

UNICEF in Georgia

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Editorial Note:

This Newsletter of the UN Children's Fund, UNICEF in Georgia, is published annually in English and Georgian. Our publication aims to provide information on UNICEF activities in Georgia. This is the eleventh issue of the Newsletter. Your remarks and recommendations concerning the publication will be appreciated. Please, let us know if you wish to obtain any additional information on UNICEF and its work. We welcome any feedback, suggestions or contributions.

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Foreword by the UNICEF Representative

UNICEF has continued to support the ongoing social sector reforms and to contribute to strengthening of institutional capacity in Georgia. Our increased focus on policy development and reform has achieved good results in the areas of education, early childhood development, and juvenile justice.

This would have not been possible without a close partnership with the Georgian government, civil society, and the donor community. Our special thanks goes to the First Lady of Georgia, Ms. Sandra Elisabeth Roelofs, to the Parliament of Georgia – and especially to the Committee on Health and Social Affairs – to the Ministries of Health and Education, the Ministries of Justice and Economy, to our NGO partners, and to the media representatives who supported us in mobilizing the general public attention towards the situation of children, and their rights.

I would like to emphasize that the successful implementation of the 2007 programme was in large measure due to the support received from the Governments of Netherlands, Lithuania, Ireland, SIDA, USAID, USA CDC Centers for Disease Control, the UNICEF National Committees of Germany, Netherlands and France. We would also at this time like to repeat once again our gratitude to all our donors for their valuable support.

UNICEF will continue to work closely with the Government of Georgia and all partners to address the major challenges affecting children, and to advocate for the fulfilment of their rights. We do hope that by the end of 2008, our collective efforts will result in a better environment where children can survive, grow, and develop to their full potential.

Giovanna Barberis,
UNICEF Representative in Georgia

Early Childhood Care and Development

What is Early Childhood Development?

Early Childhood Development (ECD) refers to the period up to eight years of age, or until the transition to school, and includes the perinatal period. The latest scientific evidence indicates that this period of life has a major impact on later health, growth, and development of an individual. These early years are the most critical period for development and also the time when young children face the greatest risks to their survival, health status, and emotional and physical growth. Consequently, there is a strong need to ensure that policies and programmes adequately reflect children's needs during this period.

Successful Early Childhood Development programmes encompass diverse approaches, from parenting programmes, to formal pre-school education and health services.

An alliance for a better childhood

UNICEF commissioned a Child Rearing Study which demonstrated inadequate knowledge and practices among parents and families for young child care, healthcare, and development. Responsive parenting and early stimulation practices were found to be inadequate in at least two thirds of families; 56 per cent of families do not have resources to promote early child development (i.e. books, toys); fathers involvement in early childhood development is also inadequate; 60 per cent of families report corporal punishments as a common and frequent practice with a high (11 per cent) child injury rate at home.

Approximately one half of 3-6 year old children attend kindergartens. Recent evidence suggests that attendance is declining, primarily because kindergartens are in poor conditions. There are neither national educational standards for pre-schoolers, nor standards for teacher qualifications. Available evidence suggests that many kindergartens may not be applying child centred learning approaches. Children living in remote areas of Georgia and conflict zones (Abkhazia and South Ossetia) experience severe difficulties and deserve special attention.

To address inadequate knowledge and poor practices among caregivers and to design an overall policy on early childhood development, the National Alliance on Early Childhood Development was established by the Parliament of Georgia with UNICEF support. The Alliance consists of various ministries, academia, professional associations, local NGOs, and international development partners.

The Alliance leads the overall design, coordination, and oversight on implementation of national programmes, with the aim of streamlining a child development agenda into sectoral development plans and reforms.



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Children in the Tbilisi Infants' House

The National Alliance on Early Childhood Development functions through thematic working groups, and aims to incorporate early childhood development principles into national policies within the health and pre-school education sectors, into academia, and into existing education programmes for parents and families.

The Alliance has already drafted the Strategic Action Plan on early childhood development in Georgia, for the period of 2007-2009. The Action Plan underlines the importance of a child's holistic development, and defines children's developmental needs in both health and educational spheres. The plan will be finalized and endorsed sometime early next year.

Early childhood development principles in higher education

Early childhood development principles were integrated into the Tbilisi State Medical University curriculum for general paediatrics and for residency courses in paediatrics. As a result, 500 targeted students (4th grade) were introduced to the principles of holistic child development during the academic year of 2007.

While the University used to teach physical and psycho-motor development only, now the curriculum introduces new disciplines like principles of child health supervision, holistic development of a child, developmental milestones and danger signs, principles of promoting development, relationships between a mother and a child, and a doctor's therapeutic alliance with the family.



A child in the Tbilisi Infants' House

The early childhood development concept has been taught through the newly developed adult learning package: this includes guides for teachers/facilitators, manuals for students, and lecture-scenarios per each topic above.

Moreover, relevant modules were integrated into a three year residency course in paediatrics covering 25 hours (2 credit score) where early childhood development subject matters are introduced in a more advanced format.

In order to obtain on-the-spot knowledge on the methodologies and specifics of early childhood development tuition and service delivery, a close partnership was established between the Tbilisi State Medical University and the Trieste Institute of Child Health/WHO Collaborative Centre. Through this collaboration Tbilisi State Medical University built the foundation for the student/teacher exchange programs, and other partnership opportunities. Moreover, Tbilisi State Medical University representatives are working on the introduction of innovative practices in early childhood development at the University Clinic, based on the experience of the Trieste Institute of Child Health.

Immunization

Timely Immunization is your Child's Bodyguard: nationwide communication campaign on immunization in Georgia

A UNICEF commissioned survey revealed that timely vaccination rates for Hepatitis B, Diphtheria/Pertussis/Tetanus and Poliomyelitis, at two, three and four months, stands at about 17 per cent. The main reason for vaccination delay is the widely held perception about the risk of post-vaccination complications among parents.

To address this, from February 2007, UNICEF in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs, and the Ministry of Education and Science, carried out a year long communication campaign on immunization. The main objective of the campaign was to improve immunization coverage of children less than one year of age, and to reduce the spread of vaccine-preventable diseases. The campaign called on mothers and other caregivers to ensure the timely immunization of their children at two, three and four months of age.

Within the framework of the campaign medical workers were mobilized at central, regional and rayon levels. Family nurses throughout the country carried out home visits to inform mothers and other caregivers about the benefits of immunization, and to advocate for timely vaccinations. 100 successful nurses, who had achieved high immunization coverage in their regions/districts, were awarded with special

Tekla Persvianidze, 2,5 month, is getting her regular vaccination at the Diagnostic centre for Mother and Children. 27 November, 2007





Mariam Barachashvili, 2 month, is getting her regular vaccination at the Diagnostic centre for Mother and Children. 27 November, 2007

gifts from the local TBC Bank. This was the first attempt to involve Georgian business companies in immunization programmes.

The campaign helped to forge more enhanced partnerships with other business companies. Procter and Gamble Company donated 15,000 boxes of disposable Pampers wipes for mothers as incentives for immunizing their children. In addition, UNICEF and Procter and Gamble agreed that 'P&G will donate \$0,05 from each pack of diapers, for the immunization of 5000 children in Georgia at the ages of 2,3, and 4 months, during a three months campaign'. The money raised will be used to vaccinate 5000 more kids through outreach vaccination sessions, for children living in hard-to-reach areas, or in the regions with the lowest immunization coverage.

The campaign also targeted school children to educate them about the importance of timely vaccinations and to have them serve as "personal sellers" of the immunization message in their homes. Lessons were arranged in all schools across the country in April, and children received school calendars including information on immunization.

Four advertising segments, each lasting three to four weeks, were broadcast on radio and television in March, April, July, and November. Talk-shows on immunization were launched on national and regional TV and radio; video-audio releases were produced, media feature articles in major newspapers were released and a 12 minute film on immunization was aired on two national, and on all the regional TV stations. Informative booklets, posters, and banners with campaign messages, were also produced and displayed at the entrance of the polyclinics and at different strategic locations.

According to the preliminary tracking surveys, the vaccination of children at two, three and four months has considerably increased. A comprehensive evaluation is planned for early 2008.

A child with immunization school calendar, Signagi, Georgia



Timely Vaccination is Your Child's Bodyguard

By Nino Lursmanashvili

September, 2007

Two-month-old Manana Tsiklauri has been taken by her mother, Lali Melia, to Tbilisi's Centre for Preventative Medicine No 6 to get vaccinated. The little girl, of course, does not know she is about to get "poked with a needle" and is not afraid. Her mother, on the other hand, is clearly anxious – after all, this is her first child and her child's first vaccination.

"The neighbourhood doctor told me that my child should get vaccinated at the age of two months, so I brought her in," says Lali Melia, "We must protect our kids from infection whenever possible. I was a little nervous at first, only because I didn't want my daughter to cry. In general she's a very calm child".

Little Manana was truly very calm about getting pricked with the needle. She cried just a bit and then settled down soon after. Now dangerous infections such as diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough, polio, and hepatitis B cannot harm her at all.



