capital and skills too. Not everyone can even start a business. There is no two-pronged system. There are neither public services nor the employers' attitude, leaving many women unemployed” - Bagdati, a victim of violence, without status (in-depth interview).

Qualitative study analysis showed a significant discrepancy between the vulnerable respondents' views and the service providers representing the ministry's subordinate agencies. On the contrary, the head of the Senaki N (N) LE Nursery and Kindergartens' Association and the Deputy Head of Tsalenjikha Municipality Gender Council indicated the availability of services

in the municipality (“sufficient and fully cover all villages and towns”). On the other hand, several qualitative study respondents only pointed out **the lack of kindergarten services (for children under 2)**. Moreover, the representatives of the Samtredia, Senaki N (N) LE Nursery, and Kindergartens` Association claim that **parents do not need to receive child care services because no one has ever applied to them**. Some women are assisted by family members, while some employees use the private kindergarten or babysitter services: *“Unfortunately, there is no demand from our parents that they have a similar need. Otherwise, according to the demand, referrals or municipality budget, services are changed or new services created”*.

It should be noted that, according to them, no needs study has been conducted, as the provision of additional services requires additional funding. However, they cannot be currently provided for in the municipal budget. Furthermore, the State Care Agency Imereti Regional Head points to the state officials` low awareness of the issues and problems and the delay in introducing crucial institutional mechanisms to address the existing challenges, often associated with a lack of human and financial resources. According to the World Vision representative, this factor contributes to the fact that self-governments have not staffed the Department of Protection of Children’s Rights. **Therefore, the state should create a system that will facilitate the development of multisectoral cooperation (closer cooperation between different government agencies and non-governmental organizations)**.

The quantitative study results and identified trends support the qualitative research findings. **The main factors hindering employment were financial instability, inflexible schedule, and lack/absence of child care services**. Four key factors include lack of job opportunities (43.3% of cases); low salary (35% of cases); inaccessibility of part-time service for mothers of small children (32.2% of cases); inability to leave small children, forcing them to quit their job (27.9% of cases).

Similar trends are observed with sections of women victims of violence and single mothers. However, a different nuance is apparent regarding IDPs. For example, the lack of part-time jobs for mothers of small children was the most relevant barrier to employment (40 cases, 42% of cases from the IDP group/7.4% of the total sampling).

Diagram # 4.3.

**Basically, what factor hinders the mothers of young children from being employed?
(Please, choose maximum 3 priority answers for you) 534 respondents (1011 cases)**

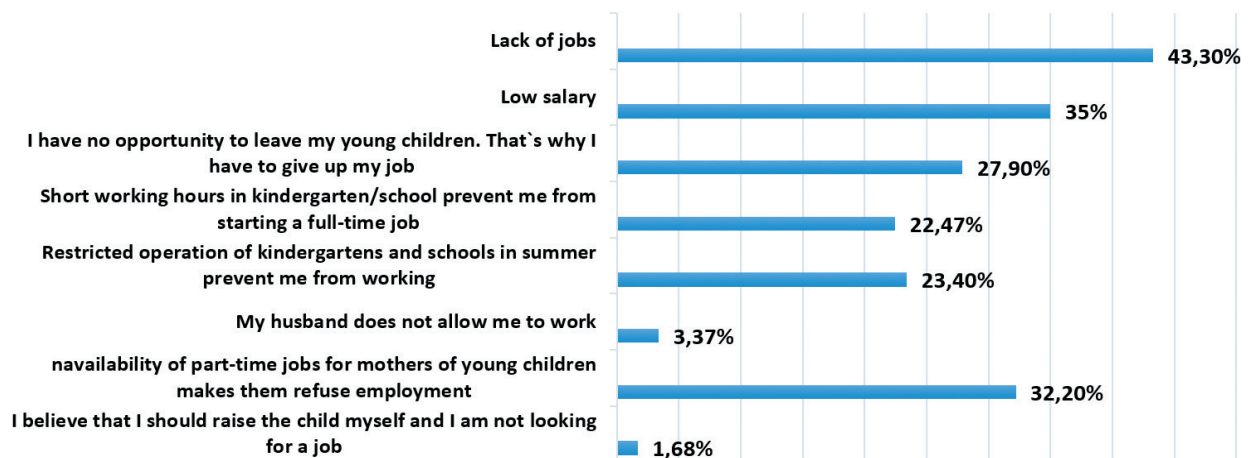
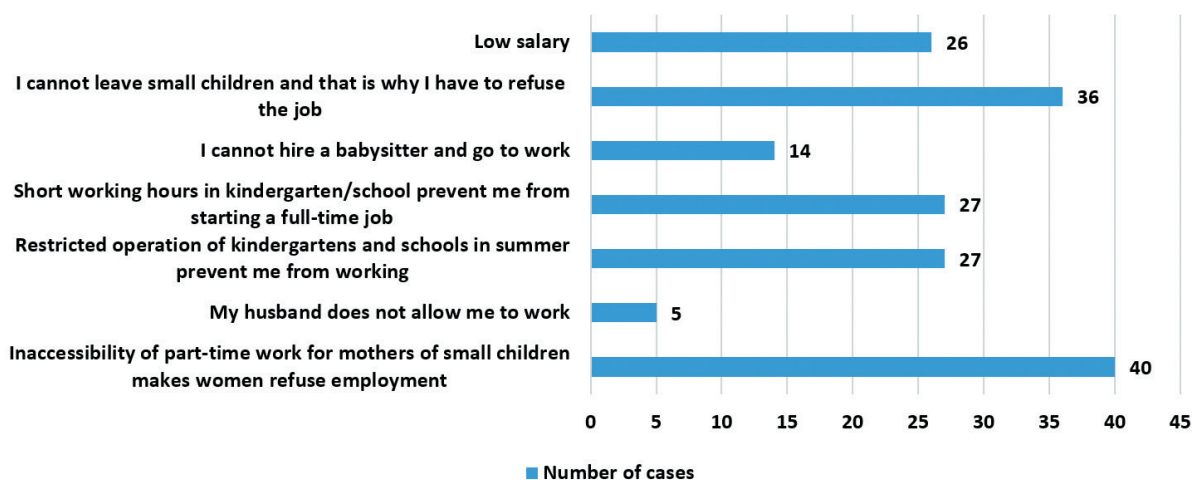


Diagram # 4.4.

