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CHILDREN LIVING AND/OR WORKING IN THE STREETS OF GEORGIA



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2018

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July, 2018
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Cover photo by David Khizanishvili



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FOREWORD

Over the past months there has been increased reporting in the media of cases of children in street situations in Georgia. Such increased public interest has all too often labelled these children as problematic – with renewed calls to urgently address the situation. A variety of services targeting these children have been in place since 2011. Through mobile teams of professionals (social workers, peer educators, psychologists), daycare and crisis intervention services, children are reached and offered shelter, protection, basic services, and opportunities for child-friendly reintegration into society. However, service providers have been increasingly identifying discrepancies between the services offered and the needs of the various categories of street children.

Therefore, UNICEF and partners conducted this research on children in street situations in Georgia and Azerbaijan. It provides an in-depth analysis of the street life of children in Georgia to better understand the situation of children living and working on the streets, and to develop recommendations on effective prevention and response mechanisms. The study is based on interviews with children in street situations, their families, service providers, and policy makers. The research highlights the diversity of the children's backgrounds and outlines many of the drivers and push factors causing them to live and work on the streets.

The recommendations emerging from this study focus on strengthening preventative and response measures, reflecting the key principles and recommendations of the CRC General Comment 21 on children in street situations. Some of the major recommendations are the development of a unified vision and national policy addressing the needs of children affected or at risk of street life; the introduction of a system to address the risks including supporting at-risk families; the improvement of existing services and expanding their geographical coverage; and ensuring access to health and education services, including vocational education.

Finally, the study showed that it is crucial that ordinary citizens do not further marginalize and stigmatize street children, but be more compassionate of their situation and report cases of abuse or neglect when witnessed.

I would like to extend my gratitude to our partners who were closely involved in the delivery of this study: the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labor, Health and Social Affairs, its Social Service Agency; the Ministry of Justice; the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport; the Public Defender's Office; the International Labor Organization, the Open Society Georgia Foundation, Save the Children, and Caritas Georgia. I also would like to thank the FAFO Research Foundation for their high-quality research work and excellent report. The involvement of all these partners made it possible to produce this very important and timely research, which we hope will guide effective policy measures for the prevention of and response to the situation of street children in Georgia, with the aim to better the lives of these children.

Sincerely,

Laila Omar Gad

UNICEF Representative to Georgia

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In early 2017, Fafo Research Foundation was commissioned by UNICEF to contribute to the development of the knowledge base on children living and/or working in the streets of Georgia and Azerbaijan. The research project that was developed involved collaboration between UNICEF Georgia, the Georgian Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Interior Affairs in Georgia, UNICEF in Azerbaijan, and the following NGOs in Georgia: World Vision International, the Open Society Georgia Foundation and Caritas Georgia. We wish to thank all the involved parties for the opportunity that the assignment has provided.

An important part of this work has consisted of interviewing children and families exposed to street living in Georgia and Azerbaijan, as well as resource personnel in services and local communities. We wish to express our gratitude to all those who responded positively to our requests to provide information. We have made a conscious choice not to cite these interlocutors by name, and names appearing in the text have been altered.

Jaba Nachkebia, Pierre Ferry and Ketevan Melikadze from UNICEF Georgia have been invaluable in their assistance throughout the process. The research project involved extensive fieldwork in Georgia, facilitated by Maya Mgeliashvili and Tamar Sharashidze. The fieldwork in Georgia was carried out by Sofio Bedoshvili, Ketevan Isakadze, Mariam Gogolauri, Maia Minashvili, Inga Gabadze, Ira Bolkvadze, Rati Mikhanashvili, Tornike Abuladze, Kristina Gigiashvili and Tina Asanidze. Several members of this staff has also been involved in providing feedback to ensure the quality of fieldwork manuals and tools, and have provided feedback to manuscript drafts.

In Azerbaijan, UNICEF's Tamerlan Rajabov and Sevinj Topchubashova coordinated the efforts. Fieldwork in Azerbaijan was carried out by Sevinj Topchubashova, Sanuber Heydarova and Tarana Jafarova. Parviz Aliyev, a consultant from the State Committee on Family, Women and Children's Affairs, produced contextual information by carrying out interviews with governmental and district representatives.

The report has been written and edited by Tone Sommerfelt at Fafo, with contributions from Anne Hatløy. Input to the institutional studies was provided by Nana Chapidze and Jaba Nachkebia from UNICEF in Georgia and Sevinj Topchubashova, an independent consultant from UNICEF Azerbaijan.

A team of researchers in Fafo supervised the research process. Drafts to this report were reviewed by staff in UNICEF in Georgia and Azerbaijan, by local partners in Georgia, and finally by an independent reviewer recruited by UNICEF.

We wish to thank all those who have participated in the research in different capacities. Needless to say, Fafo is responsible for the final text.

Tone Sommerfelt and Anne Hatløy

Fafo Research Foundation

Oslo, June 2018

MAPS

Map of Georgia¹



Map of Azerbaijan²



1 <http://www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/map/profile/georgia.pdf>

2 <http://www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/map/profile/azerbaij.pdf>

ACRONYMS

AZN	Azerbaijani manat (currency)
CRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
GEL	Georgian lari (currency)
IDP	Internally displaced person
ILO	International Labour organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
MoLHASA	Georgian Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs
NGO	Non-governmental organization
SSA	Social Service Agency
TSA	Targeted social assistance
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNOHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
USD	United States dollars (currency)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents an analysis of the findings from a research project on children living and/or working in the streets in Georgia – with an additional view to Azerbaijan. The project responds to a tender announced by UNICEF Tbilisi in collaboration with the Georgian Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs (MoLHSA), World Vision International and the Open Society Georgia Foundation. Caritas Georgia has also been a closely cooperating partner. During the process of developing the research, UNICEF in Azerbaijan also became a collaborating partner. During the early phase of research, the Ministry of Interior Affairs in Georgia joined the team and financed the entire fieldwork phase in Georgia through EU funding.

The call for this study is a response to observations made by care workers in Georgia regarding changes among children living and/or working in the streets. The resulting research project involved qualitative fieldwork in both Georgia and Azerbaijan among children, parents and families, as well as among care workers and resource personnel.

The aim of this study is to provide information in order to better tailor prevention and exit strategies for children at risk of living or already living in the streets. A related aim is to map existing institutional responses in order to develop policy responses and improve existing services in line with the socio-economic realities and the institutional environment in Georgia and Azerbaijan. Note that the institutional mapping was not carried out by Fafo, and hence does not represent a full-fledged institutional analysis.

The study demonstrates that the population of children living and/or working in the street in both Georgia and Azerbaijan is highly diverse. Though street lives and characteristics of children are complex, we can identify certain patterns. Responses to challenges street children face should be assessed in line with these patterns. The results can be summarized in the following points:

1. The population of street-connected children in Georgia can be described in terms of sub-categories according to parental accompaniment and contact

Homeless children and youth (of the street)

Youth/children who live and work in the streets, unaccompanied by adults while in the street, and without protective care from parents. They may stay in touch with parents on occasion.

Unaccompanied children in the street, sleeping at home

Children who spend most of their daytime hours working or otherwise engaging in economic activities in the street, unaccompanied by adults, but who are provided for with food and/or resources by a parent on a regular basis, and who themselves contribute with income to the family.

Street children of mobile street families

Children that accompany or are accompanied by adults who are also street workers, and who work, but do not sleep, in the streets.

Children of homeless families

Children of homeless families are similar to children of mobile street families, but they do not return to a home at night.

2. The population of street-connected children can be divided according to linguistic and ethnic lines.

In Georgia, ethnic Georgians, two groups of Romani speakers and Azerbaijani Kurds predominate. Minority politics and policies of integration must be attuned to the particular needs of and risks for children. The stigma on Romani-speaking peoples is pervasive in some circles, and even more so with respect to the Azerbaijani Kurds, which contributes to this population's withdrawal from social services.

3. The diversity of street-connected children according to parental accompaniment has an ethnic dimension, but cannot be understood in ethnic terms alone.

To some extent, the distinctions underlying the different sub-categories outlined here reflect ethnic distinctions. Among the group of *homeless youth / children of the street*, representatives of all origins are to be found. The *unaccompanied children/youth in the street, sleeping at home* also includes children of all backgrounds, and many of these girls and boys self-identify as ethnically Georgian. However, among the *street children of mobile street families*, there is an over-representation of Moldovan Roma and Azerbaijani Kurds. Both boys and girls are represented in these groups. The same applies to homeless families.

At the same time, inference of ethnicity should be made with particular care, as different ethnicities are represented along the entire spectrum of street circumstances at different phases of childhood. Moreover, though patterns within the population of street-connected children have an ethnic dimension, the street child complex should not be regarded as a cultural phenomenon alone, or an issue of 'mentality'.

Social workers experience outreach to Azerbaijani Kurdish families as particularly hard. There are considerable trust issues involved in work with street families of Azerbaijani origin. Azerbaijani travelling families express the view that they do not expect service from the state, and that contact with the state (or local authority) does not pay off. In effect, many quite systematically withdraw from state services – they avoid registering births, do not seek ID papers and do not apply for social support. Some also seem to be excluded from these services because of irregular demands for remuneration or inability to overcome bureaucratic hurdles. Some also withhold or destroy ID papers and other documentation in an effort to avoid interaction with state officials.