Lia Melia with two-month old Manana Tsiklauri at the Tbilisi's Centre for Preventative Medicine #6 for a regular vaccination session as part of the UNICEF supported communication campaign on immunization. June, 2007

One and a half-year-old Beka Dolidze does not know yet that “it is not manly to cry while getting vaccinated”. He could not quite brave it out and started crying after the needle pricked him. But his father, Vano Dolidze, quickly managed to calm him down.

“I haven’t missed a single vaccination” says Lia Patsatsia, Beka’s mother. “I take him in for all his vaccinations on time; when they call us in, we come. Beka is our third child. The older ones also had all their vaccinations on time. I do everything our neighbourhood doctor tells me to do and I’ve never had a problem. On the contrary – I would be afraid not to get them vaccinated. I wouldn’t want their health to be in danger.”

Three-month-old Baiko Tqeshelashvili was also accompanied by both her father and mother.

“We’re here for her second vaccination,” says Giorgi Tqeshelashvili, Baiko’s father. “She got the first one when she was two months old. Of course I was present then too – we come here together as a family. ”

Many people came in for immunization that day at Tbilisi’s Centre for Preventative Medicine No 6, which houses two paediatric clinics and one clinic for teenagers. Parents brought in infants and one-year-olds while 14-year-olds went into the revaccination room without their parents. The UNICEF supported communication campaign has encouraged



Two-month old Manana Tsiklauri at the Centre for Preventative Medicine #6 for a regular vaccination session with the nurse dressed in special immunization T-shirt. June, 2007

many parents to take their kids to the immunization clinics for timely vaccinations. The campaign has urged mothers and other caregivers to ensure the timely immunization of their children at two, three, and four months of age.

The Head of the Immunization Department Lali Pirtskhalaishvili told us that the centre vaccinates 50 to 60 patients per day. In total, the clinic serves 19,000 children, 1,350 of them less than one year of age.

"As you know, the UNICEF communication campaign on immunization, called 'Timely Immunization is your Child's Bodyguard', began this spring," says Lali Pirtskhalaishvili. "Based on the indicators for just the short period following the launch of the campaign, I can tell you that there has been an increase in overall immunization rates. At our clinic we are achieving full immunization for children aged two, three, and four months. In January, 47 percent of two-month-old children were vaccinated, while 17 per cent of four-month-old children received their third vaccinations. In May, these figures rose to 56 per cent and 32 per cent, respectively. These are quite high indicators for this early stage in the campaign, which means we will achieve 90 per cent coverage by the end of the year. The ongoing communication campaign is of paramount importance. The media has played a big role. Educational TV spots and ads, as well as pamphlets, are penetrating the media. All of this draws parents' attention to this very serious problem".

Ms Tsitso Dilebashvili, the head of the epidemiological department of the Tbilisi city service of the National Centre for Public Health and Disease Control, is heading up the information campaign in Tbilisi. Based on the data from several polyclinics, she says that the rate of overall immunization in the capital is increasing, though she thinks it is too early to call the campaign a success. She says that it will be possible to draw conclusions and speak of success later this year.

"If all vaccinations are administered on time, the child is fully protected at age four months from the infectious diseases he or she has been vaccinated against, and from serious life-threatening complications, if he or she gets sick," says Tsitso Dilebashvili. "A vaccinated child's body is ready to fend off those invisible infectious agents that he or she was immunized against. The younger a child is when he or she is vaccinated, the lower the risk of the disease. Surveys of parents conducted by epidemiologists show that some parents clearly do not understand just what diseases their children are being vaccinated against, and just what risks threaten unvaccinated children. Parents often believe unfounded rumours and myths about vaccinations."

This behaviour-changing oriented communication campaign on immunization, being implemented by the Georgian Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Affairs, with the support of UNICEF since February 2007, aims at instilling correct attitudes and behaviours towards timely immunization. It is based primarily on interpersonal communication between parents and neighbourhood nurses. The nurses seek to educate parents about the importance of timely and comprehensive immunization.

"Based on the interviews with mothers of two-, three- and four-month old children, at ten clinics in the surrounding territories of Tbilisi since the launch of this campaign, we can say that vaccination rates are up!," continues Tsitso Dilebashvili. "Parents' attitudes towards timely immunization are also encouraging. I do hope that the tireless work of our nurses, and cooperation from parents, will make our campaign successful."

The public awareness campaign on immunization will last until the end of 2007. As part of the campaign, medical personnel throughout the country are being mobilized to



TBC Bank presents an award to Nino Mamuchishvili, one of the successful nurses

encourage parents to get their children vaccinated. Nurses who successfully achieve 90-per cent immunization coverage in their communities are given awards by the TBC Bank, one of the partners of the immunization campaign. During the first round of the campaign, 50 nurses from across the whole country were awarded with special plastic cards with a value of GEL 100 (60 \$US) from the TBC Bank. There will be another round of the evaluation of the campaign later in the year, which will recognize an additional 50 nurses who will also receive awards from the TBC Bank.

Nino Mamuchishvili is one of the nurses who received an award during the first round. She works at the Preventative Medicine Centre No 6 and she is a very communicable and energetic woman. She takes care that no child in her neighbourhood goes unvaccinated. Nino is so successful in this endeavour that her co-workers often joke that “there are no more unvaccinated children, so we should start immunizing grandfathers and grandmothers.”

“Our neighbourhood paediatrician takes care of 1,200 children from the ages of 0 to 15 years,” – says Nino Mamuchishvili. “When an infant is one-and-a-half months old – that is, two weeks before the first vaccination – I go to their homes. I explain to the parents why they need to vaccinate their children at an early age, what dangers can come about when their children are not immunized, or incompletely immunized, and how they should behave after the vaccinations. In order for a parent to trust you, you must love what you do and be confident.”

Thanks to the communication campaign and based on the preliminary data, knowledge about immunization among parents has improved, and the coverage of timely vaccination has increased.

Maternal and Child Health

New guidelines and protocols

UNICEF is supporting the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs to develop 29 evidence-based clinical guidelines and protocols in perinatal care and early childhood development, out of which eight have already been approved by the Government. The published guidelines and protocols were disseminated during the training courses held in October-November for 102 obstetricians and gynecologists in the Samegrelo and Mtskheta-Mtianeti regions of Georgia.

This training was aimed at equipping the obstetricians and gynecologists with adequate knowledge based on the state-approved guidelines and protocols. Starting next year, the trainings will cover the rest of the regions.

UNICEF supports to improve a higher medical education

The “Perinatal Care Assessment”, conducted with UNICEF support in 2006, revealed that obstetricians and gynaecologists in Georgia are often not adequately qualified. At least 1 out of 10 surveyed doctors had inadequate experience in emergency situations. Apart from their practical skills, their theoretical knowledge was also unsatisfactory. Only 21 percent of obstetricians and gynaecologist could correctly identify signs of abnormal labor. While in a majority of cases (96%), neonatologists’ theoretical knowledge of life-saving interventions was good, however their practical skills were insufficient.

A child from the Tbilisi Infants’ House



One of the major recommendations of the assessment was to revise teaching curriculums in higher medical institutions and to include evidence-based methodology (diagnostic and treatment) in higher basic and post-graduate medical education levels. In particular, a list of topics in Obstetric/gynecology courses taught for V-VI grade students of the State Medical University, were revised, and a model teaching package, including a facilitator's guide and handouts and reading materials for students, on physiological delivery, was developed.

In 2008 it is planned to develop the same teaching packages for other topics of Obstetric/gynecology courses for V-VI grade students, and to integrate the revised curriculums into the teaching process.

In 2007 UNICEF also helped to forge a partnership between the State Medical University and the Trieste Institute of Child Health/WHO Collaborative Centre to develop similar modules on perinatal care.

Support to the medical personnel in South Ossetia

Trainings on integrated management of childhood illnesses were held for 39 medical professionals of the maternity houses and pediatricians of South Ossetia in August-September. The trainings lasted for three weeks and aimed at equipping medical personnel with improved skills on child health care. The trainings were facilitated by the representatives of the Tbilisi-based NGO Claritas, in partnership with the South Ossetia *de facto* Ministry of Health. Hence, an added value in the training was the promotion of cross border contacts.

As a result of the trainings, 10 local trainers were identified and trained as master trainers, who will be able to further enlarge the trainings in South Ossetia, and to provide coaching and support to medical doctors in their day-to-day practice. The Cascade Trainings will be carried out in 2008.

Thanks to a partnership between the *de facto* Ministry of Health of South Ossetia and ADRA, medical supplies and equipment were distributed to all public health centres and didactic and recreational materials were provided to schools in South Ossetia.

Nutrition

Fight against malnutrition

A nation-wide initiative to add vitamins and minerals to wheat flour was launched at the Parliament of Georgia on 12 February 2007. The Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) has awarded a three-year grant worth USD 1.2 million to Georgia to establish a national project to fortify wheat flour with iron and folic acid. The project is expected to benefit 2.3 million people in Georgia, particularly over one million women and children who are thought to suffer from iron-deficiency anaemia and other negative consequences of poor nutrition.

The goal of the project is to reduce iron deficiency and anaemia among the targeted groups - women of reproductive age and children aged 3 to 15 years – by 20 per



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Children from the school of the village Koda, Georgia

cent, and to reduce the occurrence of Neural Tube Defects among newborns throughout the country. It is estimated that by the third year of this project, around 50 per cent of people in the target groups – over a million people – will be eating fortified flour and benefiting from it.