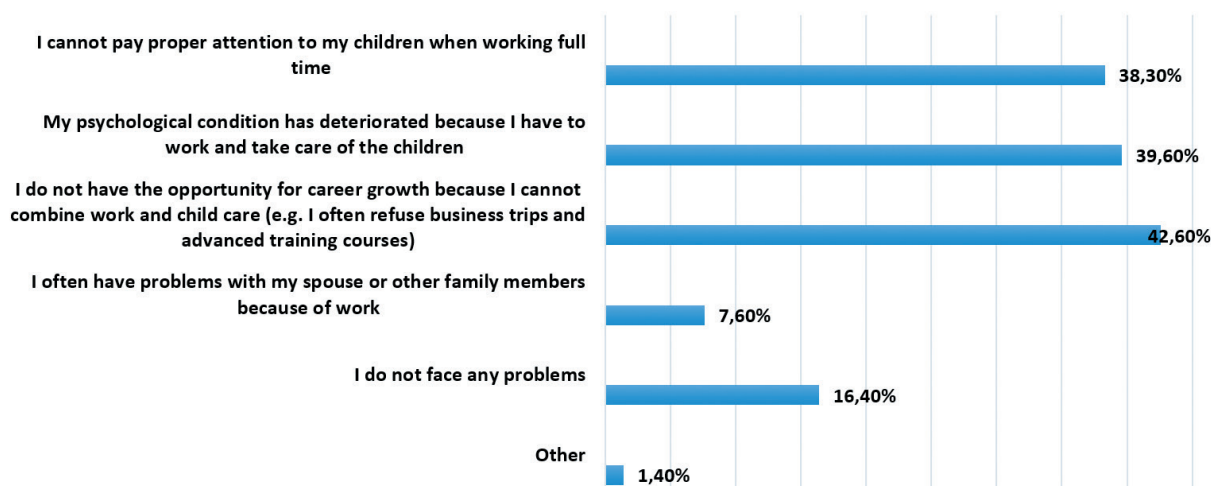
Mainly, what factor prevents mothers of young children from being employed? IDPs (95 respondents)



The following three main problems are identified among the employed respondents, **which are related to career growth retardation, inflexible schedule, and poor psychological condition**: limitation of career growth opportunities because they can not combine work and child care (e.g., often refuse to go on business trips and advanced training courses) - 42.6% of cases; deterioration of psychological state because you have to work and take care of children (39.6% of cases); in the case of working full time, they cannot give proper attention to children (38.3% of cases); Similar trends are observed with different sections: women victims of violence/single mothers, IDPs, employed and unemployed.

Diagram # 4.5.

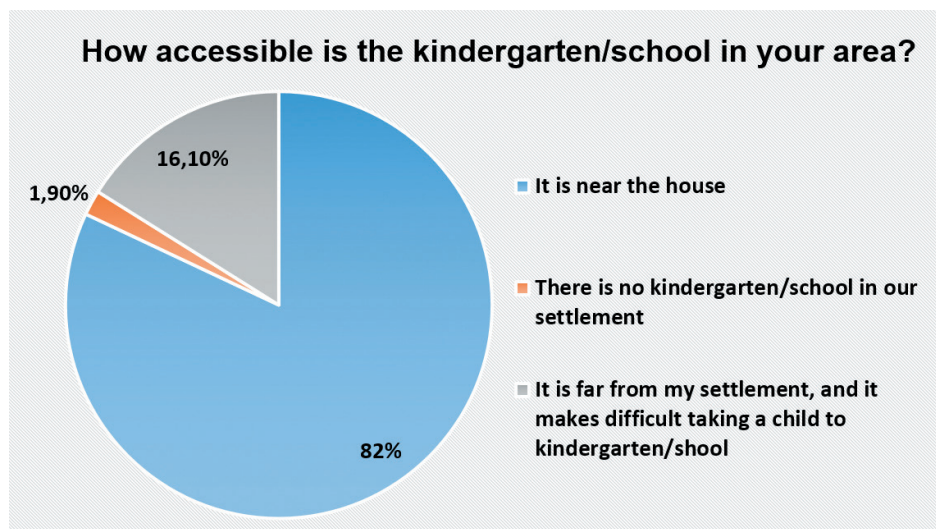
If you are employed 3.2. What problems did you face in case of employment? 439 respondents (638 cases)



Geographical access to kindergarten/school - The vast majority of quantitative research respondents have a kindergarten/school close to home (82%). However, 16% (86 respondents in total) of respondents do not have access to kindergarten/school services due to their distance. Ten respondents state that there is no kindergarten/school in their settlement. Only two of them are employed, 2 are victims of violence (unemployed), and 2 - single mothers (unemployed).

34 **employed** respondents point out that the school/kindergarten is quite far from the settlement, making **it difficult to bring the child to kindergarten/school**. In addition, 14 of the 34 respondents are victims of violence or single mothers.