4. Children's affiliation to street sub-groups is as much an aspect of age and life cycle as it is a substantive belonging.

Some children tend to move from accompanied to unaccompanied with increasing age. Older children develop separate codes of conduct and internal ties of dependence that contribute to the perpetuation of street lives over time, and are potentially a source of recruitment into criminal activity and violence. Again, a caution about ethnic stereotypes should be made: Minority children (like Azerbaijani Kurds or Roma) are represented among the groups here labelled 'unaccompanied' and homeless youth, which breaks with the received idea of all Roma children being part of closely-knit family structures.

5. The diversity of children who live and/or work in the street additionally consists of distinctions between different groups, cliques or clusters of children. The internal organization of these groups partly entails practices of assistance and sharing.

Children stay and move together in groups or clusters in order to protect each other, to find places to spend the night, to create spaces for leisure and entertainment, to cultivate friendship, and to cooperate in economic activities like petty trading, street begging and petty crime.

6. Internal group structure occasionally implies that children become indebted to each other and/or outsiders in a manner that ties them to street livelihoods longer-term.

Upon enrolment in a service program, the mapping of the individual child's needs must also involve the child's burden of debt.

7. Some groups of children have internal structures that divide children into seniors/superiors and subordinates.

As part of children's mutual assistance and protection, structures of sub-ordination are created; among children and youth talk about using sub-ordinate children as 'shields' – pushing them to carry out criminal activities and hand over profits. Often, this is organised so that criminal activity is carried out by younger children, with older children keeping guard and younger children carrying the loot. This is related to the lower age limit in Georgia of 14 years for criminal prosecution; older children use younger children to avoid criminal prosecution.

8. The police seem to enforce the minimum criminal age of 14 years, thus encouraging the use of younger children for criminal purposes.

Children give accounts of the ways in which police officers, when arresting groups of children in connection with theft or other criminal activity, assume or actively suggest that the children younger than 14 should admit to guilt. Youth speculate that they do so in order to avoid paperwork and follow-up.

9. Some sub-groups of children and youth in the street exhibit gang-like structures.

These groups may be small or large. Their organization has a territorial aspect, with groups attempting to control parts of towns or neighbourhoods in order to control economic opportunities (petty trading, begging, etc.). There are occasional clashes between these groups over control over districts. As noted, internal codes of conduct and ties of dependence may contribute to the perpetuation of street lifestyles over time and are potentially a source of recruitment into criminal activity and violence.

There does not seem to be a coordinated effort from police or city authorities to address the criminal activities of gangs. Notably, one sect-like group in Tbilisi (known as the Morgue children) is territorially located in an underground area, and former members recounted that children are initiated into the group through rites, both by older youth and adults. Many former members suffer psychological trauma. Former members of this group reported that the territory they occupied was left in peace by state and city authorities.

10. Internal group dynamics among street-connected children may entail sexual reward structures that expose girls to abuse.

With reference to one of the groups in Tbilisi, testimonies from children who were affiliated with the group in the past recount that girls are required supply sexual services to older gang (or sect) members. Former affiliates of other groups report using part of their income to pay for sexual services. This indicates that trauma from sexual abuse among street-connected children is likely, a point reiterated by psychologists interviewed for the current study. Other forms of psychological trauma from violence and drug abuse were also reported by children and service personnel.

11. Differences in social assistance schemes in Georgia and Azerbaijan, and different legal frameworks, lead many Azerbaijani families to migrate to Georgia.

Our interlocutors explained that the prohibition on begging, and stricter enforcement of sanctions against petty trade, in Azerbaijan, encourage them to commute regularly to Georgia.

12. Street-connected children's livelihoods partly take the form of seasonal migration.

This applies both to children of mobile street families and to many unaccompanied children. The seasonal migratory movements in part follow the agricultural seasons, as some mobile families take part in agricultural work in Azerbaijan. Most of all, though, migrants follow tourist flows that bring not only Azerbaijani families but also Georgian street families and unaccompanied children and youth to Batumi, Kobuleti, Ureki, and other tourist sites along the Black Sea during the summer.

13. Main factors contributing to new children's introduction to lives in the streets include

- Parents' poverty and involvement of children in activities aimed at assisting parents, effectively leading to situations of child labour
- Parents' forced migration and ensuing livelihood challenges, causing difficulties in providing for children
- A parent's death, imprisonment, illness and/or substance abuse, leading to child abandonment or neglect and a need for the child to provide for him or herself
- Domestic violence – physical or psychological – leading to the child's preferring life outside of the home
- Strict discipline – i.e. categorical limitations of their social networks and overly strict rules – in rehabilitation or service institutions, foster family care or closed juvenile schools, leading children and youth to prefer street lives to rules, and to repeated escapes from care institutions
- Socialization among children and youth, leading children to (gradually) reduce the time spent in the home and increasingly spend more time with other street-connected youth

14. Rights violations

Children who work and live in the street are particularly vulnerable to violence from caretakers, as well as from fellow street youth. The absolute majority of street-connected children do not have access to either education or medical services beyond emergency care.

15. Recommendations

Recommendations are grouped in preventive and responsive measures and distinguished according to whether they are directed at government agencies and service providers. Current services for street-connected children should be regarded as preventive initiatives as well as ameliorating measures, as they prevent younger children from continuing onto new stages of street life.

Preventive measures, government agencies:

1. **Screening tools** tailored to the needs of at-risk children and families to be used in government services that encounter at-risk parents. The screening tool should include an assessment of the conditions of children in the adult's care.
2. **ID papers:** Outreach to families in Georgia, as well as in Azerbaijan, must have as a main aim that all children be provided with ID papers at birth, whether they are born in health facilities or not.
3. **Minority policies and work to reduce stigma:** Minority policies and politics of integration must be geared towards the particular needs and risks of children. In both Azerbaijan and Georgia, research on language diversity among minority populations should be encouraged. Efforts must be made to reduce the stigma against minority populations in both countries and to raise the level of competence in public offices.
4. **Cooperation between Georgia and Azerbaijan on rules and the application of law:** Harmonization of rules and the application of law relating to economic street activities should aim at reducing the incentive for regular travel.
5. **Social services:** Social services in Azerbaijan should be strengthened, both to help prevent children's recruitment to street life and to enable cooperation between Georgia and Azerbaijan on the establishment of joint referral mechanisms. International donors can assist in facilitating competence development in such a process.

Preventive measures, service providers, including NGOs

1. **Education of foster families** should be strengthened and encourage alternative and less strict rules for children placed in foster care.
2. **Rules in rehabilitation and service institutions,** such as closed juvenile schools, should be redefined, as overly strict rules and the cut-off of children's friendships lead to children and youth escapes and re-introduction to street life.
3. **Screening tool:** A screening tool to be used in day care services and 24-hour shelters, to cover at-risk siblings and close relatives of street-related children, should be developed.
4. **Additional economic and social support to at-risk parents:** Support to families must include improved supervision in finding employment, and assistance in establishing income-generating activities.
5. **Psychological counselling of parents:** Preventive strategies involving parents should also include psychological counselling in cases when a history of mental health issues, substance abuse and violence in the family put children at risk of entering street lives.

Response measures government agencies and international donors

1. **Availability of services:** Service centres should follow the migratory flows between Georgia and Azerbaijan and, more specifically, the higher numbers of street-related children along the Black Sea coast in the tourist season. Authorities must set aside funding for services along the Black Sea coast, where social service coverage is lacking. Specialized services along the border areas on the Azerbaijani side are lacking and should be developed.
2. **Social safety net for families of street-connected children:** Capacity building relating to – and funding for – social services for families of street-connected children should be a priority for government agencies and international donors.
3. **The funding of NGO services for street-connected children:** To ensure sustainable and quality care services, funding from government should be increased to cover NGOs' de facto costs.
4. **Legal reform:** To strengthen children's legal protections, child exploitation should be defined as a crime, also independently on the law on trafficking
5. **Response of city authorities and police to criminal activities:** City authorities and police must respond to and investigate reports of criminal activities that involve children. Reports of police officers' neglect of legal follow-up of below-14-year-olds for crimes must be further investigated.

Response measures service providers, including NGOs

1. **Participatory programming:** All programmes for children and youth should be made as participatory as possible, balancing children's need for rehabilitation and protection against their sense of personal integrity and need for social continuity.
2. **Outreach to the families of street-connected children** should be an emphasis. Assistance should include:
 - **Increased economic assistance,** economic counselling, and assistance seeking employment (including for at-risk families) should be a priority.
 - **Emergency fund for parents:** There should be a special emergency fund in services for parents of street-connected children, less bureaucratic than at present, which will assist families and children financially and satisfy their immediate needs for health services, rent, etc.
3. **The recruitment of minority-language speakers into services** for street-connected children should be a priority. Language sensitivity must be a core concern in all outreach to families of street-connected children.
4. **Competence building with respect to street families:** The stigma against Roma-speaking peoples is pervasive in some circles, and even more so with respect to the Azerbaijani Kurds, which contributes to this population's withdrawal from social services. This should inform competence building in social services and care institutions. Competence on minority languages should also be a priority in the education programmes.
5. **Training programmes for children, commercial cooperatives and apprenticeships:** Educational programmes, including vocational training, should build on children's interests and wishes for future livelihoods. Vocational training should build on the strengths of street-connected children's networks, and should encourage transfer of skills into business or work

opportunities later in life, e.g. in commercial cooperatives. Apprenticeship arrangements with successful former street-connected children as mentors should be developed.