“This is the most important initiative in Georgia and we are proud that since 2005 UNICEF has been supporting both the Parliamentary Committee and the National Alliance for Improved Nutrition, to develop a national programme, the nationwide proposal on iron/folate fortification of wheat flour,” says Giovanna Barberis, UNICEF Representative in Georgia, who adds: “We are grateful to GAIN and to the Parliamentary Committee on Health and Social Issues for their initiative to address iron deficiency problems in Georgia. Thanks to this programme, our collective efforts are now taking on a new dimension. UNICEF will continue to provide relevant technical assistance to the government and the National Alliance, for succesful implementation of the initiative.”

Georgia’s recent history of civil war and turmoil following the collapse of the Soviet Union severely weakened the economy. This has had an impact on poverty levels and consequently food consumption, leaving many people with significant vitamin and mineral deficiencies. Iron deficiency is of particular concern among women of reproductive age and young children from poor households. Given the high rates

of wheat consumption in Georgia – on average about 110 kg per year per person – and the fact that bread makes up around a third of the average Georgian’s diet, wheat flour has been identified in this country as an ideal vehicle for fortification with iron and folic acid.

It is expected that over the next three years, 18 large and mid-sized mills throughout the country will be licensed and trained in flour fortification. Those 18 mills represent more than half of the Georgian flour market. Vitamins and minerals will be added to around 480,000 MT of flour, and the equipment to achieve this shall be purchased. Fortification levels will be established and quality assurance and control systems will be introduced at the mill and retail levels. At the same time, communication campaigns will be undertaken to explain the benefits of fortified flour. By the end of the project, a policy framework for universal flour fortification and tax-exemption for pre-mix imports will be in place.

One step forward for the achievement of Universal Salt Iodization

Since 2005 the import of non-iodized salt to Georgia has been outlawed. The law on “Prevention of Disorders Caused by Iodine, Micronutrients and Vitamins Deficiency” is setting standards for the import and production of iodized salt and other fortified food products. It also envisages setting up reliable quality control mechanisms as well as ensuring easy access to iodized salt for the population.

So far, the main focus has been made on raising the awareness of the population upon the importance of using iodized salt, however, the quality control of iodized salt has not yet been high on the agenda. Does the salt available in the Georgian market contain sufficient iodine, as envisaged by the international standards? – this issue is of a paramount importance for the overall success of the project and to ensure elimination of iodine deficiency in Georgia.

The law assigns responsibility to the Ministry of Agriculture and in particular the National Service of Veterinary, Food Security and Plant Safety, to ensure the quality control of the iodized salt imported to Georgia.

As quality control was not envisaged by the State budget of 2007, UNICEF supported the Ministry of Agriculture and its National Service to start developing an efficient monitoring system for iodized salt at all levels of the salt supply flow in Georgia. In particular, the samples of the salt in retail sale outlets were obtained to check their quality. Test kits were procured, methodology was developed and training on salt monitoring procedures for the employees of the National Centre was conducted. In addition, a special software programme was created to set up a proper database and to ensure adequate analysis of the information at all levels. At this stage, information obtained from retail sales monitoring will be processed and analysed.

Starting next year, UNICEF will continue to support the Ministry of Agriculture in carrying out salt monitoring at customs, retail, as well as at wholesale levels.

The UNICEF piloted monitoring scheme is an important step forward on the way to eliminating iodine deficiency in Georgia.

HIV/AIDS

New film about AIDS being disseminated through mobiles in Georgia

Twenty minute long film about AIDS was produced as part of the Save the Children and UNICEF-led educational campaign targeting young people in Georgia. The film aims to educate young people about the disease in a way that is beyond preaching and dictating.

"The film is about real lives of young people, about their daily situation, problems and dilemmas they face everyday." - says Giovanna Barberis, UNICEF Representative in Georgia – "We want this film to make young people think about and come to the right answer by themselves. We do hope that the film will help them to better realize the danger of AIDS and to learn what to do to prevent the spread of the disease".

The film will be split in five parts and converted into the mobile phone format. It is planned to write Java code to integrate the movie more fully into the phone. Young peer counselors will distribute one piece at a time to their clients, and will encourage them to pass it to their friends. The distribution of the film through mobile phone is a very innovative method of reaching young people and has never been used in Georgia before.

"This is a targeted marketing campaign for youth that could openly discuss decisions and actions that might put them at risk."-says Tom Vincent, Country

Young actor and AIDS peer counselor shows the newly produced AIDS film on his mobile phone



Director of Save the Children. "We realized that anyone under 25 in Georgia has the latest cell phone they can afford, and most of them have video and Bluetooth capability. So we thought it would be good to use mobile phones for getting the message out. The film doesn't have a concrete message; it's just a story about everyday life of young people - though the parts of everyday life that might put them at risk".

The production and dissemination of the film will have a two-fold effect – this will increase awareness about AIDS among youth as well as will make young people act themselves as peer educators and send the message out to their peers.

Young people were actively involved in preparation of the film itself, especially in a scenario development process.

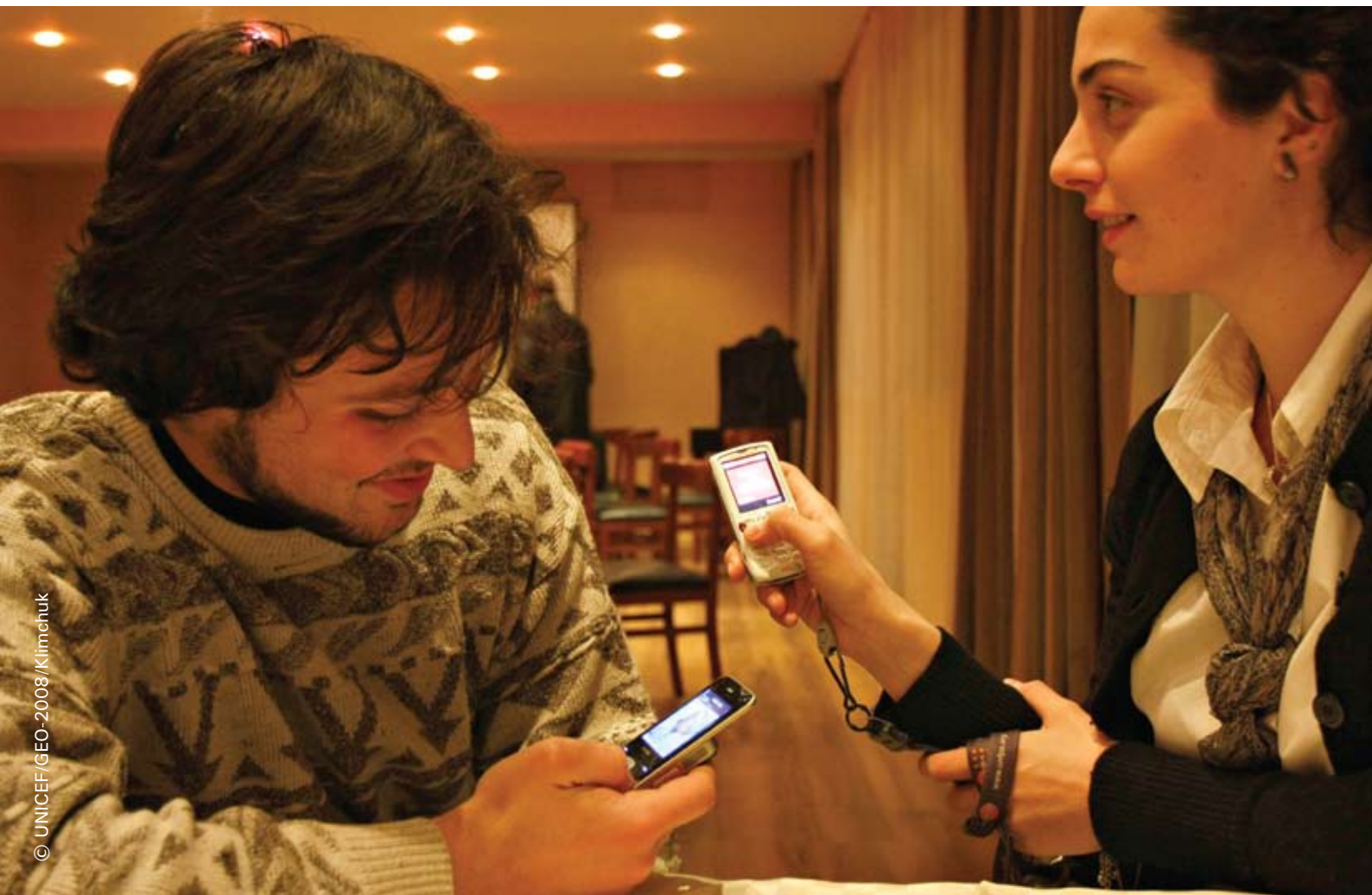
"The film is about us, about our daily life and about the decisions, often wrong, that we make. This will make us think more"-says Paata Tvauri, young actor, one of the main characters of the film.

"I like the film. I know that AIDS is a big problem nowadays and such films are important", says Ketii, young peer counselor.