Diagram # 4.6.



Factors contributing to economic empowerment

The results of the qualitative study show **that to promote women's economic empowerment and employment, it is mainly necessary to introduce or develop new childcare services, the gaps, lack, and inadequacy of which were mentioned by the respondents** (representatives of vulnerable groups and service providers):

- Continuous operation of summer camps, sports competitions for school-age students;
- Flexible work schedule (the women's labor rights in public service should be applied to the private sector as well - social worker, organization "Mercury");
- Creation and development of kindergarten services;
- Increase of the kindergartens' working hours or creation of particular groups for vulnerable groups, where they can leave children until 7-8 p.m. (however, the Samtredia N(N)LE Nursery and Kindergartens' Association chief specialist of indicates that there is no such need);
- Facilitating the introduction of multidisciplinary sport and art after school clubs, for example, an institution similar to the Municipal Centre for Students and Youth, where different clubs will be consolidated in one space;

- Existence of extended groups in schools and psychologist services (free services for at least vulnerable groups);
- Day or evening centers, with adjusted and flexible schedules;
- Assistance for vulnerable mothers and/or their children (to provide access to babysitting services);
- Developing a program of small grants for vulnerable groups for agricultural production or promoting self-employment; also offering a flexible credit system;
- Raising private business awareness and sensitivity to support vulnerable women/mothers;
- Reviewing the criteria for identifying the status of a single mother (social worker, organization “Mercury”): According to the Civil Code of Georgia, a single mother is a person who “has a child under 18, and at the moment of deciding on identifying the status, child’s birth certificate record does not include the data of the father or it was indicated by the mother“
According to the “Mercury” social worker, the criterion should be based on the actual condition of the mother - whether she is raising the child alone or not.

It should be noted that barriers to implementing the listed services can be reduced to two main factors: mobilization of financial resources and state support (e.g. introduction/implementation and enforcement of laws and regulations).

Qualitative study participants, service providers, and women from vulnerable groups as well believe that the introduction of these services will at the same time increase teachers’ salaries and create new job opportunities. However, according to the Senaki N (N)LE Nursery and Kindergartens` Association head, **the issue of teachers` low salaries prevents the development of services and/or introduction of new ones** (for example, providing extended school groups or a functioning summer school).

A woman victim of violence living in Kobuleti (whose husband has a restraining order) indicates that she does not have access to child care services (due to lack of finances and low awareness). She cooperates with Fund “Sukhumi”, which helps find a sponsor. However, it takes time. Therefore, it would be desirable to receive the services at an optimal time **if the state provided child care services.**

In Samtredia, during a group discussion, the opinion expressed by a single mother briefly describes the issue essence: *“A woman must be economically strong. But, a woman’s economic strength is greatly affected by the well-being of the family and children. And, the lack of alternative services creates many problems. Therefore, it is necessary to study the needs of such parents, to review the existing services and to update them.”*

The quantitative research has identified the need for the following four essential services to promote women’s economic activity and employment. **They comply with qualitative research data referring to the development of summer kindergartens, schools, day/evening centres, increasing kindergarten and school hours, and offering economic programs for vulnerable groups.** According to the overall data, the continuous operation of summer kindergartens/schools and the need for free day/evening care centers for children have an almost equal share and are

the **highest priority** (48% of cases). In addition, the increase of working hours in kindergartens and schools to 7 p. m. (34.6% of cases) and the offer of economic support programs for victims of violence, women with many children, singles and women from other vulnerable groups (26% of cases) are among the priority issues.

It is noteworthy that **women victims of violence/single mothers prefer the option for special free child care services (day and evening child care centers)** (91 cases - 60% of cases from this group/17.04% of cases - from the general sample). It is not surprising, given their social status, it is the most relevant need.

Diagram # 4.7.

What government services should exist to promote women`s economic activity and employment? 534 respondents (850 cases)