- 6. Economic counselling of children:** Upon a child's enrolment in a service programme, the mapping of his or her individual needs must also address any debt burden. Counselling of the child must involve schemes for how to assist the child in freeing him- or herself from economic and other commitments.
- 7. Services beyond the 18-year limit:** Support for street-connected children and youth should be extended beyond the current 18-year age limit.
- 8. Peer experience sharing:** Network creation should simultaneously include the development of mechanisms for sharing experiences among peers, for instance through regular meetings, social media portals, etc.
- 9. Psychological counselling and therapeutic follow-up:** The capacity for psychological counselling and therapeutic follow-up must be strengthened and should involve specialized competence on sexual abuse and trauma resulting from long-term domestic violence

1. INTRODUCTION

Around the metro stations and main junctions in downtown Tbilisi, Georgia, and along the Black Sea boulevard in Batumi during the tourist season, one cannot avoid seeing young girls and boys strolling around, stopping passers-by to ask for money or selling roses or religious icons. Some kids accompany their parents, others walk around on their own or with other children in groups of two or more. Some kids run away when police vehicles or officers approach, but mostly, children's begging and petty trading activities are not a hush-hush phenomenon. Police officers stopping for an exchange with kids who work in the streets is not an alien sight.

In contrast, in the flashy downtown areas of Baku, Azerbaijani children openly asking for money is not a common sight. Further away from the polished facades of the commercial area, however, children can be seen in major junctions and transport hubs running up to clean car windows or sell small items. However, these kids are in constant movement, coming out of park areas, from behind corners and other less visible places when traffic lights turn red, only to disappear the next moment when lights turn green or when a police vehicle draws near. On the high-end pedestrian boulevards downtown, groups of kids or young boys can occasionally be seen rolling out blankets with children's toys and other items for sale, but these expositions, too, are short-lived and in the blink of an eye, the blanket is wrapped up and the kids move on.

In November 2007, the first systematic study of street children in Georgia was carried out (Wargan & Dershem 2009:4). The resulting report, entitled *Don't call me a street child*, provided a head count of street children in four major cities in Georgia – Tbilisi, Kutaisi, Batumi and Rustavi – estimated to a total country average of 1049 children at the time (2009:20). It also analysed children's responses to questions about their reasons for living in the streets. Among the main factors leading children into the streets that were highlighted were the absence of parents (following a parent's death or relocation), poverty (complicating parents' ability to care for children), divorce or remarriage of a parent, relocation from conflict zones or from rural areas to urban centres, health problems, alcoholism or violence in the family, failing social protection systems and failing informal networks (including extended family's inability to step in during parents' absence), and school dropout. The study was pioneering in that it emphasized the view that street children are 'individuals with rights, complex needs and personal strengths rather than mere welfare recipients' (2009:8).

Since 2007, care workers in Tbilisi, Rustavi and Kutaisi have observed a change in the population of street children. In particular, they have noted a rise in the number of street children from Azerbaijan, identified as Azerbaijani Kurds. While not unique in this way, this group is particularly known for the close presence of a parent or another caretaker: Livelihood strategies are systematically tied to adults' and children's co-migration and close cooperation, and in some instances, to the active use of children by adults for begging and other forms of street work. Moreover, not all children who live and/or work in the street experience parental absence or only sporadic parental contact.

Based on new observations made by care workers, UNICEF, in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs (MoLHSA), World Vision International in Georgia and the Open Society Georgia Foundation, decided to conduct a new study with the objective of improving the understanding of phenomena involving children's street lives. The aim was also to map existing institutional responses in order to develop policy responses and improve existing services in line

with the socio-economic realities and the institutional environment in Georgia and Azerbaijan. A Steering Committee composed of representatives of UNICEF, MoLHSA, Social Service Agency (SSA), World Vision, Open Society Georgia Foundation, Caritas Georgia, Save the Children, ILO and the Public Defender Office (PDO) was created to oversee and supervise the research process. During the early phase of the research, the Ministry of Interior Affairs in Georgia joined the team and financed all of the fieldwork in Georgia through EU funding. UNICEF in Azerbaijan also became a close collaborating partner.

The observation made above that adults accompany some children in the street illuminates that contemporary 'street-connected children' do not comprise one group, but rather a conglomerate of sub-groups. The present study is motivated by the changes observed in recent years and raises the following overall topics: How can the diversification and social organization of street children best be described and understood? How do the habits and social relations of different sub-groups of children contribute to perpetuating life in the streets? How do existing services respond to the needs of different sub-groups of children, and to individual needs? The primary analytical focus of the current report thus goes beyond the development of a typology of groups and aims to portray in greater detail the social processes within, between and surrounding different groups of children in and of the streets. This focus is complimentary to an aim of portraying individual children as unique persons with specific experiences and needs.

Our focus is motivated by the assumption that patterns of cooperation and interaction contribute to the 'social glue' of the streets, which keeps children in the streets, recruits new children and that may inhibit efforts to introduce children to opportunities outside of the streets, or in parallel to street activities. Variation in the social organization of different sub-categories and groups is partly linked to the ways in which children in and of the streets interact with adults. Other elements relate to sources of livelihood, differences among different age groups (especially children younger or older than 14), how children cooperate among themselves and with others (from kin to public servants) to secure a living or stay out of trouble, whether relationships between children are hierarchically organized (according to age or experience), involving protection and/or threat of violence, and other factors.

Reasons for children's presence on and recruitment to the streets, or rights' violations among them, must not be understood as a result of dynamics within the community of children in isolation: As this report demonstrates, informal exclusion mechanisms at a structural level and failing socio-economic safety nets and care systems are integral parts of processes pertaining to children's street lives. Even so, our approach and focus convey that the life worlds and complex dependencies of children must be a part of the perspective in efforts to meet children's needs, and that one size does not fit all children or all sub-groups of children.

In order to approach the overarching research questions, an in-depth qualitative methodology was developed, aiming as much as possible to allow street children (former and present), their parents and relatives, and personnel working closely with these children to articulate their experiences and views (see section on methodology for details).¹ Teachers and civil servants were also interviewed with the aim of capturing perceptions of children and families who regularly travel across the Georgia-

1 As such, this study differs from the 2009 study, which was based on a combination of fieldworkers' observations and information provided by 301 street children in a standardised questionnaire of about 40 questions (carried out in 2007, see Wargan & Dershem 2009:17-18).

Azerbaijan border and earn a living by engaging in typical street-based activities, such as selling flowers and icons and engaging in begging. In order to properly address the reports of an increased influx of Azerbaijani children to Georgian streets, the study also involved fieldwork in Azerbaijan. The latter part of the fieldwork was carried out with a specific view to understanding the rationales of the migrants moving to the streets of Georgia – or commuting between the two countries – rather than aiming to capture the overall conglomerate of street children in Azerbaijan as a whole. This intended bias led us to privilege fieldwork in Baku as well as in the border areas between Azerbaijan and Georgia, Agstafa and Qasaq in particular.

In aiming to better tailor the response system to different groups of street children, this report also draws attention to the fact that the social conglomerate of the streets has an ethnic and linguistic aspect. Street children in Georgia speak different languages, the largest language groups being Georgian, two mutually unintelligible Romani languages and the version of Kurdish spoken by people who self-identify as Azerbaijani Kurds. There are also other smaller groups of language speakers, including Azerbaijani, Armenian, Russian and Yezidi (though the limited number of Yezidi speakers does not merit the use of the term 'group'). However, the lack of linguistic competence is striking, not only among lay people but also among civil servants and staff who have daily interaction with street children. This is unfortunate, as any attempt to integrate street children and develop prevention and exit strategies must include sensible communication with children and parents as a minimum standard. An associated issue is that services must be culturally sensitive in order to meet the particular needs of different groups. Finally, the stigma associated with some groups, the Azerbaijani Kurds in particular, leads to social withdrawal – an issue felt tangibly by care workers in Georgia. Moreover, the minority issue has to be addressed explicitly, yet in a manner that does not reduce street childhood to a minority issue.

To elaborate on the topics addressed in this report, the following questions can be posed:

1. How can the internal differentiation of children living and/or working in the streets – and their circumstances – be described in terms of children's accompaniment of adults, family or relatives, and children's ethnicity and/or geographical or national origin? How can we describe children living and/or working in the streets in terms of 'sub-groups', according to the mentioned criteria as well as age, gender and other relevant parameters?
2. How can the social organization of children be described – internally in sub-groups and between different groups – particularly with respect to cooperation regarding livelihood, hierarchies and structures of dependency, debt and indebtedness? To what extent does this coincide with drug use and violence or threats of violence? How does this contribute to the perpetuation of street life in different ways among different sub-groups?
3. What are the factors facilitating or pushing new children to take to the streets? What encourages new groups to move into Georgian urban areas from abroad, or from rural and sub-urban areas, to live in the streets?
4. What are the most important rights violations among children living and/or working in the streets, including violations of rights to health and educational services, issues of protection relating to violence, etc.?
5. Based on the experience of service providers, children who identify themselves as (and speak) Azerbaijani are the most difficult to reach in Georgia. What are the factors contributing to this

relative isolation or hard-to-reach-ness? Is it related to language barriers, social organization (e.g. children's different bonds to parents, employers or others), issues of discipline, or other factors?

