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SUPPORTING STATE POLICY OF CHILD WELFARE AND DEINSTITUTIONALIZATION

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INTRODUCTION

The international Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which Georgia adopted in 1994, explicitly states that the following should be fulfilled:

- Physical requirements (safe, adequate, warm environment, sufficient and healthy food and water, medical services, early employment, protection from violence and abuse).
- Emotional requirements (feeling of being loved and cared, sense of dignity, happiness and hope for the future).
- Social requirements (family, involvement in decision making, integration into society).
- Developmental requirements (friendship with dignified adults, education, preparation for adulthood).
- Spiritual requirements (freedom of religion and conscience, feeling of beauty, kindness and peace).

However, experts who have examined the situation in institutions for orphans and children deprived of parental care discovered that in Georgia, *none* of the afore mentioned requirements have been met for children under state protection, to date.

In recent years several changes have been introduced in the child protection field. In fact, a program of foster care and reintegration with biological families has been functioning for several years now. In 2006 a cash assistance program for poor families was introduced and the Inter-ministrial Commission on Child Welfare and Deinstitutionalization has been established. Standards for modern family substitution and family support services have also been developed and Georgian Parliament has discussed several draft laws directly linked to child welfare. Furthermore, licensing mechanisms for service providers are under way.

Some changes in children institutions were introduced which to a certain extent, have improved their conditions. Increase in per capita financing resolved the problem of hunger in institutions and improved the state of hygiene, health and supply of basic clothing.

In a majority of the institutions, directors have been changed, while some institutions were closed down altogether. Since 2005, children who lived in boarding schools began attending public schools, as the educational segment of the institutions were shut down.

Gradually, organizations have emerged that provide an alternative to institutional care services. However, this is a slow process and existing facilities do not meet the demand for such services. Moreover, the demand for such services will increase as the public becomes more aware of their existence and the opportunities they offer.

It is well-understood that today in Georgia, there is a serious need to develop a rational network of children institutions. This issue is recognized both inside the Ministry of Education and Science, a leading agency for child welfare and deinstitutionalization, as well as among experts in this field. Presently, the number of children in institutions is much less than their actual potential and capacity, while the number (and quality) of personnel is inadequate to the demand. Those institutions that served as sanatoriums for children with special medical needs during the Soviet time, have been gradually transformed into the ordinary children institutions and boarding schools. The observation of the geographical arrangement of children institutions reveals that there are locations where several institutions are grouped in a close proximity to each other. The question naturally arises if the aforementioned factors present a new opportunity to further optimize and improve children's conditions and welfare.

In many cases, current children institutions provide additional informal social assistance to the families living in a close proximity to the institutions. The majority of these children are "social orphans" (they have one or two parents). They use the institution during the daytime and go back home at night because their families cannot provide food, clothing, school books, and heating during the winter. There are cases when children do not even have beds at home. Thus, living in the institutions improves their quality of life and provides the opportunity to live near their families. As the country establishes

cash assistance program for poor families, such institutional assistance should be formalized and linked to this program.

It is evident that the development of family substitutes and family support services will have a profound impact on the children residing in the existing institutions; in terms of improving their quantity of life and living conditions.

The project, “Development of Principle Directions for the Support of State Policy in Child Welfare and Deinstitutionalization” was implemented by the Strategic Research Institute (SRI) with the financial support of UNICEF. The main objective of the project was to work out recommendations for rationalization of the existing network of children institutions.

The logical sequence of the project was the following:

- *Analysis of existing institutions and on-going reforms;* this analysis is the basis for future reform planning. Special emphasis should be placed on the problems, obstacles, inertia and achievements.
- *Analysis of programs of foster care and reintegration in the frame of rationalization of children institutions;* foster care and reintegration into biological families are the most powerful tools in the reform process of children institutions. These opportunities in particular

must first be taken into account when deciding upon the fate of each child in the institution. Thus it is necessary to know how these programs function and whether it is possible to make improvements in this system.

- *Analysis of existing alternative care organizations;* while making changes in the children institutions, the existence of alternative services should be taken into consideration. Their existence, or the potential for their creation, eases the decision to close down or decrease the size of the institution.
- *Expert overview of legislative initiatives;* an expert assessment of the draft laws related to child protection issues have been introduced to the Committee of Health and Social Affairs of the Parliament of Georgia (see annex 1). These experts also engaged in discussions about the draft laws and some recommendations have already been taken into consideration. Cooperation with parliament continues.
- *General conclusions and recommendations about the optimization of the network of children institutions;* The criteria have been developed based on which the decision should be made about the future of institutions. Four possible patterns of decisions for each institution have been introduced.

- *Recommendations on deciding about the future of each children institution*; here, the recommendations have been developed about each existing children institution. This is a classic example of consultancy assistance and is considered purely for the utilization of the client (in this case, the Ministry of Education and Science; Technical Secretariat to the Inter-ministerial Committee of Child Welfare and Deinstitutionalization).

1. GENERAL SITUATION OF CHILD CARE INSTITUTIONS IN GEORGIA

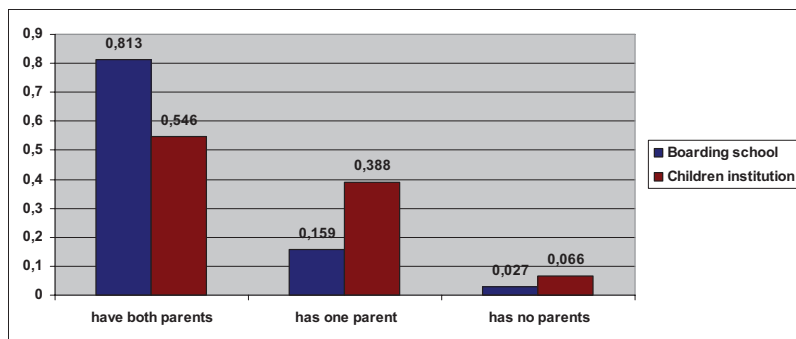
1.1. *Analysis of the data*

The following table presents general information about institutions investigated in this project:

	Children Institution	Number of children	Number of personal	Number of nurses	Living and subsidiary spaces (sq.m)	Court (sq.m)	Land (sq.m)	Educational space (sq.m)
1.	Tbilisi, Digomi	82	42	10	3100	9030		
2.	Saguramo	38	31	7	2750	40000	30000	1410
3.	Tsalenjikhka	80	48	11	584	7553	20000	515
4.	Tashiskari	62	39	7	1740	2400	10000	-----
5.	Surami	61	50	12	1253	70000	1353	-----
6.	Akhalgori	92	38	8	4160	5000	7000	-----
7.	Martvili	146	64	9	8960	10000	28000	7406
8.	Zugdidi	152	54	20	2270	82560		1096
9.	Aspindza	94	34	9	3716	2500	12000	-----
10.	Batumi	72	44	10	1050	20000	15000	120
11.	Martkopi	33	32	6	767	5500	6000	357
12.	Rustavi	40	31	7	2000	1560		450
13.	Telavi	150	70	24	3234	2164	2395	----
14.	Kojori	100	69	11	3253	3346	10000	2890
15.	Kutaisi, Brotseula	200	12	11	5200	110000	60000	1823
16.	Dusheti (Pirmisaantkari)	42	52	5	2791	8000	25000	2238
17.	Lagodekhi	61	42	10	839	34000	48000	722
18.	Mestia	40	23	6	2668	8000		834
19.	Akhmeta	(is closed)						

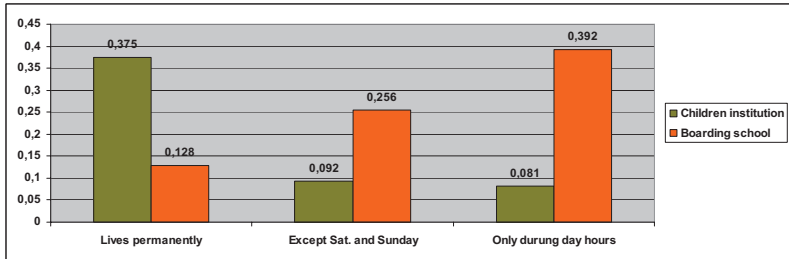
The diagrams and analysis presented in this chapter were developed by the Strategic Research Institute and were based mostly on the research of the non-governmental organization “Child and Environment,” carried out in 2004: “The Study of Children’s Institutional Organizations”.