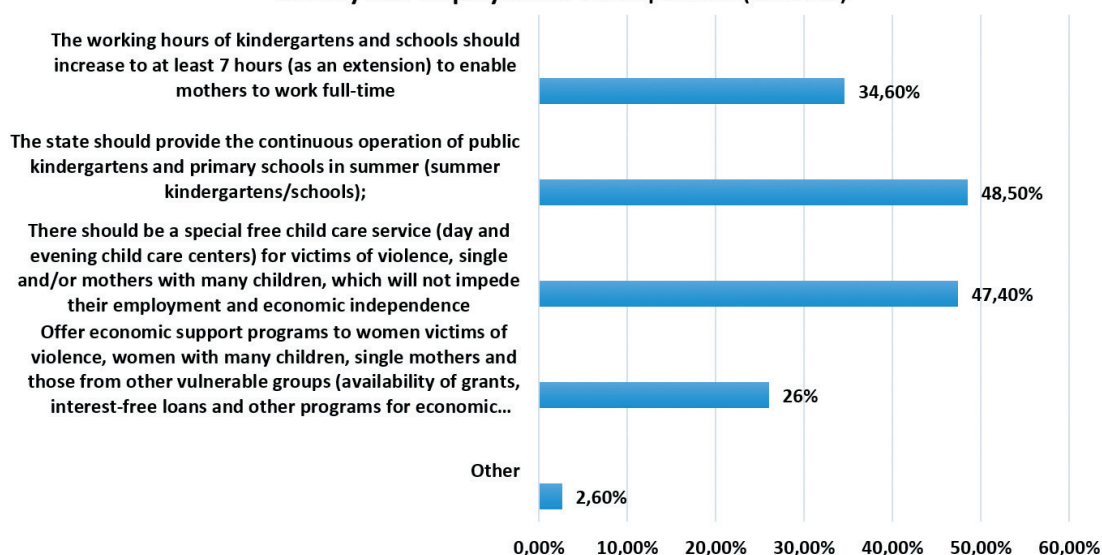
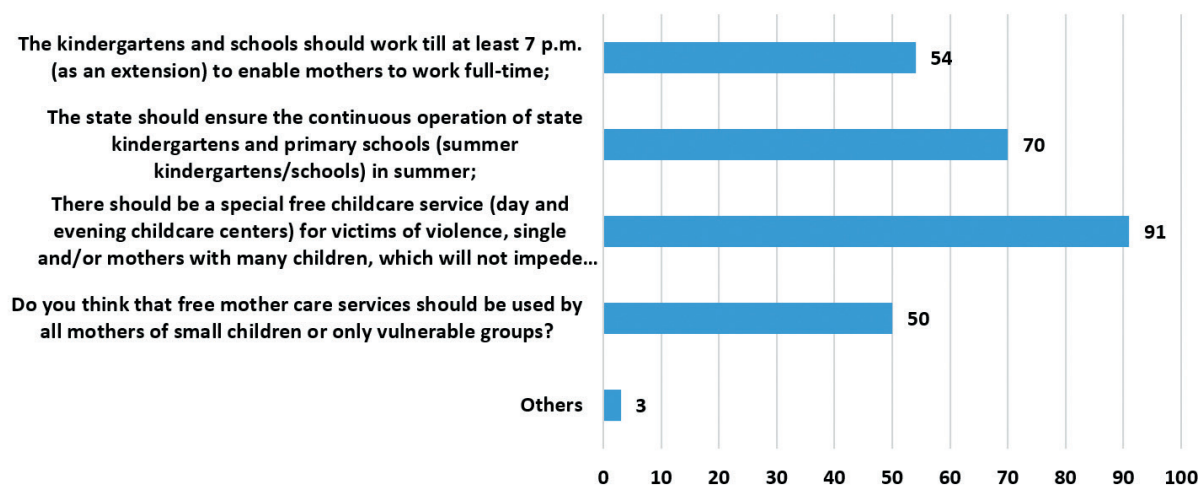


Diagram #4.8

Women victims of violence and single mothers

150 respondents (number of cases)



■ Women victims of violence and single mothers (general data - 150 respondents)

5. POLICY ALTERNATIVES

5.1. ALTERNATIVE 1:

EMPLOYMENT AND RESPONDING TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Qualitative and quantitative research data indicate that economic dependence and lack of employment opportunities increase the risk of violence and reduce the chances of escaping domestic violence. For example, a woman victim of violence in Kobuleti indicates that she endured her husband's violent attitude due to a financial factor. If not for her child's protest, she would have endured it for a long time. In addition, public attitudes, lack of support and empathy for victims of violence, and **the influence of cultural stereotypes** are essential. «*Even now, many people tell me that I will not do anything alone, and I cannot support three children. We have a common bank loan...*».

A woman victim of violence might be employed and have a high income. However, an unemployed woman with low economic status or left without an income is more vulnerable to a violent environment (Vani, group discussion). Victims of violence are empowered by employing and increasing their income. The following are the excerpts of what women victims of violence think about the linkage between women's economic empowerment, employment promotion, and the increase in cases of violence:

«If I had been alone, I would have risked leaving earlier, but I was afraid because of the children. Therefore, there should be such a service that a woman has the opportunity to leave and escape»- Bagdati, a victim of violence.

«You think about many things, how to raise children, what to do to maintain them. Then you decide to be patient ... Employing a woman should be a state priority. For example, I left, gathered my strength, and stood on my feet again. I even did not take care of my victim status. It would not give me any benefits»- Vani, a victim of violence, a single mother.

«I endured violence for years as nobody wanted to receive me with three kids. Once, I went to the shelter, then I returned to my husband and again endured violence until he almost killed me. Then I called the police. If I had a family supporting me, if I had a job, I would have left years ago and not watched my children suffer» - Senaki, a woman victim of violence.

«My husband did not allow me to work for me and constantly abused me. I did not have the right to spend his money on buying things for my son and me. When I moved to the shelter, I managed the money I earned through my labor independently. As a result, my son and I are better off» - Zugdidi, a victim of violence.

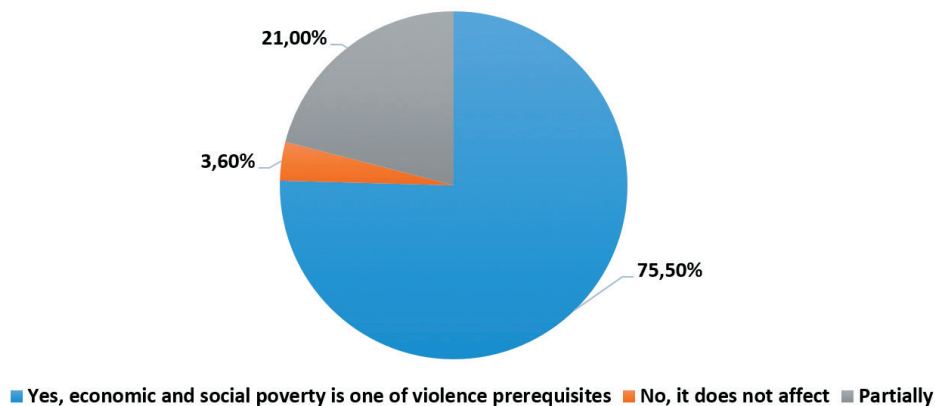
The opinions of most service providers coincide with the views expressed by women of the vulnerable group. **However, kindergarten representatives express different views (Samtredia and Senaki)**. They constantly appeal that no application has been received by their agency regarding additional child care services and talk only about the need for inclusive education teachers and

shortage of qualified staff. It indicates **a lack of study of specific needs of women and women's initiatives to address their needs.**

Quantitative research data unequivocally support qualitative research data. They show that **one of the factors triggering the increase of violence against women is employment inaccessibility and, hence, low economic status of women (75.5%).** Similar trends were revealed in different sections (age, employment, social category).