The film will also be disseminated to young people in Abkhazia.

Young people represent one of the risk groups for HIV/AIDS in Georgia. Total number of HIV positive cases by the end of 2007 was 1,500, with 344 new cases registered only in 2007. Out of 1,500 cases 621 cases had AIDS and 314 of them died. 60.2 per cent of HIV positive people are intravenous drug users.

Young peer counselors are sending the AIDS film to their friends through mobile phones





Children in the school of Gori, eastern Georgia, developing an information booklet on Avian Flu during the two-day school lessons on AI held in schools of Georgia

Avian Flu

Educating Children about Avian Influenza

To better understand the current knowledge, attitude and practices on avian flu procedures among the Georgian population, including children, UNICEF commissioned a baseline study. Although general knowledge of avian flu is high, awareness of specific preventive measures was shown to be poor. In particular, the level of knowledge of children on personal hygiene norms is extremely low. According to the study, only 5.5 per cent of children of ages 6-11 wash their hands after touching poultry, and for children between 12 to 16 years of age, this same indicator is 9.1 per cent. Such unsanitary behaviour definitely increases the risk of spreading the disease.

To address this situation and to educate children on avian influenza, special lessons were given in schools across Georgia on 28-29 March, 2007. The event, entitled "What we have to know to prevent avian influenza", was led by the Ministry of Education and Science and the National Curriculum and Assessment Centre, with the support of UNICEF.

The school lessons were organized in different stages. At the beginning, all schools received an educational package on avian influenza consisting of special instructions and informational booklets for teachers, and sets of scenarios of the lessons for lower, middle, and upper grade students; in addition, they received school calendars and information posters. During these lessons children drew



Young actors performing in the UNICEF-supported puppet theatre on avian influenza for younger children living in Signagi, East Georgia. 17 July, 2007

pictures depicting avian influenza issues that were displayed at a special exhibition organized in schools on 29 March.

"I knew some information about avian flu from TV but thanks to our school lesson I know much more," said 12-year-old Mari Bajiashvili, from Koda, near Tbilisi. "I learned that we should not touch fallen birds and should often wash our hands."

To reach more children with messages focusing on personal hygiene norms, UNICEF organized special drama lessons on avian influenza for children living in rural areas of Georgia. 'Edutainment' performances in eight areas seen as 'high risk' demonstrated how to prevent the spread of the disease. The project was implemented by the Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) Women's Association "Concent" and the NGO "Atimati".

The project featured 40 puppet shows for about 4,000 children and 20 theatre performances for 2,000 young people. School calendars and bookmarks with messages on avian influenza prevention were printed and then distributed to children during the performances. A special issue of the children's magazine "White Crane" containing information on avian influenza, stories and pictures, special quizzes, and a question and answer section on special preventive measures, were also produced.

"I liked the performance," says Archil Gurgenzidze, aged six, from the village of Nukriani, in eastern Georgia. "I know now that bird flu is dangerous. I have a lot of chickens in my village and I will wash my hands after touching them."

Information materials on avian influenza were also distributed to all schools in Abkhazia and educational lessons on avian influenza were organized.

Education

Pre-school education

UNICEF is supporting the Government to carry out a comprehensive reform of pre-school education in Georgia. The pre-school reform is an integral part of the overall strategy on child development elaborated by the UNICEF-supported National Alliance on Early Childhood Development in the Parliament of Georgia. The reform process envisages creating a framework for quality pre-school education in Georgia, and a reshuffling of the whole system of pre-school education at different levels: the setting of standards of child care and that of the pre-school institutions; development of new policies in the area as well as improving services provided to children in existing pre-school institutions; rehabilitating kindergartens; designing new curriculum and teaching programmes for children; and, enhancing skills of child care personnel in these institutions.

Though responsibility for management of pre-school institutions lies with local governments, the central government will be responsible for developing a normative framework for pre-primary education. UNICEF supports the development of a comprehensive model for pre-school education and early childhood care, ensuring that pre-school programmes are child-centred, making sure health and nutrition needs are met, in addition to ensuring that social and emotional support is provided where needed, and finally that families will be active participants in their children's education.

Children at the Tbilisi Kindergarten #83. 28 November, 2007



Within the framework of the reforms and the national strategic framework for early childhood development (which integrates both health and education sectors), UNICEF supported the establishment of the Pre-school Thematic Working Group at the Ministry of Education and Science, which includes key local and national government partners. The Thematic Working Group aims to create accessible pre-school services in the country, by developing pre-school policy and regulatory framework documents; testing formal and alternative educational opportunities; and establishing a framework for financing educational activities. The project is implemented by the National Curriculum and Assessment Center at the Ministry of Education and Science.

The Pre-school Thematic Working Group is also developing standards for Early Learning and Development for Children to ensure that adults, caregivers and parents know what children should know, and what the children should be able to do, in the 0-6 age range. These standards will be a resource tool for caregivers both in informal and formal settings, such as day care centers, kindergartens, homes, etc.

In particular, the working group will come up with standards for a pre-school curriculum, namely centered on teacher standards and pre-school institutional standards. It will carry out campaigns targeted to wide audiences nationwide to educate them on children's development in early and pre-school ages. The Early Learning and Development standards will be finalized, tested, and endorsed by the Government to make it operational for pre-school institutions.

Are children in their early years ready for school?

In order to provide the evidence required by the policy process, a School Readiness Study has been conducted in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Science. The study surveyed 1134 pre-school institutions throughout the country to learn whether they can fully prepare a child for school, and whether they provide adequate opportunities for a child's development.

The study revealed that only 44 per cent of children attend pre-school institutions in Georgia. The study also looked at current practices within pre-school institutions and identified that 20 percent of children seem to be falling significantly behind in school readiness. Moreover, the study indicates that the most vulnerable children are being excluded from formal school preparation, and that principals and teachers do not know how to remove barriers for admitting children with special needs.

The results highlight that the quality of most kindergartens is below international standards. Lack of materials and books and the condition of furniture is a serious concern. Early Learning and Development Standards in kindergartens are outdated. The survey indicated that very few parents read to their children. Only half of the parents said they have read to their child in the last three days.

Poor nutrition in kindergartens is another concern. Especially in small kindergartens, money spent on food is below accepted norms (1.6 GEL per child for Tbilisi). Poor nutrition is likely to have negative implications on children's health and their capacity to learn. Poor quality of food can be a major factor why parents do not want to send their child to the kindergarten.



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Children at the Tbilisi Kindergarten #83. 28 November, 2007

This study has recommended the introduction of supplemental pre-school education models, like the Mother-Child Resource Centers located in existing kindergartens; in summer school preparation courses; in family-run kindergartens; in inclusive kindergartens with resource centres for special needs; in day care centers; and, in church-based pre-school programs, etc.

These study findings will be considered into the pre-school education and early child development reform process.

Creating better Kindergartens for children

In line with the development of the pre-school policy that will enable legal changes and regulatory mechanisms for reforming the existing system of pre-school education, UNICEF is supporting existing pre-school institutions to help them improve their conditions and learning environments for their children.

In partnership with the Step By Step programme of the Soros Foundation, UNICEF supports 44 pre-school institutions in 11 Rayons to create better conditions for children, and to transform them into model institutions.

Within this project the infrastructure has been improved, 330 teachers have been equipped with skills to introduce child centred, interactive and inclusive pre-school education in their respective regions, and close links have been established between kindergartens and educational resource centres. The project will also



Children at the Tbilisi Kindergarten #83. 28 November, 2007

identify the most vulnerable children and will integrate them into the pre-school education system. In addition, these kindergartens become a place where parents will be able to get proper education on child care.

UNICEF is supporting the Government at policy levels to have appropriate normative documents in place, and in parallel, UNICEF is also working with other partners to pilot the new standards and norms into selected kindergartens. Lessons learned from the piloting exercise will further inform the policy and standards development for pre-school education in Georgia.

Schools for ethnic minorities in Kvemo Kartli start teaching history and geography in Georgian

Students of the Tsalka and Marneuli districts of the Kvemo Kartli region of Georgia will be able to learn history and geography in the state language – this is the main objective of the Ministry of Education and UNICEF’s joint project “In One World”, which was initiated in May, 2007. The project is being implemented by a local NGO “The Mission of the Good Will Missionaries,” in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Science, and with the local government.

“Our main objective, as well as the main goal of the “Education for All” is ensurance of accessabile and quality education for all. This would be impossible without the involve-

ment of ethnic minorities living in Georgia, keeping in mind the ongoing reforms in the country, and especially those reforms being carried out in the education sphere,” said Giovanna Barberis, UNICEF Representative in Georgia. “The above project is an integral part of reforms undertaken by the Ministry of Education and Science, which envisage the teaching of history and geography in the Georgian language, in all schools for ethnic minorities in the whole territory of Georgia, by 2009-2010”.

The project aims at introducing new teaching standards and methodologies; developing a terminology database (for the terminology related to the history and geography courses), and adapted teaching materials; training of teachers from ethnic minority schools; and, development of Georgian language text books for ethnic minorities. The project also envisages the organization of a simplified course on the Georgian language, history, and geography of Georgia, for up to 300 students during the summer classes.