6. What are the different needs for services of the different groups of children living and/or working in the streets?
7. How do existing services respond to the needs of sub-groups of children living and/or working in the streets?

The overall research questions were developed in close cooperation with local stakeholders and UNICEF. They do not reflect all requirements set forth in the project's Terms of Reference. The Terms of Reference were altered at the start-up of research. Importantly, the redefinition of the project involved that the study was not to carry out a quantitative estimation of the number of street-connected children in Georgia. Furthermore, the responsibility for data gathering for the institutional analysis was handed over to UNICEF consultants. s

As described above, in addition to the fieldwork, the research project also included a studies of the institutional engagements and legal framework relevant to street children, child protection and migration in Azerbaijan and Georgia. These were carried out by a UNICEF consultant in each of the two countries. They are included as separate annexes. Information related to laws and regulations in the main text are based on these surveys, and we give a brief summary of the surveys in the next section.

Georgia and Azerbaijan: Street activities, children and the law

The economic crises that followed in the years after Georgia's independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, and the large-scale internal displacements of people in connection with the wars in both Abkhazia (1992–93) and South Ossetia (2008), brought children into the streetscapes in new ways. Street children became visible in ways they had not been before in Georgia. Even so, it should be emphasized that children's separation from parents, and/or their earning a living in the streets in circumstances of deprivation, was not unfamiliar during Soviet times. Notably, children without caregiving parents were institutionalized in large orphanages. In both Azerbaijan and Georgia, independence from the Soviet Union was eventually accompanied by a process of deinstitutionalization that involved, and still involves, the dismantling of state orphanages.

Both Georgia and Azerbaijan have signed the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), Georgia in 1994 and Azerbaijan in 1992.² With the Georgian government that took over after the so-called Rose Revolution in 2003, alignment of national law with the CRC gained momentum. In the case of Georgia, this alignment involved the introduction of alternative care in place of residential institutions, child welfare payments, and reform of juvenile justice (cf. Wargan & Dershem 2009: 10).

Generally speaking, the child welfare system is more developed in Georgia than in Azerbaijan. The targeted social assistance scheme in Georgia is without a time limit, but is limited to two years in Azerbaijan, though with a possibility of extension following a full, renewed application process. In Azerbaijan, however, there is The Social Service Agency in Georgia conducts home visits to check on vulnerable children, whereas in Azerbaijan, activities in the districts is limited to preventive measures, districts lacking trained social workers (cf. annex 1 and 2).

2 https://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=IND&mtdsg_no=IV-11&chapter=4&lang=en.

A striking contrast between Georgia and Azerbaijan appears in the practice of legislation relating to the informal economy, and more precisely, street vending, petty trading, and begging. As the survey of the legal and institutional framework for the current study points out, the act of begging is not prohibited in Georgia (Annex 1). Small-scale street trading is also legal (though some specified geographical areas are exempted). Street trading requires a permit, and the issuing of permits is handled by local municipalities, which may call on police for assistance in cases of non-obedience. On the other hand, 'the act of involving a minor in begging or any other antisocial acts (non-medical use of substances, prostitution) is prohibited and punishable by the Criminal Code.'

In Azerbaijan, on the other hand, the Code (law) on Administrative Offences of 2000 prohibits begging, and a new Code of Administrative Offences in effect from 2016 increases penalties. The 2016 code prohibits vagrancy and the act of involving a minor in vagrancy, and considers begging (and panhandling) to be vagrancy. The Law on Licensing and Official Permission prohibits street selling without official permission. This legal principle resembles the law in Georgia, but the actual practice of the law seems more comprehensive in Azerbaijan than in Georgia: The street scene in downtown Baku, for instance, is almost free of street sellers, and petty traders are not as visible in the centres of smaller towns that the research team visited in the summer of 2017 as they are in Georgia. Moreover, street children are far more visible in the urban areas of Georgia than in Azerbaijan, and in Georgia, street children openly engage in both begging and petty trading activities. Notably, many of the children in Tbilisi, Batumi, Rustavi and Kutaisi are of Azerbaijani origin.

By virtue of a bilateral agreement from 1993, Georgia and Azerbaijan practice a visa-free regime for entries, allowing citizens to pass between the two countries and stay for 90 days without a visa. In 2015, the permission to stay (visa-free) was extended from three months to a year.³ The extension of the length of visa-free stay may have affected patterns of migration. However, in conversations with people in Azerbaijan that earn their livelihoods from commuting between the two countries, a regular explanation for travel – including when accompanied by children – was the profit to be earned from import and resale of certain goods from Georgia into Azerbaijan. Another reason mentioned was the greater generosity towards beggars in Georgia. The drive for Azerbaijani citizens to earn a living in Georgia should also be understood against the significant devaluation of the Azerbaijani manat in 2015 to 2016. The different practices of banning both petty trading and begging in the two countries, and the stricter enforcement of such bans in urban centres in Azerbaijan, should also be kept in mind.

Who are they? Defining 'children living and/or working in the street'

The notion of the 'street child' has changed significantly since it first gained currency. In the 1980s, it was employed to describe

any girl or boy [...] for whom the street (in the broadest sense of the word, including unoccupied dwellings, wasteland, etc.) has become his or her habitual abode and/or source of livelihood, and who is inadequately protected, supervised or directed by responsible adults. (UNOHCHR 2012:9)

³ This change, which allowed visitors to stay for up to one year, was a unilateral decision of the Georgian government. This does not affect the length of Georgians' stay in Azerbaijan, however, which is still 90 days.

Soon after its introduction, the concept was divided into several sub-categories, primarily *children on the street*, defined as children who work in the streets but return to their families at night; *children of the street*, who live in the streets day and night and are without family support but still maintain links to family; and *abandoned children*, who live completely on their own (UNOHCHR 2012:9). During the 1990s, the concept of 'street children' was further elaborated and diversified, both to convey the highly heterogeneous nature of children's situations and to shift attention to children's circumstances rather than the children in isolation:

Human Rights Council resolution 16/12 refers to *children working and/or living on the street*, and the Committee on the Rights of the Child has adopted the term 'children in street situations', recognizing that children engage in numerous activities on the street and that if there is a 'problem' it is not the child, but rather the situations in which s/he finds her/ himself (UNOHCHR 2012:10, emphasis added).

Similarly, Aptekar and Stoecklin (2014) use the concept of 'children in street situations' to draw attention to the circumstances children face, and to emphasize the child as

a social actor, actively adapting his/her behaviour to the social context ... these children and youth are not only victims or objects of pity; they are also actors trying to surmount their difficulties by creating a world that helps them survive (2014:1–2).

Aptekar and Stoecklin emphasize the variation in children's street situations. Thus, the social and spatial relationships of children in street situations are not necessarily limited to the streets, but are configured in combination with other connections, for example to families, neighbourhoods and schools (cf. UNOHCHR 2012:10). In effect, Aptekar and Stoecklin point out that children in street situations 'share the fact of the street being a significant part of their physical and psychosocial environment' (2014:13). This choice of focus echoes the use in UN publications of the concept of a 'street-connected child':

A street-connected child is understood as a child for whom the street is a central reference point – one which plays a significant role in his/her everyday life and identity (UNOHCHR 2012:10).

Moreover, this brief summary of the development of concepts demonstrates a general shift of attention, from the classification of children into a comparatively simple set of categories based on spatial presence and parental care to an interest in children's complex connections to the street and the relationships they enter into.

In this report, we focus on 'children who live and/or work in the streets', and include children and youth (below 18 years old) for whom the street 'plays a significant role in ... everyday life and identity' (cf. UNOHCHR 2012:10). This encompasses children who spend most of their daytime hours in the streets – some their nights as well – and includes abandoned children, runaway and homeless children and youth younger than 18 years of age, as well as children of street families. This implies that we also include working children in child labour situations, as long as their labour activities are connected to activities in the streets (selling of items, begging, etc.). Note that many youth who spend the night in shelters in many respects continue their lives in the streets in the sense that they keep the social network and street connections they had before entering the shelter. Children living in or visiting shelters were therefore also included among the interviewees during our fieldwork.

We also interviewed former street children living in shelters, and children in particularly difficult life situations who were considered at risk of entering street life.⁴

Ethnic identities and the minority issue

For people in Tbilisi, street children are closely associated with particular activities, for instance the selling of flowers, religious icons or other small items; the collection of scrap metal, left-over foodstuffs and vegetables in the market places at the end of the day; and begging. Some people also associate children in the streets with semi-legal activities, like collecting money for personal use pretending to work for charitable organizations, and with criminal activity, like pickpocketing, stealing valuables from cars, breaking and entering, and stealing cash or goods from market stalls and shops.