Diagram # 5.1.

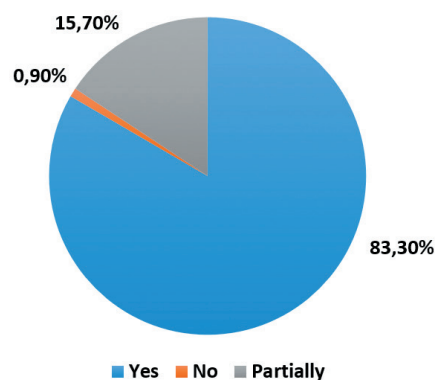
Do you think that women's inaccessibility to employment affects the increase of violence against women?? (534 respondents)



Consequently, **the vast majority of respondents also think that child support services for mothers will contribute to women's economic independence (83.3%).** Similar trends have been revealed in different sections (age, employment, social category).

Diagram # 5.2.

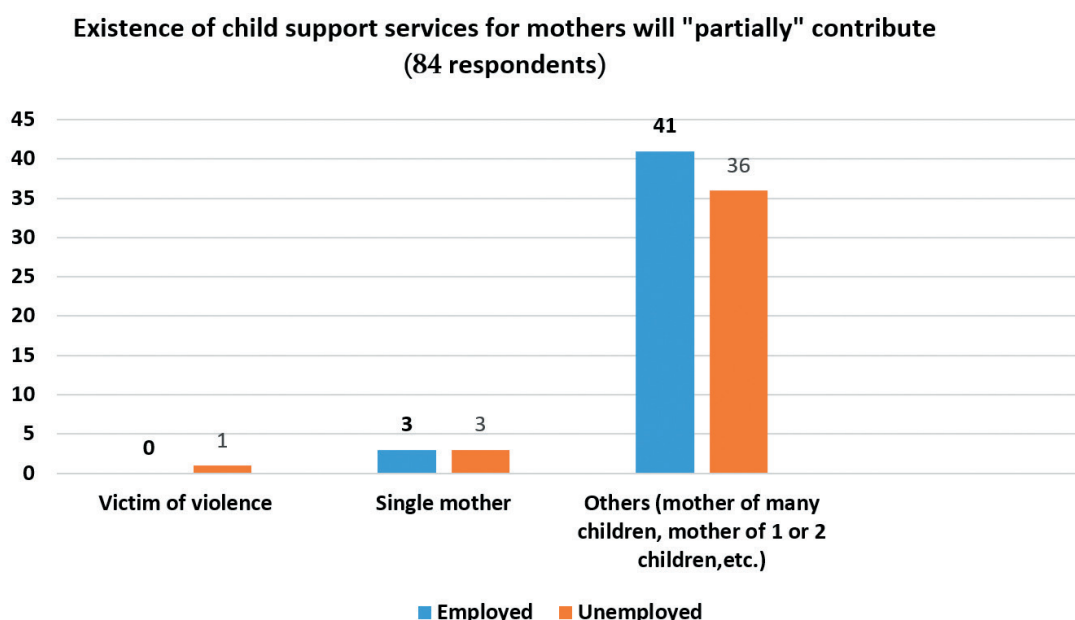
Do you think the existence of child support services for mothers will contribute to women's economic independence? (534 respondents)



Note: 5 respondents indicate - "No". 3 of them are employed, 2 victims of violence (1 of them is employed), 3 - mother of one or two children.

The diagram below shows the distribution of the answer option "Partially" according to social category:

Diagram # 5.3.



The opportunity to obtain shelter services: Since the focus is on the particularly vulnerable category when considering a policy alternative, we should not overlook women in the shelter (or those who have already left the shelter) and their employment prospects. **Moreover, after leaving the shelter, the beneficiary needs support, strengthening, inclusiveness in various projects to avoid returning to a violent environment (Head of World Vision Homeless Children's Day Centre).**

On the one hand, the shelter offers women training courses, studies their skills and development/employment prospects ("Mercury", social worker). After the training, with the organization's help, the beneficiaries start work in the private sector: "Zugdidi is a small city, and there are many NGOs, and we work in a very coordinated manner. People know each other, and it is not difficult for us to employ willing and capable people in the private sector..." In case of employment or education, the beneficiaries help each other take care of the child while in the shelter. However, there are problems in three directions:

1. **Low level of beneficiaries' awareness.** For instance, a woman living in Senaki indicated that no one offered her mastering a profession while she was in the shelter, nor did she have any information about it or the employment opportunity;
2. **Limited access to employment after leaving the shelter due to scarcity or unavailability of childcare services, as well as inflexible work schedule** (according to a social worker of the organization "Mercury", this problem may arise while staying in the shelter. A mother of a small child may not afford to do a course while staying in the shelter);
3. **Insufficient length of beneficiaries' stay in the shelters to continue independent life.** During the stay, and often after leaving the shelter, many vulnerable women cannot afford to live independently that forces them to return to the abuser (as evidenced by the women's life leaving the shelter).