140 teachers of history and geography from 89 schools for ethnic minorities in Tsalka and Marneuli districts are participating in the project. In the end, 2,100 students will be able to learn the above courses in the state language.

Failure to know the state language left these groups completely out of the social-economic life of the country. They had limited access to quality education and little possibility to participate in the ongoing reforms. It is envisaged this programme will head to greater social inclusion of ethnic minorities in Georgia.

School rehabilitation in Abkhazia

In partnership with the *de-facto* authorities of Abkhazia, UNICEF supported the rehabilitation of one school in Kindigh currently serving 68 students. The school will soon receive 20 additional students. The assistance to the school also included the purchase of furniture, renovation of water and sanitation, and recreation facilities.

UNICEF also distributed didactic and recreational materials (school-in-a-box) to all schools in Abkhazia.

School in Kindigh before and after rehabilitation



Child Protection



© Photo by Ulfert Engelkes

Children in the Tbilisi Infants' House

Support to the child welfare reform

UNICEF is providing assistance to the Government's Child Welfare Reform to develop a protective environment for the most vulnerable children (children in institutions, disabled, in conflict with the law, deprived of parental care, street children, and children victims of human trafficking). Priority is given to the improvement of institutional frameworks for effective child protection systems, and the establishment of quality child and family care services.

Within this framework, UNICEF continued to support the Governmental Commission for Child Protection and Deinstitutionalisation, through financial and technical assistance to its Technical Secretariat. The role of the Commission is to ensure the efficiency of Child Welfare Reform in Georgia.

The National Coordinator position funded by UNICEF continues to provide support to different sectors involved in the reform process, and to ensure harmonisation of the reform process with government directions and priorities. The technical Secretariat reviewed the selected legislation related to the ongoing reforms, to ensure its compliance with international standards.

In 2007 the Governmental Commission on Child Protection and De-institutionalization developed and approved the Child Action Plan for 2008-2011. The new plan has expanded beyond de-institutionalization, recognising that protection of children is much broader than only those currently in state care. The plan includes three main problematic areas: poverty, use of large scale residential institutions, and child abuse and neglect.

National minimum standards for child care

With the aim of improving the quality of child care services in residential and community based services, UNICEF supported the working groups set up under the Technical Secretariat of the Governmental Commission on Child Protection and Deinstitutionalisation, to develop a comprehensive set of National Minimum Standards for family support and family substitute services. These standards have already been approved by the Ministry of Justice within the recommendation package.

The Commission is now in process of piloting these standards towards all types of family support and family substitute services throughout the country. With the support of UNICEF and the EU project, "Support to Child Welfare Reform", the piloting and validation of the standards is currently taking place in 37 institutions (State and NGO service providers) and will be completed by early 2008. After considering the lessons learned from the piloting exercise, the standards will become obligatory from September 2008.

Warmth and care for abandoned infants

UNICEF with the support from the Government of Lithuania installed a new heating and hot water systems in the Tbilisi Infants' House.

A child from the Tbilisi Infants' House



“UNICEF is working closely with the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia and the Tbilisi Infants’ House to improve the quality of services provided to its residents,” said Giovanna Barberis, UNICEF Representative in Georgia. “The installation of the heating and hot water systems in the Tbilisi Infants’ House is an important part of a larger plan aimed at rehabilitating the whole infrastructure of the institution, and ensuring the minimum acceptable care for young children. We are extremely grateful to the government of Lithuania for their considerable support and assistance.”

The government optimization plan does not envisage the closure of the Infants’ Houses for the next five to ten years. Therefore, improvement of the current quality of services is crucial for the health and development of the 115 infants living in the Tbilisi Infants’ House.

The transformation of the Infants’ House is one of the main priorities of the child welfare system reform launched by the Government of Georgia, in 2002. The strategy for transformation of the Infants’ Houses in Tbilisi and Makhinjauri for the years of 2007-2010, envisages the introduction of alternative services to the institutional care for vulnerable infants and families, and the development of community-based child welfare protection policies and services in Georgia. The strategy is aimed at transforming the Tbilisi and Makhinjauri Infants’ Houses into multi-service centres designed to promote and facilitate family reintegration, alternatives to residential care, and the prevention of child abandonment.

Introduction of alternative services for children in institutions

Since 2005 the Government of Georgia has prioritized the reform of the child-care system through the development of family-based care alternatives, to transform residential institutions and to reintegrate children into a family environment.

As part of the government efforts to introduce alternative services for child care throughout the country, UNICEF, in partnership with the Ministry of Education and Science, and the NGO, EveryChild, supported the establishment of a small group home in Rustavi, and two day care centers in Akhmeta and Rustavi. In particular, UNICEF provided technical equipment for the day care centres. The centres will become operational in 2008.

The Day care centre offers disadvantaged children a better possibility to learn and to develop. In 2006, as a result of the closure of the institution, a similar day care centre was established in Tianeti. The centre offers the following programmes to children: academic support and enhancement, child/youth development, parental involvement, and community support.

The academic components include: mathematics, Georgian language and literature, English language and literature, and the arts. Individual help on homework is also provided by teachers/caregivers and youth leaders (volunteer students). Child/Youth development entails working on various social skills, such as healthy self-perception, leadership, decision-making, conflict resolution, etc. Individual development plans are developed per each child, and the programme is designed considering his/her individual needs and interests. Intellectual games, movie clubs, and fun activities (games), are used to enhance these programme areas.



Children do their homework at the UNICEF-supported Tianeti Day Care Centre

The center organizes monthly meetings with parents to ensure their participation in upcoming events and in the daily work of the center. The centre also partners with a special community council composed of representatives of various agencies (medical, police, school, local council, etc) and community leaders. The council meets on a quarterly basis to identify needs and mobilize resources for the center.

As of today, 38 children are enrolled in Tianeti Daycare Center.

Another alternative setting is a small family group house in Rustavi. The main goal of the family group house is to provide a family environment and care for children from Rustavi State Institution who were not placed in any other alternative service, such as those returned to their biological family, or put up in foster care, or adopted.

At the given time, the family small group house shelters between 8 and 9 children of ages 5-18 who have no family at all, or if a family exists, it is dysfunctional, poor and not adequate enough for the child's best interests. The family group house has a "father" and "mother" who work with children during five days of the week. During the weekend these "parents" are replaced by an "uncle" and "aunt". All of them were recruited after a careful examination, and were trained in child care issues.



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Children do their homework at the UNICEF-supported Tianeti Day Care Centre

The Family Group House concept offered children an opportunity to grow up in a family environment, and to be equipped with life-skills, essential for their full integration into society.

In 2007, as a result of the deinstitutionalization process, 342 children were reintegrated with their families, 263 children were fostered, and 375 children were prevented from being placed into state institutions.

Since 2000, in total, 2,372 children have been returned to a family environment and taken out of the institutions, thanks to this programme.

Experimental apartment declared a successful alternative to orphanages

By John Budd, UNICEF Regional Communication officer

RUSTAVI, Georgia, 17 July 2007 - Rustavi seems like a city, which time has forgotten – there is a building which hasn't seen much care for many years. But seven floors up, UNICEF helped renovate an apartment for an experiment that has already begun to change the lives of children in Georgia.

This unlikely real estate investment is at the centre of a larger effort to help move children out of large, impersonal orphanages, and back into a family environment.

Eighty per cent of the children in Georgian orphanages have at least one parent. Artur, 14, is one of them. Although he has parents who live here, he lived in a Rustavi orphanage for five years before being moved to the UNICEF-supported, family-style home in the apartment building.

"I only see them occasionally," Artur says of his actual family.

Poverty brings rise in 'social orphans'

Rustavi, which is located just 15 minutes from the capital, Tbilisi, was once an economically viable city. The local metallurgical factory employed almost everyone in the area. When it closed, unemployment took a toll on families. Many children were put into local orphanages by their parents mainly because they couldn't afford to care for them.

Last year, UNICEF and the British non-governmental organization EveryChild set up a partnership to help the government find homes for what they call 'social orphans' – children living in orphanages who still have one or more parents.

UNICEF's Representative in Georgia, Giovanna Barberis, says the organization has been pressing for institutional reform for many years and has made great headway at the policy level.

"We wanted to prove to the government that there were socially better environments for children, which were at the same time not more expensive than the institutional system," says Ms. Barberis.

Life in a large orphanage is difficult. Children are often left unsupervised or punished by being slapped or having their hair pulled.

"I visited my Granny without asking for permission and when I got back I was punished and had to spend two hours locked in the toilet," says one child.

'It's calmer and neater here'

With backing from UNICEF, EveryChild renovated and furnished the Rustavi apartment. In January, eight social orphans whose parents cannot take them back were shifted to this family home.

EveryChild has employed two full-time and two relief staff members to run the apartment. The staff has been provided with special training in child development and child rights.

The eight children, several of whom are related, say they feel better about living here. They have better living conditions and better food, and they aren't left alone at the end of the day. "It's calmer and neater here," one child says.

Experiment is a success

For UNICEF and EveryChild, the success of the project has been reflected in the improvement of the children's welfare. They were also able to demonstrate that the experimental apartment costs no more than what the government currently budgets for orphans' care.