Notably, children associated with street families are described in ethnic terms, mostly as 'Roma', alternatively as 'Zigan'. In Azerbaijan, children who live and/or work in the streets are described in ethnic terms mostly as 'Garachi'. As noted, children who live and work in the streets of Georgia speak different languages and self-identify according to different ethnic labels. A large portion, however, is ethnic Georgian. Other children and youth self-identify as Roma, and more specifically as one of two larger sub-divisions: 'Moldavian Roma' (or Moldovan Roma) on the one hand, and 'Lom', 'Dom', or 'Bosha' on the other. The languages of 'Moldavian Roma' and 'Dom' are mutually unintelligible.⁵ In Baku, the far greatest number of children living in shelters for children in a particularly difficult situation – including former 'street children' – that we visited, were Azerbaijani.

The notion of 'Moldavian Roma', according to interlocutors, is a cultural association deriving from the fact that some groups of Roma received identity papers in Moldova under the Soviet Union, and were registered as 'Moldovan'. Following Georgian independence from the Soviet Union, the label stuck. Several children we spoke with self-identified as 'Moldovan' interchangeably with 'Zigan'. Other youth in this sub-group described their own language as 'Romanian Roma'. In Georgia, 'Moldovan/Moldavian Roma' are considered as people who earn a living while being constantly on the move. This cultural impression among non-Roma hides large variations.

People identified as Dom or Lom, and who occasionally self-identify as Bosha, on the other hand, express longer-term connection to land or particular places in Georgia. They often describe themselves as more 'true Roma' (or as 'Roma Roma') than people identified as Moldovan Roma. Many families so identified explained that they have lived in Georgia for generations. In Georgia, an elder Dom man portrayed his own family history in terms of its traditional occupations, in particular metalwork and horsemanship. He still produced metal items upon request, like axe blades, harness equipment, and chandeliers. He explained, however, that his family's traditional profession and livelihood was endangered by decreasing demand for their services and products. Though the family still had a horse, their previous full-time horse-keeping activities were no longer possible. His sons and grandsons carried on metal-related work in the form of collecting scrap metal that they then

4 These were children below school age, considered at risk by staff in the centres they visited or lived in because they had spent so much time in the streets before being enrolled in the programmes. Most of these were children from disintegrated families, in which one or both parents had a substance use problem and, in some cases, siblings had dropped out or never attended school.

5 Some service providers explained that other smaller Roma groups are also represented among the street children in Georgia, but we did not meet Roma who identified as anything other than these two terms during our fieldwork.

sold bulk to be recycled. In many ways, this elderly man expressed pride over a rich cultural heritage, but pessimism about future possibilities of cultural continuity from traditional livelihoods. In Kutaisi, the Dom form a community, where family houses have been built in close vicinity of each other.

As Engebrigtsen points out, 'Gypsy' is employed to indicate 'categories of people who are considered in some ways to oppose the majority's way of life and world view The majority of these groups and categories speak different languages and do not admit any affinity to each other' (2007: 2). The Roma, which is only one (broad) category of people identified as 'Gypsy', include speakers of different dialects of Romani, such as Vlach, Boyash, and Harangos, among others (see Stewart 1997: 9ff.). The history of Roma in Eastern Europe is one of systematic discrimination, serfdom and slavery (Engebrigtsen 2007; Stewart 1997). Since the early 1990s, there has been a rise in cultural discrimination against Gypsies, and for the past decade, an emerging anti-Roma political discourse has coincided with the rise of right-wing populist rhetoric across Europe (Steward 2012).

In Azerbaijan, too, the terms Roma, Zigan and Garachi are used interchangeably as generic terms for a range of groups. There is a tendency to lump together all peoples considered to be descended from migrants (supposedly) from the Indian sub-continent in the Middle ages, and to ascribe them all a 'Zigan' or 'Garachi' identity. The 'Garachi' label, literally meaning 'from Karachi', is considered derogatory by people identified as such, who self-identify as 'Azerbaijani Kurd'. Azerbaijani Kurds defy identification as Roma. Azerbaijani Kurds are Muslim, as opposed to Moldavian Roma and Dom.⁶

The stigma surrounding the Azerbaijani Kurds is pervasive, and produces particular avoidance strategies. A widespread opinion in the majority community in both Azerbaijan and Georgia is that their claim of Kurdish identity is false. It is often said that 'They are not who they claim to be'. The term 'Garachi' is synonymous with 'Zigan' ('Gypsy'), and 'Garachi people' are assumed to be like other 'Zigan' or 'Roma' but are trying to evade a (stigmatising) Roma label. The argument goes that all of these groups are the same 'race' (*racine*). This 'racial' view is highly problematic: it ignores cultural difference and the basic fact that the language spoken by Azerbaijani Kurds is mutually unintelligible with the languages of both 'Moldavian Roma' and 'Lom' in Georgia, and that it is closer to Kurdish than to Romani. Linguistic research on this group of language users is scarce, but the early Russian scholar Kerope Patkanov, pointed out that while their language is Indo-Aryan, it is nonetheless not mutually intelligible with the Romani or Domari dialects spoken in Russia, the Balkans and the Middle East.⁷

Moreover, in the majority community, there is a lack of understanding of the fact that Roma is not *one* language but several. That Kurdish too has several dialects also seems to be unknown. For instance, when majority Azerbaijani talk about this issue, they counter the claims of 'Kurdish' identity of people whom they label 'Garachi' by referring to other Kurdish speakers (e.g. from Turkey) who have different words than those used by Azerbaijani Kurds. Historically, it is common for people with mobile livelihoods to adopt languages or linguistic elements from the host community. Research on language diversity among minority populations in Azerbaijan and Georgia should be a priority and insights from such research should be systematically communicated to policy makers, service and assistance workers and the general population.

6 Matras (2000) discusses identification of 'Middle Eastern Gypsies', who most likely have a close cultural affinity to the peoples referred to as Garachi in Azerbaijan. Matras explains that this groups partly lives in Azerbaijan, and is known there as *karaçi* (2000:49). However, he also notes that the same group of language users is referred to as 'Dom' in other countries. We will not attempt a detailed linguistic analysis, but simply point out that this equation of Garachi and Dom deviates from the usage in Georgia and Azerbaijan where these two groups form separate communities and speak mutually unintelligible languages. See Matras (2000).

7 See <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Garachi>.

Among street-connected children, the Azerbaijani Kurds are recognized as different from both Dom and Moldavian Roma. Azerbaijani Kurdish street-connected children are normally children of street families, like *some* families of Moldavian Roma. To some extent, there is overlap between ethnicity and social organization (and needs/drives) in different sub-groups in the streets. We return to this in chapter 2.

Approach

Along the lines of the conceptual discussion above, this report investigates the process by which children who live and/or work in the streets develop, make and un-make street life and connections, and explores how variation in this regard can be portrayed in the case of Georgian, Azerbaijani and other children in Georgia. The assessment of different situations of street connections reaches beyond the aforementioned UNICEF distinction between children *on* and *of* the street, as it captures only two dimensions, namely the social and the spatial (cf. Aptekar & Stoecklin 2014: 17-18). In this sense, our approach is inspired by that of Aptekar and Stoecklin (2014), who summarize studies that seek to go beyond the social (relations with adults) and the spatial (settings and territory) to include time (length of street life, life course), socialization (norms and values), sociability (organization of the peer group, as well as relations with adults), activities (types of street activities like work, games and drug use), identity (image of self, identification to a group), motivation (perception of street, 'street career', reasons for taking to the street), and gender (Aptekar & Stoecklin 2014: 18ff, 130, with reference to Lucchini 2007, and Stoecklin 2007). As outlined below, we analyse the empirical material along a similar set of dimensions, reflecting Georgian realities and adjusting the exploration to the scope of the present study.

It should be made explicit that our analysis of the Georgian and Azerbaijani material entails the use of concepts that differ from those used by Aptekar & Stoecklin (2014). The authors distinguish between 'street children' and 'homeless youth', using the former exclusively with reference to developing countries and the latter with reference to developed countries. The categorical divide between developing and developed countries does not convey the ways in which the access to welfare, schooling, employment and services are unevenly distributed within Georgia and Azerbaijan, for instance according to minority status. Many Roma and Kurdish citizens of Georgia do not use welfare services in the same ways as other citizens do, and there are historical and structural reasons behind minorities' withdrawal from contact with the state and state services. By choosing a notion like "homeless youth" to characterize street-connected children in Georgia (rather than "street children"), we run the risk of introducing assumptions about parental neglect (as well as poverty level) and, more generally, glossing over differences and variations among the children who live and/or work in the street. Additionally, Aptekar and Stoecklin, in their examples and analysis of UN terminology, exclude all Roma children from the category 'street children' as they are considered 'separated' but not 'unaccompanied' (2014: 21f.), with the justification that 'Roma families are tightly knit (2014:18). Though in line with international norms, this homogenization of an entire ethnic group lacks an empirical basis, and the assessment reifies categorizations of child characteristics rather than analysing children's street situations, fluid connections and attachments to the streets as the authors set out to do (2014: 16). Our fieldwork in Georgia and Azerbaijan included meetings with unaccompanied Roma youth who had lived in the street. Roma children's relationships to parents, kin and adults are organized in a variety of ways. Some Roma boys are also members of gang-like groups in Tbilisi. Some of the groups of children that live and work in the streets of Tbilisi are organized in

a way which does not invite a distinction between gangs and street children or homeless youth, as drawn by Aptekar and Stoecklin (2014: 78ff; see also Heinonen 2011). Finally, as noted, we include children of street families in the category of children who live and/or work in the street, as they engage in economic activities in the street full time and also slip away from parents during daytime hours, and often for days at a time, in a manner which should be explored as part of the social system of children in street situations.