Diagram 1. Family status of children



Only 2.7% of children placed in boarding schools are absolute orphans, while 6.6% of the contingents in children institutions have no parents. The majority of children in both categories have no parents. The majority of children in both categories have at least one parent. Additional data reveals that 8.2 % of this category of children (children in boarding schools and institutions) has no contact with their parents. Other children have contact with their parents with certain regularity.

Diagram 2. Frequency of stay in the institutions



A significant portion of children live with families. They enjoy the service of the institutions only during day hours. The number of such children in boarding schools is particularly considerable as it amounts to 39.2% of the total number of children, while in children institutions the number of these “mobile children” amounts to 8.1%.

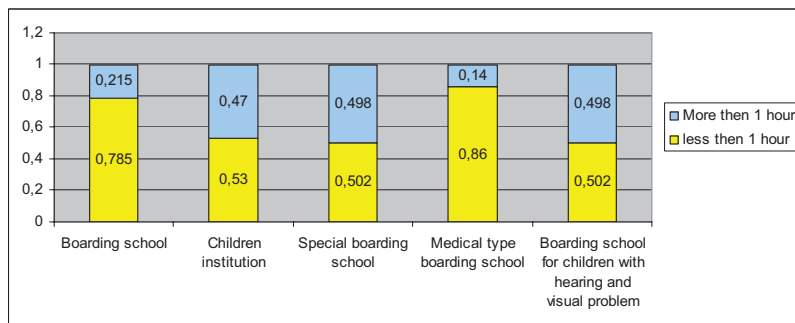
Such a high ratio of “mobile children” is likely conditioned by the following factors:

1. Drastic social-economic conditions (poverty, poor living condition): 31.3% of the interviewees referred to this cause.
2. Distance to other educational institutions (15% of the interviewees referred to this reason because of the desire of education).

3. The existence of so-called “dead souls”
4. Profile of the institution (musical, sports, sanatorium type).

Such a great number of “mobile children” (nearly one third of the total number) permits us to maintain that the system of day care centers should be developed and supported.

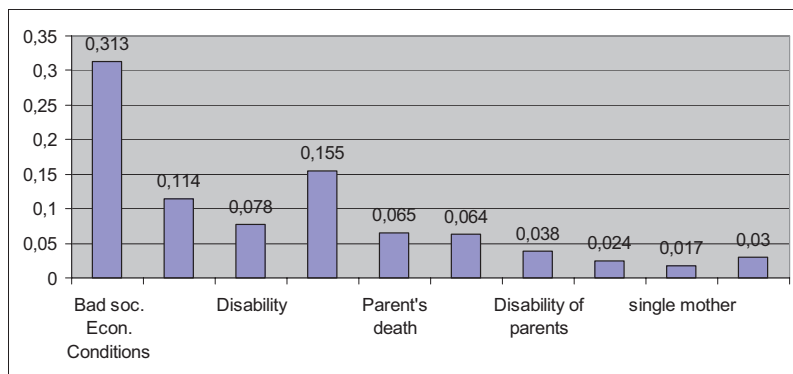
Diagram 3. Average distance from the institution to home



As we see, the principal body of boarding schools and boarding schools of the sanatorium type consists of children who live near these institutions. Additional data shows that 77.8% of children placed in institutions have some place to live outside the institution; 12.3% - have no place to live at all, while the administration of such institutions has no accurate information about the remaining 9.95%.

This diagram also provides more arguments for developing the system of day care centers.

Diagram 4. Major reasons for the placement of children in institutions



The principal reason for placing children in institutions, according to 31.3% of interviewees, is “grave social and economic conditions.” The percentage from this bracket placed in boarding schools and children institutions is the highest. Children from multi-child families – 3% and single mothers – 1.7% were included in this category. While the majority of interviewees explicitly attribute dire social-economic conditions as a direct reason for institutionalization, experienced personnel working in child institutions regularly state that a child seldom arrives at an institution due solely to severe social–economic conditions, as an adverse family atmosphere is

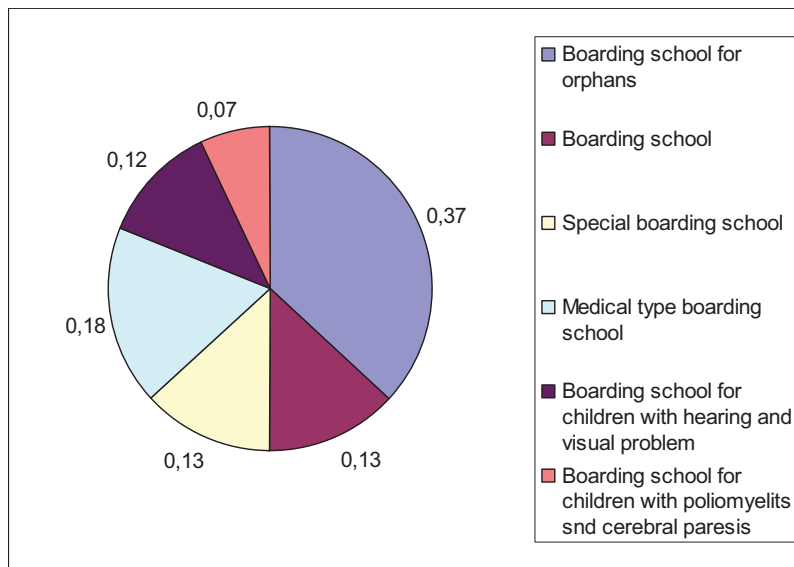
a major additional factor. However, if a child is placed in an institution purely for impoverished reasons and not because of the objectionable behaviour of the parent, then these parents should initially be considered for a reintegration program.

The percentage of those who place a child into an institution for educational reasons is 15%. Most children going to institutions for education are placed in boarding schools. This is an unexpected result. As a rule, parents don't send their children to boarding schools for education alone; exceptions are cases when a parent of a child works at the boarding school. In such cases children of personnel are nourished informally at boarding schools.

An additional factor which contributes to such a high percentage is the number of pupils attending specialized sports and musical schools, which makes up 13.3% of the total number of children placed in care institutions. As a rule, parents of children placed in such institutions cite the possibility of receiving specialized education as a reason for placement. Further studies must be carried out to understand the particulars of specialized musical and sports institutions, real achievements of children in these disciplines and the child's contact with the outer world.