The Government of Georgia agreed that the experiment was a success, and in May of this year, it took over the responsibilities of running the apartment. Their main hope is that more apartments can be set up and fewer children left to the poor environment of orphanages.

Back at the orphanage, children's grades suffered because they often skipped classes. Now, that's not possible because they have adequate adult supervision. The children may grumble a bit about it, but their grades are improving and that makes them feel better about themselves.

Institutional care and alternative services for disabled children

In May 2007, UNICEF, together with the Ministry of Education and Science, and the NGO — Children of Georgia, launched a new project on introducing new models of child care for disabled children living in institutions. The project is based on the results of the assessment of the needs of disabled children in institutions, and on the possibility of social inclusion, carried out in 2006.

The main target of the project is children with disabilities and it aims at promoting their full development and integration into society. One of the major components of the project is social inclusion of children in state kindergartens.

The new models of child care will be introduced through an ongoing training of personnel in selected institutions, with the inclusion of parents in setting new child care standards, and through the development of new educational programmes for children. The new child care model should reinforce children's physical, intellectual, social, and emotional development, and their readiness for social inclusion.

The project is being implemented in the following institutions: The Tbilisi Infants' House, Tbilisi School #200, Gumati School #2, and Kutaisi day care centre for children with cerebral palsy.

Within the project individual educational programmes will be developed for 90 children currently living in institutions. New child care models will be launched into the selected institutions, trainings will be carried out for the child care personnel,

Children in the Senaki Institution for disabled children



training packages will be developed, and training will be conducted for parents on basic child care practices. Three kindergartens will be selected for inclusion of 10 children with disabilities from the Tbilisi Infants' House. Standards of care for disabled children will be developed and introduced into these institutions.

The project will last till June 2008.

The German National Committee and a German celebrity in the Senaki Institution

The German National Committee for UNICEF, the German RTL TV crew, and a famous German top model, Eva Padberg, visited the Senaki Institution for disabled children in October 2007, to film a special TV feature about children living in the institution. The TV film was shown at the RTL annual fundraising TV marathon held later in the year.

As a result of the visit, the required funding was mobilized to renovate and refurbish the Senaki Institution for disabled children, to improve the lives of the children there, and to create better opportunities for their development.

Eva Padberg with children in the Senaki Institution





Eva Padberg with children in the Senaki Institution

Feature

A silent cry - Senaki Institution for disabled children in Georgia

By Maya Kurtsikidze, UNICEF Georgia Communication officer

12 February, 2007

Two men with rifles on their shoulders meet us on the doorstep of the institution for disabled children in Senaki, small town in the west of Georgia. The first question that makes us a bit anxious is – are we really in children’s institution?

Yes, we are, the two men with rifles have just acknowledged this. We are standing in front of a big soviet-type gloomy building, which looks more like a prison. A few big dilapidated blocks of the building serve as a reminder of the past. Frightening darkness looks like black holes through the broken windows of the building. Nothing so far makes us think that we will meet children any time soon.

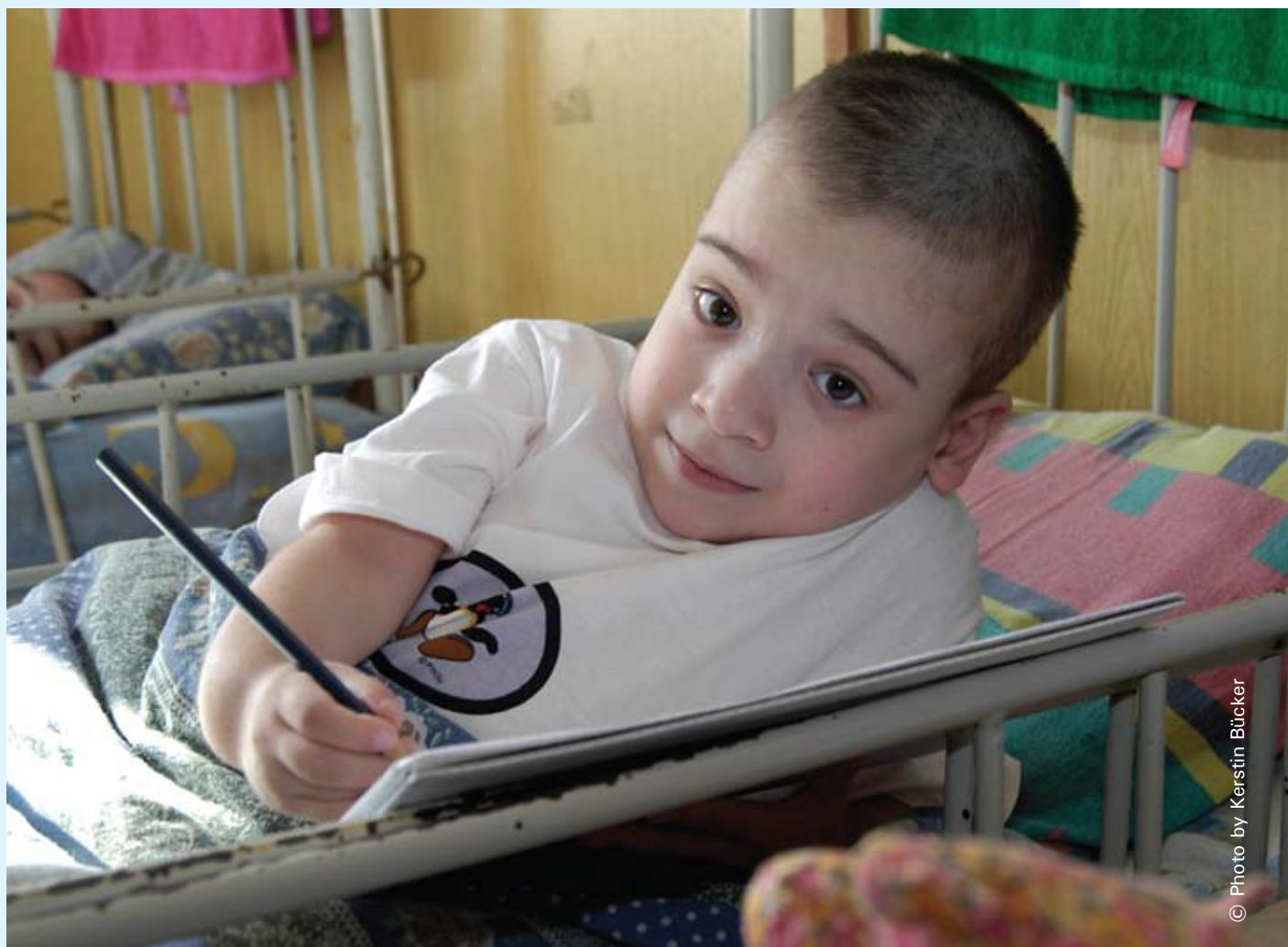
We are recalling what we already know about Senaki institution. There are 90 children of age 4-18. Most of the children are abandoned and have never been visited by their parents. Children there are completely isolated from the rest of the world. The placement

of children in institution has mainly been based on unscientific diagnoses and without a genuine assessment of the level of support which kids require. Most of them are simply labeled as “mentally retarded” without the proper IQ and functional behavior assessments required by internationally accepted standards.

A few boys of age 14 meet us when we enter the building. They are a bit nervous as they are going to the concert soon. Their friends and inmates are going to sing at the charity concert, organized by the institution.

“I am a Director here”, says one of them “what do you want?” and he leads us to the cabinet of the director of the institution. “She is my Deputy”, says the boy.

We are invited to the big cabinet of the soviet set up and soon a young woman with a smile on her face meets us. Nino Mgaloblishvili has been the Director of the Senaki Children’s Institution for the last four months. She is well aware that a lot should be changed here and invites us to make a tour around the institution. We take a deep breath and get prepared for the worst as we know that our feelings will become more depressing.



© Photo by Kerstin Bückler

Tamriko, 8 years, in the Senaki Institution for disabled children

First we see small children of age 5-10 who are confined to bed. Rooms where they stay are shabby with broken floor and faded ugly walls. "Hello", we try to make efforts to smile while greeting small children with physical or mental disability of different type. "Hello, we are well taken care of here and we love our teachers and our director", some of the kids reply to our greeting. We are speechless as we have not asked them about it.

Tamriko is 8 years old and she is always in bed. "I cannot get up as everything aches", she says, "I cannot go to the concert with my friends. But I can tell you the poem" and she starts: "Sun rise, rise, and do not hide behind the mountain. Poor man killed by the cold is lying here".

The building does not have central heating but old fashioned wooden stoves which make some feeble effort to warm the rooms. The wooden stove has a specific smell and the room is not ventilated. The availability of electricity is better now, than it has been before. The kids have a small TV and they like to watch concerts. They like to sing songs they hear from TV.

Lali, 7, is lying in a bed next to Tamriko but she is not talking. She is just smiling at us and trying to say something with her big eyes. Petre is 6 years old and his biggest dream is to go to school. He cannot add anything. We are surrounded by kids who cannot walk and who are in wheelchairs. They are so glad to see somebody visiting them. George, 5, in his wheelchair, is sitting next to the door, firmly holding our hands. He does not want to let us go.