These problems can be solved through a variety of services through multisectoral co-operation. Other services may be added to the shelter. For example, “Mercury” is considering adding babysitting services in the future. If we consider the example of Sweden, shelters offer women different support alternatives. They must have different funding models. Initially, the shelters were set up voluntarily. However, state participation contributed to their development. Based on this example, local organizations (e.g. World Vision's Day Care and Crisis Intervention Centre for Homeless Children and SOS Children's Village Family Strengthening Daycare Centers) **can be considered state co-participation (co-financing) and a multisectoral approach “framework”, on which a specific model can be built to improve and develop child care services.**

5.2. ALTERNATIVE 2: THE IMPACT OF CHILD CARE SERVICES ON THE PREVENTION OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE. PROBLEMS/INSTITUTIONAL APPROACHES

Qualitative research has shown a **positive impact on developing/introducing childcare services to prevent domestic violence. It promotes the employment and economic empowerment of vulnerable women.** An unemployed and economically weak woman who fears being left without material support with her children is forced to endure a violent environment. **Promoting women's employment should become a priority for the state** (group discussion, Senaki). **The second task is to introduce childcare support services not only in the public but also in the private sectors. It is advisable to introduce incentive activities for private business representatives to promote the employment of vulnerable women.**

The study has shown that another component necessary to prevent domestic violence is **public outreach / raising awareness.** Because of low awareness and lack of information, several women victims of violence participating in the study could not take part in the employment and profession mastering program (while in the shelter). **Cultural stereotypes and stigmatization are directly proportional to low sensitivity to victims of violence and tolerance of the violent environment triggering victimization.** Consequently, only improving child care services will not change the situation without state support (by law, appropriate measures, etc.).

It is clear that the improvement of child care services and women's economic empowerment are interdependent factors. State support, promoting women's employment by strengthening services, affects women's awareness. But, on the other hand, changed awareness gives women an incentive to develop.

“I am going to divorce, and when I mention it, I am often asked whether I rule out reconciliation opportunity? This person should not be in the family and have contact with children as it is dangerous. I did not say everything when the order was issued. Kobuleti is a small city, and I do not want my children to be pointed at.” Although a woman victim of violence seems categorical about resuming her relationship with the abuser, the society (husband's relatives) suggests an alternative of reconciliation with the abuser. She does not rule it out because she does not know what services she

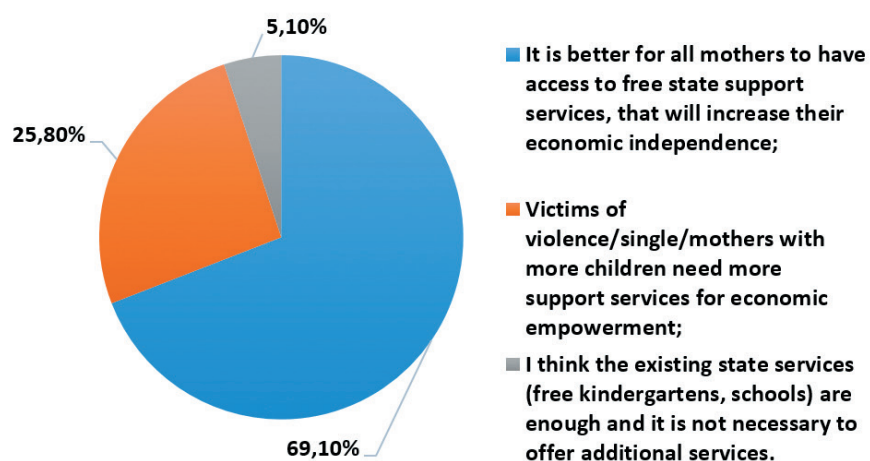
can use and how to act. *“Now I know that I will not let that person in to prevent violence. But there is nobody to support me. I do not even know half of the existing services and what can I ask for. But for the non-governmental organization, I would not have done what I did. I have so many concerns...»*

A woman victim of violence living in Bagdati says that if she had known about childcare services, she would have escaped from a violent environment before.

The majority of quantitative survey respondents (69.1%) see women's economic empowerment and violence prevention in a more “global” dimension. **Access to free state support services, which will increase women's economic independence, should not only be a priority for any particular group but should be available to any woman who needs it (as some qualitative survey respondents indicated). About a quarter of respondents highlight increasing the support of vulnerable groups through childcare services (25.8%).** Similar trends were identified in different sections (women victims of violence/single mothers; employed and unemployed; IDPs).

Diagram # 5.4.

Do you think that free state support services should be used by all mothers of small children or only vulnerable groups?(e.g. single mothers/mothers with many children/ women victims of violence)? (534 respondents)



5.3. ALTERNATIVE 3: INTRODUCTION OF NEW SERVICES/STRENGTHENING OF EXISTING ONES, IDENTIFIED AND REGULATED BY LAW

A qualitative study (vulnerable women and service providers) has revealed that **it is vital for the state to regulate the introduction of certain child support services by law.** First, it is necessary to study and analyze the women's needs, and then identify specific functions and redistribute powers for different agencies (however, some participants consider it risky to require private businesses to give privilege to specific categories of women at the legislative level since employing a woman will no longer be profitable for the employer).