Other factors figuring into a high percentage rate is disability (physical/ mental) – 11.4% and disease – 7.8%. Children in this category are ordinarily placed in special health center type boarding schools.

Diagram 5. Percentage of children in various types of institutions (ratio of children to total number of children placed in institution)



Examining the number of children placed in special and medical type institutions reveals an interesting picture: while disability is identified as a reason of abandonment in 11.4 % cases, in reality 21% of the total number of children is enrolled in specialized boarding schools. This means that a rather high percentage of healthy children are placed in special and medical type institutions meant for the mentally and physically disabled. We can assume that alongside with the illness of children there are other reasons too. These might be:

1. Proximity to the school.
2. Relatively good conditions at the institution (medical service or good food).
3. Severe economic state of a family.
4. “Dead souls”.

Removal of the health profile from an institution, which is actually transpiring within the framework of the current reform, would be appropriate, but before a final decision is made in this area it is necessary to obtain consultation from medical doctors of the appropriate profile.

Diagram 6. Number of employees per 100 children, according to the type of institution.

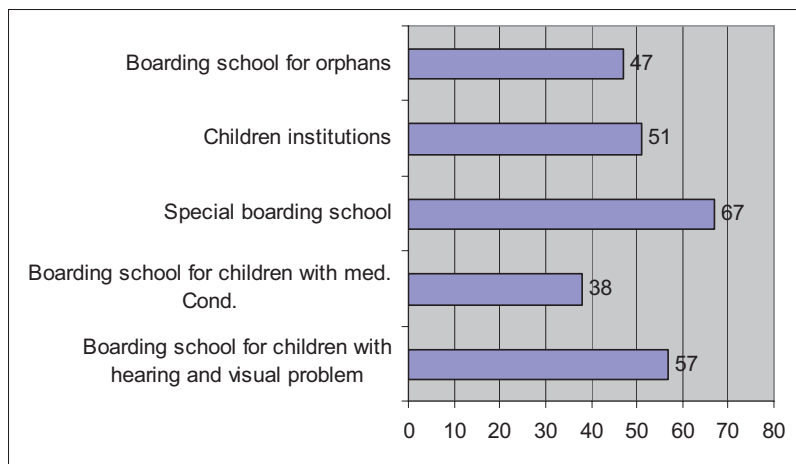


Diagram 6 shows that the average ratio of children to employees in institutions and boarding schools is approximately 2/1. This means that these institutions are overstaffed. Yet despite this fact, the quality of institutional care is rather low. It is absolutely imperative to develop training programs for child-careworkers and personnel employed in such institutions to improve the quality of care.

Conclusion: Irrespective of the fact that the diagrams presented here are drawn on the basis of data collected in 2004, they enable us to see particular sustainable trends which should become the theoretical basis for defining major tendencies of optimization and the deinstitutionalization policy.

1.2. Management problems in children institutions

The analysis of the situation in every children institution visited revealed that the issues of health, hygiene, poor nourishment, inappropriate education and fear of the future are still neglected in children institutions.

Management deficiencies are one of the leading problems in all institutions. In almost every case, directors are hoping to achieve the status of legal entity under public law, which they associate to providing more financial and managerial freedom. One of the major problems management faces is the regulation of staff and low salaries. Management is currently waiting to receive new regulations for the children institutions as pres-

ently, these institutions still operate for the most part on old regulations from Soviet times. Only five institutions have had their statutes approved by Ministry of Education and Science.

Managerial capacities of directors of children institutions vary. Some directors visit other institutions to obtain information on how they work. None have had any training or formal education in the managerial field. There are some directors who have a willingness to make changes but are not able to cope with the overwhelming difficulties. As a result, a threat exists that the system may lose dedicated and useful people. Many directors state that it would be very beneficial to organize regular administrative meetings in order to share information and experiences. In the frame of the project, one meeting was conducted in which all the directors of the children institutions participated. This was very useful not only for the directors, but for the representatives of the Ministry of Education and Science, and experts also. One significant result was that after the conclusion of the official portion of the working meeting, directors continued to divulge information on how to cope with specific problems and issues.

Institutions are not allowed to make purchases without proper documentation. While this stipulation provides a necessary and transparent means to monitor the purchasing process, the procedure has its drawbacks as obtaining and processing the proper documents invariably increases the price of needed goods. Since institutions have very limited resources, this compulsory obligation is a luxury that they cannot afford. The

directors of children institutions believe ways must be found that will both comply with all the rules while simultaneously rationalize spending money for children's food and clothing.

The salaries of institution employees are very low and few realize how qualified caregiver's work is very demanding, time consuming, and requires a high standard of professionalism.

Additionally, the restructuring of existing institutions and boarding schools has left a substantial number of employees without work. This issue requires acute attention. Some recommendations in this area are provided below.

Children institutions require permanent control from the Ministry of Education and Science, however, representatives of the ministry have not visited some institutions for several months. Moreover, the directors at the working meeting expressed concern that their work is undervalued and that they sometimes are the subject of mistrust. They assume that dishonest behavior of some directors in the past, and perhaps even presently, create a negative stereotype which is unfair and creates obstacles for effectual work.

Current directors are largely uninformed about the requirements and standards that are now being developed for modern type children institutions. It should be highlighted that in the frame of this project, the recently developed draft of standards of child care services has been scrutinized and many critical remarks have been given to major stakeholders.

1.3. Results of the implemented Reforms in Children Care Institutions

Closure of the educational portion of boarding schools

The most important policy implemented last year by the Ministry of Education and Science in children's care institutions of Georgia was the closure of the school component in some boarding schools and the transfer of children to public schools for education purposes.

It should be stated in advance that the concept of closing classes in boarding schools and transferring children to regular state schools is not new. Many foreign and local experts consider these measures are beneficial for children in order to prevent feelings of entrapped fear towards the outer world and apprehension to make friends. The policy provides children with an equal chance to be integrated into the society they will have to live in after they reach adult age. Thus, the reform implemented by the Ministry of Education and Science has a theoretical basis.

The study aimed to assess and analyze the results of the implementation of this specific issue: What are the processes of changes generally like and what are the results? (the kind of changes made in principle; the side effects that followed; time needed; whether there was any opposition to those changes; prospects created by the released capacities; the positive and negative aspects of changes).

The project research team studied the situation first-hand in every boarding school where the reform has been implemented or is in the process of implementation. Besides it was considered purposeful to study the situation in those children institutions (e.g. children institution in Digomi, Tbilisi), where children always go to regular schools providing general education. Comparison of the new reform with these findings would give the research team more arguments for the assessment of the reform process.

The study also examined the issue of released personnel and discovered that some of the teachers who had been discharged were re-employed in the same institution they had taught in before. Others were employed in the public schools that institutionalized children had begun to attend. Several teachers were trained as social workers since the closures of schools and boarding homes created a new work force demand (ie. in Tianeti, where after the closer of the boarding school a day-care center was established). However, the majority of those laid off were offered neither a job nor monetary compensation after being made redundant. It should be noted that this set of circumstances reflects a common practice firmly established in all spheres of life in Georgia.