We move to the rooms for older children. Girls and boys are held separately here. Here are classrooms for children to learn something. Most of the equipment in the classrooms are old and shabby. There are not enough school supplies as well and very limited opportunity for proper education. What surprises us the most is the fact that the children with severe and mild, mental and physical disabilities are kept together and have joint classes.

Nino knocks on the door and an old lady with a big stick in her hand opens the room where the boys of age 14-18 are staying. Some of them are running here and there and are trying to show us around. Some boys with severe disabilities are sitting in their wheelchairs or are lying on the floor next to the wooden stove. Sul Khan, 15, is dressed like a policeman and is walking in the corridor. He is saying goodbye while we leave the boys' room. We turn our eyes back; Sul Khan is now behind the gate waving his hand to us. There is a similar gate between us and these children. We have to try to remove these barriers and to get our worlds closer.

We observe that there are no classes of vocational training here. Children have limited opportunities to learn life skills for their further integration.

We now enter the girls' room. One of the girls is approaching me whispering, "I have not eaten anything today. I am sick." She is saying the same to Nino who seems to be seriously concerned about the situation. Other girls, like boys too, stay together in one room. Some of them are staring at us without emotions. Some of them are smiling and greeting us from their remote world, which we cannot fully understand.



George, 5, in the Senaki Institution for disabled children

Nino is leading us to other parts of the building. Here we find the kitchen and the laundry, the next door. Everything seems so run down and crumbling here. But this is what we can see and what is visible. The most tragic thing is, of course, the shattered lives of these abandoned children with disabilities, whose yells for aid seldom reaches the outside world.

Our partners from the NGO Children in Georgia told us this story: One young girl in Senaki institution asked if she had a mother, the answer was "yes". Then she asked if they had seen her mother, the answer was "yes". The young girl then said, "I have a mother, but I have never seen her. I would just like to see her once before I die, even if it is just for a minute".

Social work practice improved

The Child Welfare Reform envisages improving access to state social services across Georgia. The Ministry of Education and Science has a pool of social workers in most of the regions, but there are still regions not covered by social services at all. In 2007, UNICEF endeavored to support placement of 10 new social workers in those regions where no social work services were available. These social workers are now supported directly by the Ministry of Education and Science, and it is expected that similar support will be provided to additional regions in 2008.

UNICEF, in coordination with the Tbilisi State University, has supported up-grade (certificate) training for 46 state and NGO social workers. With UNICEF support, social work trainers and academics participated in a study tour to Slovenia to further enhance their social work teaching capacity. A training curricula, as well as teacher and student guidelines, have been drafted for practice teaching, with the support of the Georgian Association of Social Workers.

An ongoing major review of social work practices in different sectors provides frequent recommendations for the further enhancement of social work capacity in Georgia. This new strategy incorporates at least the minimum professional and service standards that could lead to the provision of full scale gate-keeping and referrals, and that will improve the quality of social services in the country.

A child at the Tbilisi Kindergarten #83



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Violence against children

UNICEF is working with the Ministry of Education and Science for the development of the “SAFE schools and Violence Reduction in Schools Programme,” to address the underlying causes of violence, and the factors that lead to abuse. The programme will focus on positive actions rather than punitive measures, by providing clear guidance to teachers and students on expectations, and introducing programmes such as restorative justice. The aim is that children have an environment in which to learn. Children who are unhappy or fearful do not learn to their full potential.

Within this programme UNICEF is supporting the Ministry of Education and Science to adapt the Council of Europe and UNICEF Violence Reduction in Schools Programme. UNICEF is also providing training for school staff and community leaders, and is developing and implementing curricula for teachers and pupils on the creation of a non-violent environment. This will include initiating cascade training for senior staff in schools, to create a climate of harmony where violence will not ever again be expected, experienced, or tolerated.

UNICEF participated in a joint UN-led campaign on raising awareness of violence against children, through development of the UN joint programme, and a public awareness campaign on domestic violence.

In partnership with the Child Rights Centre of the Public Defender’s Office, two trainings for youth have been conducted on violence and child rights, using the training modules developed within the UN Secretary General’s Study on Violence against Children. A similar training was also conducted for children living in a Kurta village of South Ossetia.

UNICEF translated and published the United Nations Secretary-General’s Study on Violence against Children in Georgian. The whole package consists of the report itself, a child-friendly version of the study, and a training manual for children.

The study is a global overview of violence against children. It is a landmark effort that provides a picture of the nature, extent and causes of violence against children. The study proposes clear recommendations for action to prevent and reduce such violence.

Evidence for street children

The number of street children appears to be increasing in Georgia, while there is no evidence on the extent of the problem, and on the effective and sustainable responses that would address the needs and rights of these children in the streets.

In order to obtain the required evidence, UNICEF, in partnership with Save the Children and the Ministry of Education and Science, conducted an assessment on street children across the country. The study will be completed early next year.

UNICEF is supporting the Ministry of Education and Science in the assessment and development of a transformation plan for the Gldani Rehabilitation Centre, that primarily caters to street children. The reason for such a transformation is to convert the centre in a way that would address the children’s requirements more effectively. The same plan is based on Child Welfare standards and provides practical guidance for application to other settings.

Improved legislation for child sexual exploitation

Under the leadership of the General Prosecutor's office, amendments to the current Law on Trafficking of Humans were integrated to address the gaps related to Child Trafficking.

In the area of child pornography, UNICEF is working with the General Prosecutor's office to draft appropriate legislation on pornography and sexual exploitation of children, in accordance with international standards. This is to support the Government of Georgia in responding to the Council of Europe Convention on Child Sexual Exploitation.

Juvenile Justice

Analysis of the juvenile justice system in Georgia

At the request of the Government of Georgia, UNICEF carried out a thorough analysis of the Georgian juvenile justice system to examine the extent to which the current legislation and practices, relating to children in conflict with law, was consistent with international standards. The assessment was carried out by Carolyn Hamilton, Professor of Law of the University of Essex, United Kingdom.

The report contains a detailed analysis of the international treaties ratified by Georgia related to juvenile justice, an analysis of Georgian legislation and the court system, and of criminal processes for juveniles aged 14-18. This report included the following areas: arrest and detention statistics; temporary detention at the police station, pre-trial detention, sentencing, criminal records, and prevention of future juvenile offences, etc.

The overall conclusion of the analysis was that the present juvenile justice system fails to implement the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and does not meet UN Minimum Standards and Norms on Juvenile Justice. The analysis highlighted an increase in the number of young people entering the criminal justice system. In 2006, over 900 children entered the criminal justice system in Georgia. This reflected a 50% increase on the number of young people entering the system in 2005. The analysis demonstrated that there is an overuse of deprivation of liberty regarding pre- and post-trials for juveniles, many of whom are accused of, or have been found guilty of, committing non-violent property offences, and petty offences. The report concluded that the current system is rigid, and that there is too little emphasis on prevention, including preventable digressions from the effective operations of a juvenile criminal justice system. The analysis revealed that there is a lack of community based rehabilitation schemes which provide effective alternatives to taking these juveniles through the trial process, and imposing custodial sentences. Moreover, Georgia does not have juvenile courts or juvenile judges.

As a result of the assessment, Professor Carolyn Hamilton provided 21 recommendations to the Government of Georgia on how to comply with international standards and what should be done to improve the juvenile justice system. The report was finalized and submitted to the Government in the beginning of 2007.

UNICEF supports to reform the juvenile justice system in Georgia

To fill the existing gaps and to make the juvenile justice system more child-friendly, a three year cooperation agreement was signed by the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, and UNICEF, aimed at supporting the Government of Georgia in reforming its juvenile justice system. The Ministry of Justice was designated by the government as its lead body on juvenile justice reform.

The project, developed in close consultations with governmental and non-governmental partners, will be implemented in various directions. In particular, a comprehensive Strategy and Action Plan on juvenile justice will be prepared, and a new Juvenile Justice Code, and related amendments in existing laws, will be developed, to bring the national legislation into full compliance with international standards.

The project will also enhance current institutional and human capacities so as to establish a qualified pool of trained juvenile justice experts. Police and prosecutors will be trained on how to implement human rights standards, how to interview and work with children, including interactions with perpetrators, victims and witnesses.

A system for future juvenile judges training will be developed, and training modules will be incorporated into judges' training programmes.

The project will also establish alternative sentencing programmes to divert children away from the criminal justice system as much as possible, and to provide alternatives to the use of custodial sentencing, in both pre- and post-trial situations.

Establishing rehabilitative diversion schemes and alternative sentencing schemes in Georgia

Within the framework of the juvenile justice system reforms, UNICEF is supporting the Government to establish three diversion and alternative sentencing pilot schemes over a period of three years. These pilots aim to ensure that, where appropriate, young people are not prosecuted for minor and less serious offences and, if prosecuted, are given a non-custodial sentence that enables them to stay with their family, receive appropriate education, and rehabilitation services.

In order to develop a concrete plan for such diversion schemes, UNICEF has engaged two consultants from the Children's Legal Centre and Penal Reform International to explore the options for establishing diversion and alternative sentencing in Georgia, in the immediate future. These options will be based on international standards, existing schemes in other countries, the current legal framework in Georgia, the views of local and national government and state bodies, and available resources.