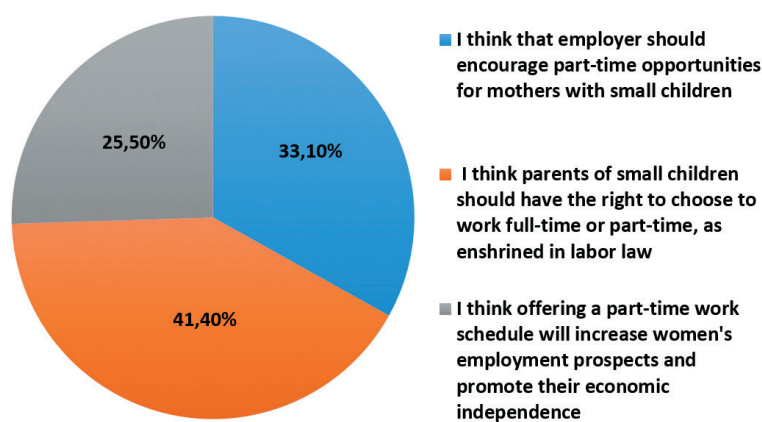
In a comparative analysis, the International Labour Organization (ILO) offers a variety of mechanisms to help women victims of violence. For instance, working part-time is an excellent way to balance family-work; “normalized” part-time work, i.e. flexible work schedule to promote career growth. On the other hand, they point out “Family-unfriendly” working conditions, i.e. a long and inflexible work schedule, negatively affect employees` productivity. Moreover, since the burden of household duties mainly lies on women, they choose informal employment or part-time work, hindering their professional growth and development.

The study results indicate the specific measures that should be regulated by law:

- **The flexible work schedule for vulnerable groups (victims of violence/single mothers/ mothers of small children)** - not only for the public but also for private-sector employees (through the Labour Code. Quantitative study respondents indicate that **the most crucial support that an employer can provide to the parents of small children is the right to choose to work full-time or part-time (41.4%)**. A similar trend was observed in different sections, with victims of violence/single mothers and employed/unemployed.

Diagram # 5.5.

What services do you think the employer should provide to mothers of small children?(534 respondents)



- **Development and expansion of daycare centers (with the state participation), where not only education but also psychological rehabilitation will be provided for children, especially those who have escaped a violent environment;**
- **Vocational training for vulnerable women;**
- **Increase teachers' salaries to improve child care services (increase kindergarten and school working hours);**
- **Assigning allowances for children (not to depend on alimony);**
- **Introduction of a voucher system, for example, the City Hall provides day center vouchers to vulnerable children/mothers (a special commission will study the need for a voucher).**

Service providers, such as the head of the State Care Agency Imereti Regional Centre and a social worker of “Mercury”, point out that they do not see the prospect of implementing these initiatives without imposing specific responsibilities under the changes in the law.

“The Labour Code applies to all employers. I think that the state but private businesses should be required to provide some benefits for mothers of small children, single mothers, victims of violence and mothers with many children with no support in the family” - Zugdidi, mother of one child (group discussion).

“These are women with stigma, and they are unable to fight. They easily give up. They do not have psychological readiness ... They should have a consultation with a psychologist, and there should be women’s rooms. They should cooperate with a private business. If the employment of people with disabilities is considered a good form for the state, the employment of these women should also become interesting”- Baghdati, primary school teacher (interview).

“Child care services should be created on a state basis. It must be identified who will carry out this duty and, in my opinion, the most optimal in this case will be the local self-governments` inclusiveness and the development of their programs”- the organization “Mercury”, a social worker.

“Legislation should regulate that the employer does not have the right to abuse the work of a particular victim” - Head of the State Care Agency Imereti Regional Centre (e.g. employment without a contract or probation, when there is a risk that a vulnerable woman will be left without pay if released).

CONCLUSION

Preventing violence against women and economic empowering requires several interrelated measures that ensure access to employment. The latter is the main precondition for the prevention of violence. Introduction/development and access to child care services for vulnerable women can be achieved through a multi-sectoral approach - through the coordinated work of various agencies. Barriers to child care services (inaccessibility, inflexible schedule, insufficient funding, and human resources, legislative gaps, low sensitivity of employers to vulnerable groups, etc.) can be overcome by raising awareness (overcoming cultural stereotypes), initiating legislative changes tailored to vulnerable women and, consequently, providing the resources necessary for the continuous functioning of educational institutions, training service providers and raising their qualifications.



RECOMMENDATIONS

The research results show that the following steps need to be taken to support women victims of violence/single mothers (including multi-sectoral approaches and cooperation between various governmental and non-governmental agencies).

To Municipalities:

Promoting the development/implementation of child care support services

Promoting employment programs/strengthening the training program. However, it must be taken into account (and provided for by law) to prevent the illegal use of the work of a vulnerable woman, for example, employment for a probationary period and subsequent dismissal without pay;

Providing housing for vulnerable groups - (i) It is desirable for all municipalities to have their social housing (head of the World Vision Homeless Children's Day Centre), and to provide a quote for a reasonable period to receive beneficiaries that will be sufficient for a vulnerable woman to continue living independently. (ii) Provide housing rent for all vulnerable women in all municipal programs and budgets;

In some municipalities, a prerequisite for providing existing housing/apartment rent is directly related to **(i) registration of a victim of violence in a particular municipality, (ii) obtaining the status of a victim of violence/single mother. Therefore, it is essential to remove existing barriers (which will facilitate access to services for vulnerable women victims of violence):** a) regarding the registration of a victim of violence in a specific municipality and the status of a victim of violence/single mother; b) they should have the opportunity to use this service under the status granted by a specific law and according to the actual place of residence. Municipalities should work on the issue and cooperate with NGOs (e.g. in the form of a memorandum);

Alternative for the development of child care services - providing money/allowance to a vulnerable child/parent, to receive babysitting services (in case of an urgent need, or if other services cannot be obtained);

Co-financing day and/or evening child care centers (for example, subsidizing NGO-run centers to contribute to service development and diversity) or outsourcing them entirely to the municipality;

Introduce a voucher system for continuous services of day-care centers (provision of co-financing by municipalities);

Agree on the format of cooperation between municipalities and respond to common challenges by consolidating resources (inter-municipal cooperation). For example, to provide victims of domestic violence unhindered access to a municipal apartment rental program regardless their place of registration; Co-finance the child care services, promote and finance the opening of child care rooms in vocational education institutions.