The matter of utilizing buildings vacated after school closures has been addressed in various ways. For example: The building in Saguramo was simply sealed off. In Kojori, the building was renovated rather well and became partly occupied by adminis-

tration but most importantly, there are now medical and entertainment rooms for the children. In the town of Tsalendjikha, the situation is rather extraordinary - during the assault of the armed brigades of the Mkhedrioni during Georgia's civil war, Tsalendjikha suffered great losses. Both new buildings of the boarding school in Tsalendjikha were burnt down and the boarding school was moved to another building. Today, the classrooms are no longer needed and the rooms can be converted into bedrooms. This will greatly improve conditions if 40 children won't have to sleep in one room anymore. In Tianeti, the question of buildings has not been addressed yet.

Quite naturally, the child was the major focus of the study. It was important to determine the condition of children after being transferred beyond the walls of their institutions to regular schools. This is a rather radical change in a child's life.

From the very beginning, it was noted that the measures of integration produced a severely traumatizing effect on the children, which could have permanent repercussions. In general, children from boarding schools are greeted with hostility and become the objects of mocking and occasional violence. To local children, they are "foreign," "those who came from the unknown", "homeless", "children of disreputable parents" etc. In the regions, where the attitude towards children from institutions is historically friendlier, the transition process went more smoothly. The nicknames for the children were also less harsh (e.g. "pap-eaters").

Due to their brief experience with relations in the outside world, children from institutions generally suffer from various sorts of traumas. Typically, their appearance in conventional schools creates another trauma.

Each school these children were placed in was not prepared to receive them. This refers not only to the children who encountered them, but much more alarming, also to the teachers, parents and administration, all of whom could not conceal their hostile or negative attitude to these children. School teachers simply do not know how to approach these children. While there are some teachers who pity such children and attempt to help them integrate, these educators cannot overcome this totally hostile environment alone.

The closure of classes in boarding schools concurs with stable statistics of a decreasing number of children in boarding schools. At first sight, this situation does not appear rational. As a rule, a parent admits their child to an institution because they are unable to feed their child or because the situation at home makes it impossible for the child to live there. So what has changed for such a child after they enter a new school? Why does a parent take their child back from a boarding school? If a parent could have kept their child at home, why did they bring the child to the boarding school in the first place?

Yet after the closure of classes, it was discovered that the decreasing number of children in boarding schools was influenced by the following reasons:

1. Many children had agreed to stay in boarding schools because they understood that they would live in better conditions, from the point of view of food, clothes and heating, than in their own homes. However, when they changed schools, children lost even that slightest comfort. The hostile atmosphere at school forced children to decisively ask their parents to take them back. “They organize hysteric scenes for their visiting parents,” stated one director. One mother, who couldn’t bear her child’s demands to take her back said “I have to bring her back home. I know she will starve there but I cannot kill her here.” It so happened that the children who returned home were from well-functional but extremely poor families. In principle, this is a positive direction but additional effort should be made to improve the quality of their lives in the families.

2. There were many children in boarding schools that stayed with their families overnight and spent the day at the boarding school. They ate and studied there. After the schools shut down, their status became unclear. If a child goes to school in the morning, boarding school directors don’t know in which status they can receive that child at the second half of the day. In these cases, it would resemble a day care center, but it is necessary to clearly define the status and working conditions of this type of situation.

3. A principal problem is simply getting to school, as the road conditions are often poor and the distance to institutions can be far. For example, children in Saguramo must walk two ki-

lometres to school. Even in areas where the distance is not so extreme, the route becomes unbearable in winter, particularly for children who are poorly dressed.

Among the many existing problems, one mentioned by all interviewed institution directors was educational level placement. If a child is placed into institution in the middle or the end of the academic year, it is unclear where to place them because as a rule, these children have already missed many classes and are behind in the learning process. It is very common when 14-15 year old children are so behind they must sit with 7-8 year old children. One can easily imagine their state and pedagogical theories aren't needed to verify that their situation is not normal.

As previously mentioned, the research team analyzed the Digomi children institution, where children attended public school from the very first day of the institution's inception. 60 children from the Digomi children institution study at the nearby Georgian public school, but these children are also not treated as ordinary pupils. Because school principles and teachers are unacquainted with the specific issues related to children living in the institutions, they do not know how to interact with these children. They cannot understand why these children have problems. Aggression towards these children increases with time, including belligerence emanating from the parents of other children. The director of the Digomi institution contemplates changing the school or distributing its children

to various schools, however, other schools are distant. Some children go to the Russian school, where the situation is somewhat better. Nevertheless, children seldom make friends with “ordinary” children and are afraid of making relationships.

There is a procedure in the Digomi children institution that if a child is brought in the middle of the academic year and is especially behind in the school program, the child is not sent to school that year. Instead, Digomi personnel try to help him catch up. However, it is exceedingly difficult - nearly impossible - to compensate enough for the missed lessons to reach the necessary level.

Some directors of children institution see the problem more globally: While schools are not ready to meet the problems of a difficult child, the greatest problem is that our schools overall, are not up to standard. The study process is irregular and inadequate.

1.4. Conclusions and Recommendations

About Educational Issues

Our recommendations are based on the principal conviction that the integration of orphans and children devoid of parental care into the conventional schooling process is ultimately the correct course of state policy in regards to the protection of children's rights. Nevertheless, it is critically vital to implement the following actions:

- Inhabitants of children institutions are traumatized in various ways: These children are deprived of social contact and unable to form relationships. The so-called phenomenon of "socially disabled" is typical, where the limited capacities of a child is the result of flaws in their upbringing and education. Schools must be properly prepared to receive such children. We believe that the methods of integrating orphans and those who lack parental care into the mainstream school system should be analogous to approaches and ways of inclusive education for disabled children. In particular, the process of inclusion of the disabled child requires preliminary preparation of teachers and school administrators, healthy children and their parents. Therefore, regular work must be carried out in the schools for the acceptance of children from institutions. The newly created boards of trustees at schools should also be involved in this process. The process of due preparation of schools is rather

urgent and in those schools where these children study, it must be started as soon as possible. Children already experience some problems with inclusion which must be addressed as soon as possible. One should initiate discussions about universal human values, highlighting the concepts of compassion and teaching kindness to children. Theoretically, this is easily feasible; all that is needed is to find dedicated people willing to contribute. Furthermore, even though according to our laws, directors of schools are responsible for the safety of children and protection of their human rights, it would be advisable to issue an extra order which would emphasize the responsibility of school principals to protect the rights of children coming from children institutions.

- It should be recognized that it is not easy for school administrators to constantly deal with these children in a supportive and friendly manner. It is expected that some of these children will be "difficult children" (children with challenging behavior). Therefore, schools will need methodological support and assistance.
- The charter (statute) of children institutions should clearly spell out the tasks of administration and caregivers in terms of their relationship with schools; these terms should clarify the responsibility of the institutions towards their children's school attendance; qual-

ity of prepared homework; presence at school events and parental gatherings.

- Terms should be created at children institutions for children to overcome school learning demands without serious problems. The emphasis should be made on the process of preparing homework. We consider it appropriate to add teachers to the staff of personnel working at children institutions. These teachers should be responsible for homework preparation. Teachers should be selected so that they are able to help children in all major disciplines. It is very important that in children institutions a comfortable space to study and resource center be created. The issue of evaluating "aid" teachers and the issue of compensation for their work should become a component of the system of successful inclusion of children in the study process.
- The Ministry of Education and Science and education resource centers at the local level must realize the need of specific control over the academic progress of inhabitants of children institutions at all levels of school exams.
- In the case when taking a child to school leads to a situation which insults the child's dignity (for example, a significant problem can arise when a child does not have knowledge relevant to his/her age group and will be put

in the same class with younger children), the children institution must be given the right and opportunity to carry out preliminary work for preparing a child for entering public school.