Dimensions of street connectedness and outline of chapters

In general terms, share Aptekar and Stoecklin's aim of exploring how children make and unmake connections to and in the streets, adjusting it to the current context and scope of study. In chapter 2, we seek to describe the internal differentiation of sub-groups of children in the street, based on their different connections, in order to adapt programme interventions to meet different needs. Accordingly, we distinguish between

- homeless children and youth (of the street)
- unaccompanied children in the street, sleeping at home
- (street) children of mobile street families
- children of homeless families

This differentiation of circumstances of children and youth who live and/or work in the streets in Georgia is based on children's and youth's relationships with and accompaniment of adults (which is one of the facets of the "sociability" dimension (see Aptekar and Stoecklin 2014: 130ff). The resulting differentiation also conveys the spatial dimension of children's living and working in the street, as it describes where different types of street-connected children spend their nights. Chapter 2 also considers motivations for being in or taking to the streets, which is also encompassed by the differentiation into sub-groups of children and youth. Finally, chapter 2 discusses how this differentiation intersects with ethnicity.

In chapter 3, we explore activities of children who live and/or work in the streets, both in terms of survival or economic activities, practices of mobility, and activities related to drug use, gaming, and sexuality. Chapter 3 further explores internal organization and dynamics of the different groups of street-connected children in greater detail. Aspects of peer group relationships, identities and roles within groups are also described here, along with the age dimension that partly conveys some typical development cycles or "careers" (cf. Aptekar & Stoecklin 2014: 18) of children's street life. The highly gendered aspects of street-connected children's life courses are explored throughout chapters 2 and 3.

Chapter 4 considers parental and family perspectives, especially among adults whose subsistence strategies have traditionally been closely associated with street activities and mobility. This chapter also considers responses among parents to new caretaking intervention policies of the social services in Georgia. In turn, the chapter examines encounters between services, programmes and street-connected children and their families. The chapter further explores implicit notions within much programming of the ideal development of street-connected children, based, we argue, on an anticipated radical break with the social networks and cultures of the streets. Chapter 5 attempts to synthesize findings and presents recommendations.

Research method and techniques

In order to approach the overarching research questions, an in-depth qualitative methodology was developed, aiming as much as possible to allow children to articulate their experiences and needs.⁸ The aim was partly to obtain information on the characteristics of street children's living conditions, but also to create a portrait of the dynamics of their relatedness more broadly. In effect, we developed a research design partly with pre-defined questions, but also with lists of topics to discuss individually and in groups discussions with three different groups of interlocutors:

- i. Children: present and former street children, as well as children considered at risk of entering street life
- ii. Parents and relatives (including older siblings) of street children
- iii. Other adults: 'resource personnel' or 'key informant' interviews with teachers, social workers, psychologists, police officers, representatives of local authorities, and others that relate to street children on a more or less regular basis

The individual interviews had a *structured* form in part in the sense that they required answers to certain pre-determined questions. Data registration forms for the different respondent groups were included for this purpose (see annex 3). The pre-determined questions covered elementary aspects like age, background, whereabouts and sleeping facilities the previous days, and educational level. However, the main part of the individual interviews had an *unstructured* and *flexible* form in the sense that interviewers explored issues that arose through open-ended questioning. Even so, lists of potential topics to pursue were included in a research manual. For the children, topics included

- Their histories of movement, and accompaniment of adults and other children
- Economic activities and livelihood strategies and challenges
- Regularity of contact with parents and relatives
- Nature of, and reasons for, connections to the streets
- Patterns of cooperation and assistance: Care for and economic support of adults, siblings and others, as well as assistance (financial, labour-related) received from adults
- Cooperation between older and younger children/siblings/relatives in different activities in the streets and practices of protection
- Contact with social services and experiences of this contact

As for the interviews with key interlocutors, including resource personnel, topics included information on the services provided by their employment institution (e.g. health, education, social services, psychological counselling, etc.), the nature of their contact with street children and street families, their assessment of street children's (and street families') economic and social challenges and adaptations, particular needs of children and families, views on policies or services that have worked

8 As such, this study differs from the 2009 study, which was based on a combination of fieldworkers' observations and information provided by 301 street children in a standardised questionnaire of about 40 questions (carried out in 2007, see Wargan & Dershem 2009:17-18).

well, main obstacles against services working optimally and concrete cases of activities/initiatives directed at street children and families that have *not* worked well. The aim of interviews with key interlocutors was also to uncover perceptions – and prejudices – about the street-connected children and families' profiles.

Group discussions with children had a different aim than the individual interviews, and were used to gain insight into the social organization among street children and other people of the streets. Topics that were raised in groups discussions included

- the whereabouts in the streets of different groups of children, and their own, day as well as night;
- the profiles of different groups, in terms of age, gender, activities, livelihood, and street styles;
- troubles in daily life, and between different groups of children in the streets;
- relationships of cooperation and conflict within groups, between groups, and in networks generally;
- perceptions of street character of different children and different groups; and
- relations of assistance, subordination and domination.

In discussion groups with children and youth, we generally followed a pattern of exploring notions about other children before turning to more personal characteristics. In no case were explicit questions about abuse asked. In some of the focus groups, especially with older boys in shelters where fieldworkers knew the participants personally, conversations tended to turn into joking and exaggeration, a development which at first was appreciated as a relaxed atmosphere. Eventually, however, the mediators reminded participants that participation was voluntary, and explicitly encouraged the youth to stop exaggerating and lying.

Training of fieldworkers was carried out in Georgia from 14–21 August 2017, and in Azerbaijan from 22-26 August 2017. In Georgia, a total of 13 fieldworkers participated in training, which was facilitated by UNICEF's Jaba Nachkebia and Maya Mgelishvili of World Vision. Fieldworkers were recruited among independent consultants, as well as among employees of Georgian social services, World Vision, and Caritas Georgia, the latter having existing members of mobile teams with long-standing relationships with children living and working in the streets. Out of the 13 fieldworkers that participated, six were trained as interviewers/moderators (originally trained as social workers, psychologists and peer educators), four as transcribers, and the remaining three participated in training in order to function in vital facilitator roles (as identifiers of potential respondents and research participants and translators). Following training in Tbilisi, supervision continued in the field in first interviews and group discussions in Tbilisi, Kutaisi, and Batumi.

In Azerbaijan, three fieldworkers were trained to conduct interviews and focus group discussions with adults and children in local communities. In addition, a consultant from the State Committee on Family, Women and Children Affairs collected contextual information by carrying out interviews with governmental and district representatives (so-called ex-Comms, as well as teachers, police officers etc.). Training for fieldwork took place in Baku, as well as in the Gasakh and Agstafa regions.

Draft manuals were provided to the fieldwork personnel ahead of training, in order for feedback on design and content. The manuals were completed following testing during training.

As noted, the Georgian fieldworkers already knew many of the children and youth living and working in the streets, and their faces were familiar to many of the interlocutors recruited in the streets. An obvious negative effect of using service providers for research purposes is that subjects associate the fieldworkers with certain benefits, and thus adjust their answers and information according to what they hope to obtain in terms of material and immaterial resources/benefits. This was, for instance, a striking problem in research conducted by Fafo for UNICEF in Haiti (on child fosterage and child domestic labour), where respondents exaggerated their poverty in the hope of obtaining help. We therefore did not opt for such a procedure in the Haitian context (see Sommerfelt 2015).

In the Georgian context, the situation is nearly opposite: street children do not always hope for contact with the mobile teams or to gain substantial benefits. For a long while (until a recent change of activities), mobile teams were present in the streets with the purpose of making contact with children (in order to build up trust), and not necessarily with the aim of actively engaging in rehabilitation of children. This has changed, but not to a degree that we considered to outweigh the benefits of well-established trust relationships. The issue of trust was also a core theme during fieldworker training.

Fieldwork teams consisted of a member of the mobile teams carrying out interviews and mediating group discussions, as well as one transcriber/recorder/translator of information. People in the latter position were mostly recruited specifically for this task. In Azerbaijan, both of the two interviewers/mediators, as well as the two transcribers, were recruited specifically for the purpose. One of the interviewers had experience from social work.

For interviews and groups discussions, fieldworkers worked in part through already established networks and approached children and adults in the street with whom they had no prior contact. Following explicit requests for consent from interlocutors, fieldworkers either took notes on site or recorded conversations, in order to transcribe them at a later stage. All recordings were erased after transcription, and transcripts were translated from Georgian and Azerbaijani into English.

In Georgia, a total of 64 individual child interviews and 48 individual interviews with adults (parents, caretakers, service personnel, resource persons, public administration officials) were carried out. Seven focus group discussions were also organized with children, youth and adults. In Azerbaijan, 14 focus group discussions, eight individual adult interviews and 10 child interviews were conducted. In addition, the consultant from the State Committee on Family, Women and Children Affairs produced information by carrying out three group discussions and five adult interviews with governmental and district representatives.