Facilitate access to social services for vulnerable women. A vulnerable woman should not need the consent of an authorized person to receive services (unless she is the applicant herself) and have the opportunity to apply for social services in any territorial unit;

Promote an awareness-raising campaign to better inform the public about services for victims of violence and those of domestic violence and increase the employers' sensitivity to vulnerable women. One way is to advertise successful examples and use a similar method of peer education.

Promoting Women's Economic Empowerment

- Offer entrepreneurship and business project management skills development and business development grant programs for women's economic empowerment and access to employment;
- While developing women's economic empowerment programs, special attention should be paid to the needs of vulnerable groups and to the barriers that hinder women's participation in economic projects;
- To inform women about economic programs and make them interested in participating in projects, appropriate consulting service centers should be established in the municipality to provide information on state or local economic programs to women (especially to vulnerable groups, single mothers, mothers of many children, women victims of domestic violence), detailed explanation and practical assistance in filling out the application.

To Kindergartens' Association:

Nursery and kindergartens' service should be developed (possibly according to the needs assessment);

The scheme for finding necessary financial and human resources to **extend the kindergartens' working hours** (at least for vulnerable groups) should be developed. Accordingly, the categories of beneficiaries of extended hours and the assessment criteria of the service recipients should be defined;

The rule to identify the necessary number of summer kindergarten groups (e.g., based on needs-assessment etc.) **should be set up** and the appropriate human and financial resources should be defined.

To Ministry of Education and Science:

The scheme to **extend the school working hours** (at least for vulnerable groups) and **to find the necessary financial and human resources should be developed**. Accordingly, the categories



of users of extended hours and the assessment criteria of the service recipients should be defined;

The rule for identifying the necessary number of summer school groups (e.g. based on needs assessment etc.) and the appropriate human and financial resources should be set up. Uninterrupted continuous summer services should cover regions as widely as possible (not just central cities);

Provide educational institutions for children with inclusive needs with human resources (special teachers). The needs assessment of beneficiaries should be conducted to identify the extent to which various barriers (including the lack of special needs teachers) hinder the education of children with special needs. Action strategy should be developed based on the study results;

Promote an **awareness-raising campaign on domestic violence**.

To Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Youth of Georgia:

Promote the **operation of multidisciplinary sports and art after-school clubs**, making them free (or of symbolic price) for at least the most vulnerable category;

Promote and develop institutions similar to the Youth Centre and increase access to them;

Develop a scheme for vulnerable women and their children **to address the problem of limited mobility** (e.g., funding and/or providing transport for inclusiveness in multidisciplinary sports and art after-school clubs).

To Vocational Schools:

Vocational training centers should train and raise the qualification of **nannies and kindergarten teachers**; develop the relevant training module;

Inclusive education teachers should be trained to provide comprehensive services to children with special needs;

Childcare rooms and flexible curriculum tailored to individual needs should be offered to vulnerable women seeking vocational training.

To Public and Private Sector Employers:

A flexible schedule should be offered to vulnerable groups (following the relevant changes in legislation);

The opportunity of **working online** should be considered, and the vulnerable group representative should be allowed to carry out the imposed obligations in the workplace or remotely upon necessity (if the employee's profession allows it);

If possible, child care rooms should be provided in or near the workplace;

Support service/particular program for vulnerable women (optional financial package) should be developed. It may include compensation for child care; co-financing paid services (if any); financing the babysitting services (fully or partially).

A special support package should be developed for vulnerable women with non-standard work schedules, combining several options: offering part-time or full-time (at a specific period) distance work, assistance in the selection of childcare services (e.g., in the selection process and/or financially), compensation or co-financing of medical services in case of a child's illness.

To Parliament of Georgia:

Changes under the recommendations below should be made at the legislative level and apply equally to the public and private sectors:

To facilitate employment according to their individual needs, flexible schedules should be provided to vulnerable groups (women victims of violence/single mothers/mothers with many children). It includes not only remote work options (where possible) but also part-time work and/or compliance to the schedule of childcare services;

A special program/support service for employers tailored to the needs of vulnerable women should be developed. It will allow the parent (vulnerable woman) to receive daycare services during the child's illness or vacation;

In case of child illness, an employed, vulnerable woman (single mother/mother of many children/victim of violence) should be given **additional paid leave** (for 7-14 days) until the child turns 14. Changes should be initiated (Article 24, paragraph 6 of the Labour Code of Georgia).

This recommendation is based on the successful experience of Ukraine;

Vulnerable women (victim of violence/single mother/mother of many children) should be allowed **to take additional breaks** until the child turns 3. In addition, the reduced working day shall be considered as a full working day;

If necessary, the employer should be obliged to offer vulnerable women (victims of violence/single mothers/mothers with many children) (i) part-time work; and (ii) the right to use additional paid leave (not more than ten working days) to vulnerable women with children under 14 and children with disabilities.

To the Government of Georgia:

- The new National Action Plan on Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence and Measures to be Implemented for the Protection of Victims (Affected) should focus on developing existing childcare services tailored to women's needs and introducing new services to strengthen women's economic empowerment.



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