As a result of continuing consultations and negotiations with the Government of Georgia, and other experts, it has been agreed to pilot the rehabilitative schemes in two cities of Georgia, Batumi, and Rustavi. It was decided that the first stage of the reforms should focus on bolstering the probation service to provide more effective services for young people who are the subject of conditional sentences. Therefore, the major focus at this initial phase is centered upon the juvenile

probationers, while other categories will be targeted at a later stage. A further expansion of this project will cover one district of the capital city of Tbilisi, as well as introduce other alternative sentencing measures.

In order to support juveniles to reduce their risk of reoffending, a range of services should be available (not all of these services are needed for each juvenile), such as assessment of the needs of the juveniles, assessment of the family situation, individual work with the child to address offending behaviour, family work, psychological support, remedial education, support to reintegrate into school, vocational training – informal and formal, legal support – documentation, support to access services, access to housing (for juveniles who are not able to live at home), health services, and extra curricula activities – health living classes, sports, and cultural activities.

Under the 2007 Law on Probation, the Probation Bureaus have the mandate to work to rehabilitate juveniles. The Law foresees a Probation Officer and/or a social worker carrying out this work with juveniles, and permits the probation bureau to hire individuals to carry out this work.

The Probation service is also permitted to contract other agencies (social institutions) to carry out this work.

At this point a discussion is underway as to which, if any, of these services should be offered directly, or in-house, by Probation, and which should be commissioned, and which services could be provided by the State, or non-state agencies.

Training of judges on juvenile justice

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the UN Minimum Standards and Norms of Juvenile Justice require that the objective of a juvenile justice system should be rehabilitation and reintegration of children in conflict with law back into society; and, that children should not be criminalized, and that the personnel dealing with juveniles should receive specific training.

According to the changes in the Criminal legislation of Georgia (23 May, 2007), judges, prosecutors, and investigators are authorized to carry out proceedings over juvenile offences, and should be re-trained on Juvenile Justice by the 1st of July, 2008. To address this gap, UNICEF partnered with the High School of Justice of Georgia to retrain acting judges, and to improve their professional knowledge. Thus, the High School of Justice and UNICEF joined efforts to conduct trainings for judges on Juvenile Justice before the 1st of July, 2008.

The focus of this training is to ensure that professionals working in the judicial system, and dealing with juveniles, are able to apply laws in such a manner that protects children's human rights. After the completion of these trainings, judges will be able to understand and address the rights of children in the justice system and to protect them in accordance with national laws, with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and with other international standards.

Within the framework of the project, the training manual for judges should be developed before February, 2008. This training manual will contain international and domestic standards, and case studies on juvenile justice.

In total, 120 acting judges will be retrained on Juvenile Justice before the 1st of July, 2008.

UNICEF efforts to improve the situation of children in detention facilities in Georgia

UNICEF distributed education materials, along with recreation, hygiene and sanitation supplies, to juveniles in detention centres across Georgia. Responding to a request from the Government of Georgia, UNICEF procured the supplies to improve the living conditions and education opportunities for children in conflict with law.

In June 2007, in collaboration with the State Penitentiary Department, UNICEF delivered supplies to five detention centres holding children across Georgia. These facilities were Avchala Juveniles' Correction and Educational Institution, Prison Number 5 for Women and Juveniles, Batumi Prison Number 5, Kutaisi Prison Number 2, and Zugdidi Prison Number 4.

The children received stationary and art supplies; sport materials, including basketball and table tennis equipment; basic hygiene supplies, washing machines, water heaters, mattresses, bed linens, pillows and blankets.

"UNICEF is concerned about the situation of children in detention centres," said UNICEF Representative in Georgia, Giovanna Barberis. "These children have a right to decent living conditions and to the opportunity to learn and develop. The distribution of educational, recreation, and hygiene supplies is just one part of UNICEF's efforts to improve the situation of children in detention facilities. We are closely working with the Ministry of Justice to reform the whole system of juvenile justice so it becomes child-friendly. We think that detention should be the last resort for children in conflict with law. In cases when a child is detained, he or she should enjoy every right to live in dignity and to develop."

Advocacy and Social Monitoring on Child Rights

Reporting to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child

UNICEF supported an alliance of child rights NGOs in Georgia to produce an alternative report on the Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The leading child rights NGOs came together with UNICEF to comment on the State Party Report submitted to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, earlier in 2007, and to develop their alternative view on the implementation of the Convention.

The NGO alternative report was presented to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in October 2007, at the pre-sessional working group meeting attended by members of the NGO coordination council, and UNICEF. The Georgian NGO alternative report was considered by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child as one of the best amongst recent submissions from other NGOs.

The Constructive Dialogue with the Government of Georgia to provide a final overview and recommendations on the implementation of the Convention, is planned for the next session of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in May 2008.

Support to the child rights' centre of the public defender's office

In 2007, UNICEF commissioned a number of consultancies to support structural and human capacity development of the Child Rights Centre in the Public Defender's Office. In June, a five-day training on child rights' monitoring was held for 23 representatives of the child rights' centre and NGOs. The training was facilitated by Dr. Karl Hanson from the Institute of Kurt Bösch, in Sion, Switzerland. The training helped the participants to learn how to make children's rights real, and what strategies and procedures could be put into place to implement and monitor children's rights in the country.

Later in June, Ms Rimantė Šalaševičiūtė, Children's Rights Ombudsperson of the Republic of Lithuania, paid a one week consultancy visit to Georgia to provide



Children at the Tbilisi Kindergarten #83

recommendations on how to enhance the child rights' monitoring structures in the Public Defender's Office.

In November, the representatives of the Public Defender's Office, and the Ministry of Education and Science, visited Lithuania for a short study tour to get acquainted with the existing child rights protection system. The consultancy also revealed significant shortfalls in the child protection system of Georgia, such as the non-existence of child rights coordination mechanisms, nor the presence of a responsible agency on child rights at the local level.

Manual on child-friendly reporting

The media should play an important role in the monitoring of child rights. UNICEF, in collaboration with the MediaWise Trust, a UK based media ethics organization, supported journalistic faculties at higher education facilities, to devise a practice-based training course on Reporting Children. The draft training manual was designed by Mike Jempson, Director of the MediaWise Trust, in partnership with university teachers and media experts.

In order to adapt the manual to local needs, a working group of professors from Tbilisi State University, and the Caucasus School of Journalism and Media Management, was set up. The group came up with a final training curriculum that combines conventional formal lectures, 'homework' exercises, classroom based practical exercises, and seminars, allowing students and tutors to link theory and

practice through brief presentations and discussions. It employs a 'learning by doing' approach, encouraging active participation through story development and research exercises, role-playing, games, and media analysis.

The 'Reporting Children' manual will be integrated into the curriculum for undergraduate students of journalism at the Georgian State University and at the Caucasus School of Journalism and Media Management, early next year.

Special events

Let's save the Future Together – Child Protection Day in Georgia

1 June, Child Protection Day in Georgia, was marked by a charity concert organized by the Iavna Foundation, and the UN Goodwill Ambassador in Georgia, Paata Burchuladze, with the support of UNICEF. A Charity concert, held at the National Opera and Ballet Theatre, featured the world renowned pianist of Georgian origin, Alexander Korsantia.

Alexander Korsantia is holder of First prize, and Gold Medal, of the Arthur Rubinstein Piano Master Competition, and also of First Prize from the Sydney International Piano Competition. Korsantia resides in Boston where he is a professor of piano on the faculty of the New England Conservatory.

The funds raised as a result of this concert were used to support de-institutionalization programmes in Georgia, and to help the most disadvantaged families to reunite again and to take proper care of their children.





Charity concert of Montserrat Caballe in Georgia

Another charity concert was held with the participation of world renowned opera singer, Montserrat Caballe. It was organized on 14 December 2007 as a result of a continuing partnership between the Iavvana Foundation and UNICEF.

The funds raised were used to procure houses for three disadvantaged homeless families, and to enable 28 children from these families, already placed in institutions, to get reunited with their parents once again.

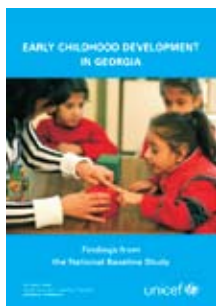


Important Publications



The Convention on the Rights of the Child in Georgian

This is a re-printing of the Convention in Georgian. The Publication contains full text as well as an abridged version of the Convention.



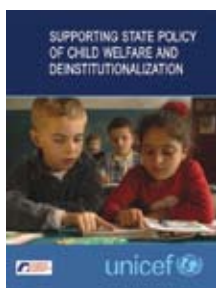
Child Rearing Study

This study focuses on the needs, perceptions, and expectations of parents, and the community in general, regarding Early Childhood Development issues, related to health, nutrition, early stimulation, learning, and protection.



Social Inclusion

This survey of disabled children in institutions defines the needs of children with various disabilities placed in institutions, and assesses the situation and environment that affects children's development.



Assessment of the Child Welfare reform

This study includes an analysis of reform implementations and provides concrete recommendations.



Protocols and Guidelines

These are evidence-based clinical guidelines and protocols, in perinatal care and early childhood development



State Party Report on Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child

Third Periodic Report submitted by Georgia to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, in August, 2007.