Summaries of interviews and group discussions were written in Georgian (and Azerbaijani in Azerbaijan), and translated into English. Analysis involved on all the received summaries and relied on ethnographic procedures. The aim was to discern overall patterns. No standardized programme for data coding was used. Concrete examples and cases were chosen with the aim of providing the best possible illustration of the patterns discerned. All contributions were kept anonymous. Within the scope of the current research project, it has been impossible to convey the richness of the accounts in interviews and group discussions with children and adults. Insights from interviews and group discussions are nonetheless synthesized in this report's analysis. Drafts to this report were reviewed by staff in UNICEF in Georgia and Azerbaijan, by local partners in Georgia, and finally by an independent reviewer recruited by UNICEF.

A particular note on bias and empirical limitations

As the analysis in the report's second chapter will demonstrate, the population of street-connected children is diverse. In part, this diversity can be portrayed in terms of whether children move along with families, in 'street family' constellations, or whether they primarily relate to other children and youth. Among the latter group, one sub-category of children has very limited contact with parents and rarely receives parental support or care. We refer to these children as 'unaccompanied', or occasionally as 'homeless', in this report (see chapter 2). In many cases, these children come from broken families that have experienced illness, the death of a parent and or/domestic violence, and conflicts and abuse at home have led the children into their current circumstance. This study did not succeed in recruiting interlocutors from this group of parents. This is unfortunate, as they account for many of the street-connected children in urban centres in both Georgia and Azerbaijan. Importantly, many of these parents belong to the majority community (of ethnic Georgians) in Georgia and (of ethnic Azerbaijani) in Azerbaijan.

Moreover, the empirical material from interviews and discussions with parents is limited, especially in the case of Georgia. In Azerbaijan, an unintended selection effect resulted from fieldworkers' exclusively seeking out members of the Azerbaijani Kurdish communities as interlocutors in their capacity as families of street-connected children. This selection was made in spite of the fact that fieldworkers recognized that the majority of children encountered in one of the service centres for former street children in Baku belonged to the majority Azerbaijani population. This selection effect translates into a bias – giving the (wrong) impression that street children in Azerbaijan primarily hail from the Azerbaijani Kurdish communities – that should be kept in mind. In order to counter this bias, we emphasise this point in the chapters that analyse the Azerbaijani data (see especially the section on 'Parents and families' in chapter 4).

Ethical considerations

Consultation on ethical aspects of research and ethical clearance for the project was sought from the Norwegian Ethics Committee (given that Fafo is a research foundation registered in Norway).⁹ Application for ethical clearance required that we submit the research design documents and fieldwork manuals for evaluation. As all data were to be kept anonymous, the study was considered exempt from the need of formal ethical 'clarification' as defined by the Norwegian Ethics Committee.

We consulted the ERIC guidelines for research with children, which are based on the 'no harm' principle (see childethics.com). The research project also adheres to the requirements set out in the UNICEF Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis.¹⁰

Each interview session and group discussion involved that participants were asked explicitly for their informed consent. Regarding obtaining informed consent from children, we did not seek out parents or guardians of unaccompanied children to ask for additional consent. This was related to adults being difficult to locate. In addition, many of the children are in need of protection from caretakers, and should therefore not be encouraged by fieldworkers to get in touch with them. No children was asked to provide information with their parents or any other adults present. No payments was

9 https://www.etikkom.no/globalassets/documents/english-publications/60127_fek_guidelines_nesh_digital_corr.pdf

10 https://www.unicef.org/supply/files/ATTACHMENT_IV-UNICEF_Procedure_for_Ethical_Standards.PDF.

provided to interlocutors. However, some child and youth respondents received hygiene kits by fieldworkers. Importantly, the data collection was designed in a manner that ensured that children and youth in need of assistance could be referred to relevant service providers. In Azerbaijan, a referral system was established with the Azerbaijan Children's Union, and in Georgia, with the Social Service Agency.

In order to ensure interlocutors' anonymity, individuals' names have been changed in the presentation that follows and many details from personal testimonies have been omitted. This is done in line with the cautionary instructions provided in the UNICEF Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis (page 19).. Fieldworkers have been instructed to maculate handwritten notes and erase recordings as soon as the final report is done. By the same token, partners in Georgia and Azerbaijan have been instructed to delete files with transcripts in English, Georgian and Azerbaijani. In Fafo, files are stored in a password-secured server, to which only two involved researchers have access. As noted, fieldwork staff in Georgia were partly recruited among staff working for the Social Service Agency, World Vision and Caritas. The aim of the recruitment was to ensure trust in relationships between interviewers and interlocutors. No conflicts of interest were identified in these relationships that could harm fieldworkers' commitments to their other employers, that could affect the outcome of the research, or that could harm adult and child respondents. In Azerbaijan, a consultant hired from the State Committee on Family, Women and Children Affairs was excluded from access to the data collection process of children and their families, as there was a risk of conflict of interest in the way he potentially could make use of data and exercise his duties at a later stage. His task was redefined to collect contextual information from governmental and district representatives.

No conflicts of interest in relations between researchers and funders can be identified. Results presented in this study have not in any way been influenced by potential harms to or benefits for the researchers that have been involved.

2. CIRCUMSTANCES OF CHILDREN'S STREET LIVES

This chapter assesses variations in street-connected children's parental relations and accompaniment and their motivations and reasons for living and working in the streets. Its aim is partly to portray the different backgrounds of street-connected children, as well as to understand the factors leading new children to take to the streets. As the chapter will show, the main factors pushing children to live in the street and keeping them there are as follows:

- i. Parents' poverty and involvement of children in activities aimed at assisting parents, effectively leading to situations of child labour, either due to a deep-felt sense of obligation among children vis-à-vis parents, or as a result of relatives' demands on children's labour
- ii. Parents' forced migration and ensuing livelihood challenges, causing difficulties in providing for children
- iii. A parent's death, imprisonment, illness and/or substance abuse, leading to child abandonment or neglect and a need for the child to provide for him or herself
- iv. Domestic violence – physical or psychological – leading to the child preferring life outside of the home
- v. Strict discipline in service institutions, like foster family care or closed juvenile schools, leading children and youth to prefer street lives to rules and to repeated escapes from institutional settings
- vi. Socialization among children and youth, involving a (gradual) reduction of the time spent in the home and an increasing amount of more time spent with other street-connected youth.

In the present chapter, we start out by recounting some children's own statements about their circumstances and the factors leading them into street lives. In turn, we assess dimensions of street connectedness by distinguishing between different sub-categories in the streets. The issue of children's and youth's socialization is discussed in part in this chapter, but forms a main issue in chapter 3, which assesses peer-dynamics among street-connected children.

Being in, and taking to, the street

When children and youth tell how they came to live or work in the streets, they cite a multitude of circumstances. Often, the reasons for their being in the street differ throughout their street 'careers', as does the nature of their street connectedness, ranging from family poverty and joint migration with kin to make a living to livelihood-seeking separately from parents. Below, we recount stories provided by children and youth in order to portray the large variation in circumstances that lead children into the street and to provide initial insight into the developmental cycles of street life.

From parents' forced migration to street life with friends

Gregory is a 13-year-old boy who has earned a living on the street for several years. Both of his parents used to live in Russia, but moved to an urban area of South Ossetia, where Gregory was born. When the war between Russia and Georgia broke out in 2008, however, the family was forced to flee, and they moved to the Georgian town of Gori.

The family had difficulty earning a living in Gori, and Gregory and his parents came to Tbilisi when Gregory was ten years old. According to the interviewer, who knows him well, Gregory helped his mother sell fruit and vegetables in the market for several years. He also added to the family income with money from begging.

For the past few years, Gregory has spent most of his time in the streets. He mostly hangs around with three or four close friends, and they have found a place to sleep, outside, but sheltered from the rain, in the Saburtalo area of Tbilisi. He alternates between sleeping in his parents' flat and outside in Saburtalo, and when away, tells his parents that he sleeps over at his friends'. He likes to spend time with his friends, playing around and having fun, he says, and currently earns a living stealing money from cars. He still engages in begging to get money for food, and often the friends share their income and buy food and cigarettes together. When he asks them, he occasionally also receives some food or money from his parents. At present, he attends a day care centre in Tbilisi four to five days a week, where he goes to school and takes part in programme activities like excursions and using computers.

Accompanying parents, paying bills

Fatima is a 10-year-old girl. Upon meeting her in Tbilisi, where she has recently started attending a day care centre, one of the interviewers, who is also a social worker, talked with Fatima about her origins and daily activities. She does not come to this centre regularly, as she usually stays outside in the streets to earn money.

When asked about her background, Fatima explained that she is Azerbaijani Kurd and a citizen of Azerbaijan. Her father had passed away. Currently, Fatima lives in a flat in Tbilisi with her mother, three brothers, an older sister (another sister passed away), as well as an aunt and an older female relative whom Fatima refers to as 'grandma'. The two-room apartment in a big building costs 10 Georgian lari per day.