- Children from institutions, more than other children, need adequate clothes, normal bags, necessary books and other accessories. Today there are not such a large number of children from institutions who attend public schools that the resources cannot be mobilized to adequately equip them. The Ministry of Education and Science must calculate the approximate costs and find ways of covering it, including the potential support of donors. A public campaign must be organized for the collection of clothes, books etc. The Strategic Research Institute is ready to participate and render support in this endeavor.
- To successfully integrate institutionalized children into society, the management of the children institution must widely apply the placing of children into various sports, art and handicraft circles beyond the institution. With this in mind, urban locations provide more opportunities. A child who is behind academically, but possesses a particular talent in music or sport can establish close relationships with children of their age. The present day tendency that all children institutions must have such circles in these institutions might be justified.

- While making decisions regarding the education of children devoid of parental care, we must take into consideration the timely initiative of the Ministry of Education and Science on the creation of a wide network of vocational training and education in Georgia. This approach is extremely valuable for resolving the major dilemma a child faces when they reach full age. Quotas could be established, some professional technical schools could also have the responsibility to render support to certain children institutions (only 2-3 children a year reach full age in one children institution). In this case, training children in a particular profession will be simplified, as they will be more familiarized to it.

About the institutions in general

- **Development of distinctive regulations for children institutions:** A document should be developed which will clarify the legal status of institutions and maintain rules according to this status. This document should become a basis for developing specific regulations for each concrete institution.
- **Control over children outside institutions:** It is important to regulate those cases when children are taken out of the institution by their family members. There are

cases when children are taken out by parents to spend entire summers or holidays begging in the streets. The management of institutions has no authority to influence these situations.

- **Development of job descriptions and qualification requirements:** For each position in a children institution, from director to janitor, a distinct job description and qualification requirements should be developed.
- **Development of standards:** The standards of modern care services have already been developed and legalized. At this stage it is important to ensure their gradual implementation. Public discussions about these standards are necessary.
- **Consider the possibility of a centralized supplier for children institutions:** General economic rules indicate that when faced with restricted resources, a centralized supply will provide food, clothing, hygienic articles and other necessary goods at a much cheaper price. It is recommended that the Ministry of Education and Science consider this opportunity with qualified economists and financial specialists.
- **Training programs:** Training programs should be developed for the personnel of children institutions. Particularly important are training programs for the

managerial staff. The analysis of the existing situation revealed that the majority of directors lack managerial skills.

- **Experience sharing:** It is critically imperative to ensure an open exchange of information and experience among the key personnel of children institutions.
- **Visits to Children Institutions:** The Ministry of Education and Science should adhere to a set schedule of visits to children institutions. The reports of these visits should indicate specific problems and suggest ways to cope with them and assign the appropriate task to the suitable person. There are reports from institution inspections which are very useful, although it is essential to create formal templates for the necessary reports. After the adoption of standards, it will be much easier to create a format for such visits. Moreover, these visits should not be conducted in a real supervisory manner but rather be intended towards solving problems in a cooperative way. However, unplanned visits should also occur.
- **Optimization of Children Institutions:** After a decision is made about the transformation (closure) of an institution it is *absolutely necessary* to first discuss and then decide the fate of every single child. Written arguments must be developed in each case. This is actu-

ally an established procedure but long-term supervision on a child's condition and a proper reporting system should be added to it as well. Furthermore, serious deliberation should be given to employment opportunities for the staff that have been laid off from the closed or restructured organizations. Some of these people could be offered work in alternative care institutions (including becoming a foster parent, etc).

- **Stimulation of managers:** Being the director of a children institution is a very demanding and challenging job. It is essential to acknowledge their hard work and award those who demonstrate exceptional performance. Motivation does not have to derive solely from financial acknowledgement.

2. ASSESSMENT OF DEINSTITUTIONAZATION PROCESS

2.1. Results of the deinstitutionalization policy

The deinstitutionalization policy for children deprived of parental care is one of the most successful recent social reforms in Georgia. Its success is the result of methodologically correct planning and implementation. In 1999, the Parliament of Georgia adopted a law of foster care, which was the result of intensive work in many areas:

- The situation in children institutions were intently analyzed to understand what problems could arise from the deinstitutionalization process.
- The opinion of the Georgian public to the newly created institute of “foster care” was analyzed.
- Meetings with the parents of institutionalized children were conducted. The aim was to analyze how much opposition reform might encounter from the parent when placing children in a foster family for the best interest of the child.
- Financial sustainability of the new system was ascertained.
- Global experience was analyzed and a comparative analysis written.

- The results of the analysis were discussed with professionals in the child care field.
- The concept of foster care law was developed.

It is important to emphasize the working environment in which the law on foster care was adopted. This was a cooperative effort of the Georgian Parliament, Ministry of Education, UNICEF, NGO sector and mass media to achieve a full understanding of the issue and to learn the role and function of each participant. It must be stressed that the global experience in developing social programs demonstrates that there cannot be any success without prior conceptualization, careful planning and responsible involvement of all major players. None of these stages can be omitted.

Since 2000, 290 children have been involved in the foster care program; among them many cases have been concluded as children reached age 18 or returned to their biological families. Some children have been adopted based on the Georgian adoption law. Currently there are 176 active cases, among them are 26 children with severe disabilities. The area where deinstitutionalization is practiced is gradually widening. 5 regions have been involved in this process and two have been added since 2006.

There has not been a reported case when a foster family relinquished their commitment to care for a child and re-

turned them to an institution. This is a significant indicator of the reform's success.

Currently the Parliament of Georgia is discussing a draft Law on Social Assistance. The draft Law on “Foster care of orphans and children deprived of parental care” is also under consideration in parliament. Putting these two laws in one package was based on the argument that financial support under the foster care system is considered to be one form of state assistance, which is absolutely legitimate.

There are some areas in the foster care system needs very careful consideration. For example, when families do not have minimum social guarantees, the establishment of a foster care system may not be appropriate because it defeats the practice of reintegration to biological families. A case in point is when a family gives up their child to an institution because of poverty, and that child is placed in a foster family which is receiving financial support for raising that child. In Georgia, there are cases of financial support to assist reintegration to biological families, however, there are many cases when a family does not want to place their child into an institution despite the drastic need to. They receive no support or assistance and conditions can be worse at home than in an institution. The current cash assistance program for the poor must take such families into consideration.

During the discussion about the abovementioned laws the project research team closely cooperated with the Committee of Parliament on Healthcare and Social Affairs. The commit-

tee was given comments on these laws, some of which have already been taken into consideration.

To help create more foster parents and improve the system, there should be further development in the public information sector, as a majority of the population is not familiar with the system.

A problem which needs immediate attention is the scarce financial support foster families now receive. The existing support has devalued considerably due to increasing inflation.

During the interviews, the research team meets a former caregiver from an institution which had been closed. She was considering being a foster parent; her major concern was how to purchase the necessary items for the child, like a bed and clothes. It is important that social workers carefully consider such cases and manage them for the benefit of children.

The analysis revealed that in some occasions, reintegrated or even foster children can end up in worse conditions than they were in the institutions. For deinstitutionalization to be more effective, additional measures must be taken to support families, particularly the provision of daycare services. Such centers will assist in feeding but more importantly, under the supervision of specialists, they will profoundly assist the learning process of these children. For example, in Tianety, 8 months after the closure of the school segment of the boarding school, a daycare center was established. Now the center provides all

the support services for reintegrated and foster families under one roof.

The recently launched Child Welfare and Deinstitutionalization Reform improved the move towards the concept of deinstitutionalization. More rigorous attempts have been undertaken to either close down or optimize the existing system of children institutions. Additionally, this reform supports the development of alternative services to foster care. The reform includes the development of standards for alternative and existing institutions, licensing mechanisms of these organizations and developing a supportive state system of monitoring and evaluation. Furthermore, this reform generally follows the norms of social reform development. The Inter-ministerial Committee comprised of the Ministers of Education, Health and Finance was established to politically and conceptually lead the process of deinstitutionalization. This current study is one component of the detailed plan under development. Linkages to other reforms (e.g. cash assistance program for poor) have been established. Major stakeholders are actively involved in the planning and implementation process. Only serious stakeholders who are not sufficiently represented in this reform are directors of children institutions. They possess enormous experience in this field and can contribute very valuable recommendations and ideas to the reform process. This methodologically sound management of the reform process provides hope that it will achieve its goals in the most efficient way.

2.2. Major recommendations for improvement of reintegration and foster care programs

- The number of children who returned from institutions to biological and foster families cannot be the only criterion of the success of the reform. It is possible that children can emerge in worse conditions after leaving institutions (this is indicated by international experts as well). Social workers should thoroughly investigate each specific case of a child who has left an institution and regularly inform the Ministry of Education and Science of the continuous situation of a child after deinstitutionalization for at least a 2 year period.
- Establishing daycare centers is a progressive measure to help families with deinstitutionalized children. It is also financially efficient. Preliminary studies carried out within the structure of the project (as well as the precedents that exist in Georgia) prove that in most cases where children institutions serve mainly the children of families located nearby, children institutions might be painlessly substituted by daycare centers, particularly in the regions (an analogy of this are kindergartens and classes of prolonged studies at schools).
- Daycare centers are actually new types of services. It is important to develop the rules and mechanisms for

their functioning. For example, what is the relationship of daycare centers with the parents and schools where the children study; to what extent are they responsible for the academic achievements of the children?

- The decision to assist foster families in obtaining additional on-time financial support to purchase necessary items for a new foster child must to be well thought-out. Such practice exists in other countries. It should be up to social worker to decide upon this issue.
- The institution of foster care and a more extensive development of alternative care services needs massive information support. Public awareness programs should be developed and implemented. Public television should be involved to support such activities.
- A dynamic information database should exist for potential and existing foster families and other alternative services.
- Currently functioning children institutions negatively affect the subtle psychology of a child. Psychological problems are accompanied with other specific issues. That is why it is absolutely vital that a child who enters an institution be transferred to an alternative family or community friendly services as soon as possible. Some countries practice the placing of children not into institutions but emergency foster families until a decision is

made about the best permanent placement for the child. It is noteworthy that such families are paid by the government even when they do not have children. These families undergo special training.

- After the adoption of appropriate laws of deinstitutionalization it is vital to develop bylaws and regulations. Precise bylaws and regulations ensure sound functioning of the rules and procedures of the system.
- In two to three years, the number of first generation children who passed through the alternative care system and reached the age of 18 will be quite substantial. Then it will be possible to intensely analyze and generalize the results of the deinstitutionalization reform. It will be critical to trace the fate of these children in order to understand the general trends of the reform.
- Mechanisms to link a cash assistance program to alternative care services should be developed.

3. ALTERNATIVE CARE INSTITUTIONS

One aim of the project was to study existing alternative child care institutions. To analyze the situation in this area the research team used data of existing family support and family substitute servic-

es available from Everychild, a leading organization working on child protection issues in Georgia. Additional information was acquired from Educational Resource Centers, which were asked to provide information on existing alternative care services in their regions. These two sources were the basis for the analysis.

The purpose of analyzing existing alternative services was to identify the current capacities in Georgia to accommodate children from children institutions. The research team assumed that the existence of alternative services would provide significant criteria to support their recommendations on closing down or restructuring existing institutions.

The following table provides the basic quantitative data on the number of alternative care institutions and number of children receiving various types of care:

REGION	# of alt. institutions	# of children
Racha-Lechkhumi	0	0
Guria	3	250
Samtskhe-Javakheti	3	140
Shida Kartli	3	N/A
Samegrelo	3	50
Ajara	5	N/A
Kvemo Kartli	7	614
Mtskheta-Mtianeti	9	272
Kakheti	11	N/A
Imereti	18	546
Tbilisi	23	1337
TOTAL	85	3209

Analysis of existing data about the alternative care institutions revealed the following:

- **Geographical spread:** while services do exist throughout Georgia, they are still mostly concentrated in the country's capital of Tbilisi, as well as the Imereti and Kakheti regions, where services are mostly concentrated in their capitals of Kutaisi and Telavi. This can be explained by the fact that these cities are attracting the exceptional attention of international donors which are the major source of financing such organizations. The least number of alternative services can be seen in Racha-Lechkhumi (none according to the data basis), Guria, Samtskhe-Javakheti, Shida Kartli and Samegrelo regions.

- **Types of alternative care services:** In Georgia, all the alternative care services proposed by the working group of the Committee on Child Welfare and Deinstitutionalization, do in fact exist:
 - Small family-type group homes.
 - Medium size children institution (residential house for 8-20 children).
 - Day care center for children with disabilities.
 - Day care center for other socially marginalized children.

- Temporary shelter (for mothers and children; for various category children).
- Social programs for children before and after classes.
- Various forms of services during vacations, summer school, camps etc.
- Form of services at home for children with disabilities or children suffering from chronic illnesses.

The analysis revealed that the majority of alternative services were family support types of services, such as daycare centers, after school programs and vacation programs. Modern family-type substitute services, such as small group homes and shelters, are much fewer in number but do exist in several locations. Such a pattern might be explained by the fact that in major cases, family support services are cheaper to sustain and require less responsibilities from service providers (compared to family substitute services). What is more, family support services fill an empty niche, while family group homes to an extent, complement existing children institutions, therefore the population's demand for these types of services is more satisfied. It was interesting to discover special in-home programs for children with physical disabilities. The development of this type of service is partially due to the existing educational

policy which requires schools to provide such assistance to disabled children.

Although all types of services currently exist in Georgia, their number is inadequate when compared to their need. Considering that the majority of the rural population lives at or below the poverty level, the need for daycare centers and after school programs exists in almost every village and small city. While poverty is a significant reason for establishing such services, there are occasions when a family has two working parents, which also creates a need for a place where a child can spend time under the supervision of adults.

The transformation of some large residential institutions into daycare centers (recommendations of the project research team) can create a dilemma: on the one hand the research team found that in the cases where the recommendation was given to transform big residential institution in to the daycare (or leave a small residential setting and add daycare service) there indeed was the need for such service, but on the other hand the following situation might be created: the population residing near such services would benefit from these services but residents of other villages, who are in the same socio-economic conditions, will lack such opportunity only because children institutions were not located in their areas.

- **Affiliation and financing:** The majority of alternative institutions are non-governmental organizations

(NGOs) which receive financing from international and private donors. Many of these institutions are now diversifying their sources of financing, some even receive Georgian budgetary support. Some organizations operate with assistance from the local government and are financed mostly by local government funding. A few institutions belong to the Georgian Orthodox Church, which are funded by the Patriarchy, international donors and occasionally receive government assistance.

So far, there are no clear mechanisms by which alternative care services can receive sustainable financial support from the Government. At this stage, almost all organizations negotiate the conditions and amount of received money individually. The exception is the program which supports the social adaptation and integration of people with disabilities. This program is monitored by the State Agency for Employment and Social Assistance, which sets clear terms for receiving financing from the state budget. This is significant assistance. Although these service providers claim the amount is not enough to cover all their needs, the predictability of financing and clarity of terms put them in a better situation to plan for the future and seek additional sources of financing. The adoption of new standards of care and the development of licensing mechanisms should improve the exist-

ing situation and place service providers in a better state in terms of securing financial sustainability in the nearest future. Meanwhile, many are working in “survival mode” which poses the threat of decreasing the quality of care.

Other non-state sources of financing mentioned by the respondents are:

- Danish Refugee Council
- World Vision
- USAID (Save the Children)
- Georgian Orthodox Church
- European Commission
- Open Society – Georgia
- UNDP
- Red Cross
- Irish Aid
- World Food Program
- CordAid
- SOS Kinderdorf

- Georgian private banks
- Foreign private individuals and businesses
- **Number of Children and Capacity:** The number of children in the 85 alternative care institutions is more than 3000. It is clear that this number is underestimated because:
 1. Some services may be excluded from the data basis;
 2. In the existing data base some information about the number of children is missing.
 3. Some interviewees were unable to give an exact number of children because of the fluctuations in the number of children during the year.

It is apparent that the number of children in alternative care services is far less than existing institutions which is not a favorable proportion. Most of the alternative service providers operate at the absolute maximum of their capacity using all their resources to satisfy the demand for such services. Some service providers stated that in the existing setting and with more financial support they will be able to serve more beneficiaries. This indicates how strong the demand is for such services in the country. This also indicates how problematic it would be to

use existing alternative services to redirect children from large residential institutions. Most importantly however, all these types of services do exist and there is a growing experience in the country on what works well and what is not acceptable to Georgian culture and reality. But if the government decides to rely on the existing services, serious additional investments must be made to increase their capacity to serve new and more beneficiaries and to manage the enlarged organizations.

4. Optimization of the network of Children Institutions

In principle, children institutions in Georgia all operate under similar conditions in terms of financial, social and organizational points of view. However, in reality, their situations are all distinctly diverse, sometimes radically so. It is important to be aware of the major causes of those differences. Some of them are:

- The personal qualities and professional level of the administration of children institutions, in particular the director: how active and devoted directors manage to collaborate with local governments, civic organizations and schools; the way additional funds are obtained; being more demanding in relation to their colleagues - the typical result is having a better staff. Their relation with children in the

institution is based on mutual respect and recognition, which gives them the opportunity to establish better a living environment for children.

- Relationship between children in the children institutions and their parents: there are institutions in which children engage in weekly and sometimes even daily contact with their parents. This naturally alleviates the intense psychological trauma which children living in institutions ordinarily develop and which sometimes oppresses them for the rest of their lives. Additionally, such parental attention in children institutions offers a greater hope that normal conditions for the natural development of a child who will return home from a children institution will be created, provided those families have the proper support.
- Traditions that have been established in children institutions and around them: in children institutions where personnel constantly violate children's rights or does not fulfill its duties properly, violence and oppression become prominent. This easily transfers to inter-children relationships. The situation in such children institutions is very similar to that in the Soviet army, in which "dedovschina", or the oppression of the minors by the seniors is an established rule. The local population's attitudes towards the children is also important. This factor influences the child's attitude towards school and the outer world in general.

- The location: where a children institution is placed – in a remote village or in a city – defines how effectively human and other resources can be used to improve its functioning. Ethnicity of the local population and children in institutions must be taken into account.

While elaborating recommendations for optimization of children institutions, or to put it more precisely, rationalization of the network of children institutions, the research team focused particularly on the combination and interdependence of precisely these abovementioned factors.

There were other factors originally considered by the research team not included in the final list of factors. These are:

- Material assets of the children institutions and their condition: during the visits of the research team to children institutions, investigating material assets was one of the objectives. In the absolute majority of these cases, the main building (where children resided) and auxiliary buildings (dining halls, medical blocks) all need a huge investment to improve their condition. Because the situation in nearly all of the institutions was more or less similar, the research team excluded this criterion as a decisive factor for optimization.
- Existence of alternative care services in the region (rayon): as was already mentioned, the number, geo-

graphical location and capacity of existing alternative services do not provide an adequate opportunity to seriously rely on their existence when deciding about the restructuring of the existing institutions. Thus this criterion can be used as an additional factor but not the main decision making tool.

In fact, one of the most important means for decision-making was getting acquainted with the children and speaking with them. It provided a much more accurate picture than material factors like the condition of the building, heating, water and power supply etc. Everybody who has ever visited a children institution knows that a child's face often say more than any other indicator.

Taking into consideration all these enumerated factors, four possible decisions were outlined while elaborating the optimization plan:

1. Children institutions must be closed. A child's fate must be decided individually so that they may either return to their families (provided there is such an opportunity), or are placed in a circumstance that is as maximally close to the family atmosphere as possible (foster care, small group home etc.). As a last resort, the remaining children would be redistributed in the existing child-care institutions. It is totally unaccept-

- able that even one child's condition should worsen in the process of reorganization.
2. Children institutions should be replaced by an established daycare center that would also provide services to local children. Those centers would use a flexible financing system.
 3. Ideally, a children institution should be entirely transformed into a day care center, however a portion of the residential places (dormitory) should be maintained to function together with the day care center.
 4. Children institution should be basically maintained for each particular region, although it should be radically improved in all parameters. These institutions should firstly satisfy those standards which the family substitution services must comply with.

Based on the developed criteria and taking into account four different scenarios of restructuring, the research team developed recommendations for optimizing the existing network of children institutions. This document enumerates all institutions and furnishes recommendations for each of them. This document is for internal use only. Below, the description of four different cases of restructurization is given. They are based on real cases but names of the institutions have been omitted.

Case #1: Institution should be closed down:

Institution 1

Institution 1 is the only one the research team recommends for closure as quickly as possible, without any reservations. There are only 27 children in this house, all of whom are non-locals. Nearly all have unreliable families and maintain very limited contact with them. Chaos and disorder has been reigning in this children institution for years. For decades, the village youth have shown indecent, unhealthy interests towards the inhabitants of the house. The relationships between the children of the house are often pathological.

With the aid of sponsors, the dormitory building was repaired. Metal-plastic doors and windows have replaced their old-fashioned counterparts, preparatory works for laying gas and water lines have been finished, although presently there is a very limited supply of water and no gas. The institution has a new director who is truly devoted to the children and could in fact correct many things, however, the more fundamental problems the children institution faces offer meager hope for a general improvement of the situation. The director has no managerial capacities and has problems dealing with the problems of the institution.

This children institution should be closed. The children should be distributed to different settings where reintegration and foster care is the first option. Those who are left should be distrib-

uted to different existing institutions so that the experience of living in this particular institution may be as far removed from their lives as possible.

One additional question: the present director of Institution 1 is a person of unusual devotion, energy and kindness. For the child welfare system, the loss of such a personality would be a major misfortune. The research team believes this person should be provided with a job in this system that corresponds to their abilities and dedication.

Case # 2: Residential institution should be closed down and daycare service established in its place

Institution 2

The residents of institution 2 are all from families of the local population. This institution can be transformed into a daycare center, since in reality it essentially provides this exact function. Few kids are problematic, because their family conditions are such that even in case of the governmental assistance through their return to their families their condition will definitely deteriorate. Thus other alternatives than reintegration should be considered. Each particular case should be thoroughly studied. It is possible that in addition to the usual assistance, a family is provided also a one-time assistance with aim of creating elementary living conditions for a child. Such

a child should by all means be enrolled in a daycare center. The families should be included into the cash assistance program for the poor. Social workers should ensure this process. A temporary solution to the problem could be reducing the children's number to a minimum and working towards making residential service no longer necessary. Foster care should be considered as a serious option. As this institution is situated in western Georgia where foster care is not widely implemented, additional steps should be made to popularize the institute of foster care among the local population. As a part of a broader policy, the structure and rules of functioning daycare centers should be carefully detailed. The research team also believes that the present management will successfully administer the daycare center as well.

Case # 3: Residential institution should continue functioning on a smaller scale and daycare added to it.

Institution 3

Institution 3 is located next to a neighboring country and has a mixed ethnic population. Due to severe economic conditions, surrounding villages are emptying. With exception of the public organizations (court and school), the children institution is virtually the only budget-funded organization in town. Its continuation is reasonable even for simply strengthening the Georgian ethnic element.

The kids from the children institution are from the same town the institution is located and neighboring villages. 15 children (16%) are from other regions of Georgia.

14 children have been reintegrated to 11 families. According to the director's estimation it is additionally possible to return 20-25 kids to their biological families. The family condition of the remaining children is so grave (psychically ill parents, extreme poverty etc.) that it is rather acceptable that they remain in the children institution. There is a high demand within the local population that the children stay in the children institution, however, without authorization from the Ministry of Education and Science, they cannot stay.

There is no any animosity towards the children from town's population and children (with exception of one or two cases when an angered teacher called them "children from a haven"). This is explained by the fact most of the kids are from the town itself and their intellectual abilities and educational level is not lower than that of the other kids (this year 4 of 8 of them successfully passed the national exam). Oddly enough, their clothing is often better than other kids in town and their knowledge and experience in computer technologies surpasses that of their peers from outside the children institution.

Two projects implemented in the children institution should be exemplary for all. Through the aid of donors, a well equipped computer class (7 computers and organizational equipment, at the time of our arrival they were finishing equipping another classroom

with 10 computers) was set up. Both institutional children and town kids take computer courses. Town kids are charged a set fee. This serves both as an additional income source for the children institution and as an additional element for the children institution kids' self-affirmation. Because the fee of the courses is relatively low, it competes successfully with the only other computer class in town. In fact, the number of outsiders who want to attend the children institution computer class cannot be fully satisfied.

Through the assistance of donors, a mini sewing workshop (the "quilt center") was also set up, where children create items that sell quite well. There are both local and foreign orders for them. The money earned in this way is used to benefit the children institution. After two successful projects, a felt fabrication center is designed to open. These kinds of projects help children develop work skills and more importantly, they become accustomed to finding their own ways to deal with the new economic situation and not be reliant entirely state assistance.

The pupils of institution 3 freely attend the town's soccer, wrestling and music study groups (the services paid by the town municipality) without any restrictions. A teacher of religious chants appears regularly at the school (this lesson was full of children). Children sing in church choirs. The relationship between the children and town is very warm. The children's expressions are generally very cheerful.

The resettling 3 pupils from institution 3 can be considered successful: A house and three cows were bought for orphaned

kids (two sisters and one brother) and a small farm was established for them. Another such project is currently in progress. The building of the children institution is in satisfactory condition. Water supply presents a problem, yet a well is being dug. Wood is used for heating.

Taking into account the dire economic situation in the region, there is a need to additionally open a daycare center in conjunction with children institution. The administration of the children institution will have no problems undertaking this task.

Case # 4: Residential institution should be left as it is and strengthened

Institution 4

Institution 4 was recently transformed from a boarding school into a residential institution. The children attended public school. In a certain way, it does follow the general trend the research team discovered in other children institutions. This was the first occasion when pedagogues did not discriminate or complain about their pupils and familiarized the team with their approaches. The director of institution 4 stated that he and his group work tirelessly on a daily basis so that their children will not be humiliated. The director emphasizes that for full educational integration of children, it is necessary to spend more money, which the children institution cannot afford to do. Children need pocket money for going to the school canteen with friends and there are other additional expenses.

es (excursions, school activities etc.). Deprivation of these basic treats increases the child's problems at school. It is also difficult to integrate children whose level of knowledge does not correspond to their age, they therefore must sit next to younger pupils. The intensification of this problem is pending, since after the closure of a nearby children institution, the kids who will be transferred to institution 4 will face that particular situation and no solution to this problem has been found yet.

In institution 4, as in all children institutions, teachers' salaries are a problem. However, at institution 4, the problem can be said to be even more acute since the administration requires high standards of service, therefore, the teachers' work load is greater here.

After visiting institution 4, talking to the administrative staff, caregivers and children, the research team had the impression that the children are growing up in a warm environment, almost like in families. The condition of the building is good and much of the inventory is of high quality. The children often receive products that are not ordinarily available in a children institution. For all these achievements, the director should be praised. He has the ability to attract sponsors (both foreign and local), obtain their confidence and retain it through his activities throughout the years.

The experience of institution 4 and its director's attitude towards his children should become a subject of more serious and in-depth study with the aim to elaborate models and standards of children institutions.

C o n c l u s i o n

Every society has children who are orphans or deprived of parental care. The existence of children institutions in various forms is unavoidable in any society. However, a society which accepts the situation of a family giving up a child for purely reasons of poverty cannot be considered a healthy society. Urgent measures must be taken that are already realized in other countries as well as Georgia. The major objective should be the *prevention* of institutionalization. To overcome unemployment and develop a proper social safety network is a major tool used to cope with this problem in a long-term perspective. In a contemporary situation, “here and now”, development of family support services such as kindergartens and various types of services such as daycare centers and after-school programs for school age children is a major option. We must also take into consideration that these types of services are important not only in poor countries. For example, in the election platform of USA presidential candidate Al Gore, wider development of after-school programs was one of the leading issues. Family support services are not only for the benefit of poor families. Many of these programs can be partially financially self-sustainable. In our optimization plan, the majority of residential institutions should be transformed into daycare centers from a long term perspective. It is important not to exclude regions where there are no residential institu-

tions. It is crucially important to develop services everywhere. The government of Georgia should support this process organizationally, methodologically, legally and financially. At the beginning stage, the donor community should be mobilized to cover starting costs for establishing the system.

On the other hand, for those children who will not be integrated to a family, the residential institutions should become such place, where physical and emotional requirements as well as spiritual needs, are satisfied. A decrease in the number of children institutions will provide the opportunity of the government to implement modern standards of care and permanently monitor their realization.