Fatima recounted that they travel back and forth between Georgia and Azerbaijan every three months. When they return to Azerbaijan, they go to the house of Fatima's grandfather, who lives in Karabakh, near the Armenian border, with his two sons. Her grandmother had died some years back. When she travels, she always accompanies her mother, she explained. But not all the family travel together at the same time: 'Some of us stay here and some leave', she explained.

The conversation between the interviewer and Fatima illustrates one way in which children accompany their parents and chip in order to assist the family's survival:

Interviewer: *Do you remember how long you stayed outside yesterday?*

Fatima: *Yes, me and my aunt stayed late at night, till 3 or 4 a.m.*

Interviewer: *Do you always go out in the streets with your aunt?*

Fatima: *No, sometimes they [my family members] tell me to stay at home, but I insist on going out.*

Interviewer: *Why? What do you usually do there in the streets?*

Fatima: *To see my friends, of course...*

Interviewer: *For instance, where were you yesterday?*

Fatima: *On Marjanishvili street* [a central street in Tbilisi]

Interviewer: *And what was going on in Marjanishvili yesterday?*

Fatima: *There were a lot of children there*

Interviewer: *And what were you doing?*

Fatima: *Nothing special...*

Interviewer: *And what do you together with your auntie when you go out in the streets? Do you try to work or earn some money?*

Fatima: *Yes, I earn money to pay the bills for gas, water, electricity etc.*

Interviewer: *And do you give this money to anyone?*

Fatima: *Yes, I give it to my mum and she pays the bills.*

Interviewer: *And how you earn this money?*

Fatima: *By begging from people.*

Interviewer: *Where? On Marjanishvili Street?*

Fatima: *Yes, and on Shardeni as well.*

Interviewer: *Do you beg for money alone or with anyone else?*

Fatima: *Alone.*

Interviewer: *Do you sell icons as well?*

Fatima: *I used to before, I was selling icons and candles in the subway.*

Interviewer: *And how much were you earning?*

Fatima: *20, 30, 40 lari.*

Fatima explained that she used to buy candles for five tetri (0.05 lari) each, and sold them for one lari.

Interviewer: *Do you stay all day long outside?*

Fatima: *Yes, mostly.*

Interviewer: *And till late at night?*

Fatima: *Yes, till midnight or 1 a.m.*

Interviewer: *What do you eat during the day?*

Fatima: *Sometimes nothing*

Interviewer: *So, are you hungry all day? Do people give you some food as well?*

Fatima: *Yes, sometimes, when I beg at the restaurants.*

Interviewer: *Do any adults accompany you when you go out for begging?*

Fatima: *Yes, my mum or my grandma, or sometimes my brother.*

Interviewer: *And when people give you money you pass it on to them?*

Fatima: *No, I give it to them later, when I get home late at night.*

Interviewer: *Do you yourself decide to go out for begging or does someone tell you to?*

Fatima: *No, I decide myself.*

Interviewer: *Do your siblings go out to beg as well?*

Fatima: *Yes, they do.*

Interviewer: *Together or alone?*

Fatima: *Sometimes yes, sometimes no...*

Interviewer: *When you go out together to earn money, do you share equally at the end of the day or give all the money to your mum?*

Fatima: *Give to our mum.*

Interviewer: *And when you need some food or clothes?*

Fatima: *Our mum buys them.*

Interviewer: *Fatima, how many siblings do you have?*

Fatima: *We were three sisters and one passed away, so we are two sisters and three brothers now.*

Interviewer: *Have you ever spent a night outside?*

Fatima: *Yes, only twice.*

Interviewer: *Together with whom?*

Fatima: *With my friends, of course.*

Interviewer: *On which street?*

Fatima: *On Marjanishvili.*

Interviewer: *Where exactly did you spend night? At the internet café or outside in the street?*

Fatima: *In the street.*

Interviewer: *And you didn't sleep at all, did you?*

Fatima: *No, I don't sleep.*

Interviewer: *And when do you usually travel to Azerbaijan?*

Fatima: *I don't know exactly, but very often, almost every three months.*

Interviewer: *And what do you do there?*

Fatima: *We never beg there, it's forbidden.*

Interviewer: *Yes, I know, and how did you earn money then?*

Fatima: *We don't need to earn; our grandpa has [money]. If police see that a child is begging in the street, he will take him or her to the orphanage immediately.*

Interviewer: *Does the government or an organization support your granddad there?*

Fatima: *Yes, soon the local government plans to give him a new house and we are going to move there in Karabakh to live with him.*

Interviewer: *So, you are going to move to Azerbaijan and you won't live here in Georgia anymore?*

Fatima: *From time to time we will visit Georgia as well.*

Interviewer: *Here in Tbilisi do you use other ways to earn money or just beg?*

Fatima: *No, we are just begging.*

Interviewer: *How much do you usually earn on your "lucky days" for instance?*

Fatima: *People give us more on rainy days, for instance, 30, 40 lari.*

Interviewer: *And when you stay outside to spend the night?*

Fatima: *When I stayed till late last night I earned more, 27 gel, for instance.*

Arrangements where children contribute to the family income through street activities, as seen here, are often ascribed to traditional Roma or Azerbaijani Kurdish livelihoods. However, patterns of children supporting family are also found among ethnic Georgians, especially in cases where families have suffered a crisis, like the illness or death of a parent. In these cases, children often express a profound sense of responsibility for bringing in an income, and they peddle in the streets separately from relatives in the daytime, returning home at night.

Avoiding the home

Children and youth also explained that they had left the home, or run away, to escape beating and abuse from parents or relatives. Some of the children fieldworkers spoke with in the centres where they were living were former street children who had been taken to the centres by more distant relatives, neighbours, social workers, or friends from the street following beatings and repeated attempts to run away. One of these was Maria, a girl of 17. One of the social workers who knows her well and who took part in the study as a fieldworker talked with Maria in the 24-hour shelter where she lives.

Maria explained that she has lived in one of the 24-hour shelters in Tbilisi for the past four years, and three more years prior to this in another 24-hour shelter. When asked how she got to the centre, she said, 'When I was ten years old, my father used to drink every day and beat me, so one of my friends brought me to the shelter'. At that time, her mother was incarcerated. Maria explained that up until she was taken to the shelter, she spent her days and nights in the street. She slept either at entrance of a building, or inside, in internet cafés, paying five lari a night. She earned money by selling religious icons. On a good day, she said, she could earn 30 to 40 Georgian lari, and sometimes even 50 lari from this activity. She did not sell from a specific location and used to walk all over town to peddle icons near shops, traffic lights, bars and restaurants. She also got money from begging, but no more than 15 or 20 lari a day. When asked what she did with the money, she reported that she gave some of it to her father, and when she did not automatically give it to him, he would beat her and take it from her by force.

When Maria was brought to one of the 24-hour shelters by a friend, seven years ago, she started following the educational programme there and appreciated her time there: 'It was nice, I had everything to live and study'. After a while, her mother was released from prison. This prompted her father to go to the shelter and take Maria home. She said, 'Nothing had changed, he used to drink every day again and beat me to go earn money in the streets. Social workers who regularly visited us warned him, but he didn't obey.'

A while after her release from prison, Maria's mother died from a heart attack. Maria went back to the shelter again.

Two years prior to the interview, Maria met a guy she started dating. She explained that she used to leave the shelter to meet him. She got pregnant, and nine months ago, gave birth to a baby boy. She told the following story:

When he was born, I was told that because I was not an adult and nobody came from my family to take the responsibility for the child and sign the documents, they had to give the child temporarily to a foster family till I turn 18. Now I want to start working in order to get my child back from the foster family.

Maria explained that she wants to enter college, and tells herself that she has to be patient: 'No one is going to help me with my child, so I have to wait till I am 20 if I am to get an education. I have to work as a cleaner or a dishwasher during studies till I [turn] 20.'

Maria's experience reveals that she was pressured into a street livelihood in part by and for her father, and that she took to the streets full time in order to escape pressure and beatings from him. Now, though, she is eager to work and to care for her child.

Stories of the imprisonment or death of a parent, followed by abuse from an alternative caretaker, or conflict in a new home setting, come across in several accounts. When parents themselves cannot care for children, stepparents, uncles, aunts, or grandparents step in or are assigned parental roles. These accounts are complex, and do not always include alternative caregivers engaging in abuse. However, in some cases, children are made to beg or work against their will by a household member, and/or are disciplined harshly or beaten and take to the street to avoid this. Often, arguments over the treatment of the child heighten the level of conflict in a manner which leads the child to prefer spending time in the streets to spending time in the home.

Escaping rules

Yet another variant of children's and youths' drive to escape strict rules appears in accounts from children who run away from foster care and into street life. Some of these children have been placed in foster care following neglect or abuse in the original family, without passing through a street phase, whereas others have lived and worked in the streets prior to being placed in a foster family. Jaba, a Georgian boy of 16, is in the latter group.

Jaba was not open about his childhood but said that he had previously lived with his mother in the town of Samtredia. His mother died, however, and Jaba got in trouble with the law. Due to 'truancy and problems with the law', as he put it, Jaba was enrolled in a so-called special school for juvenile offenders. He was in the school for two years, but added that 'during the last year, I was running away, skipping classes and wandering in the streets.' The reason, he said, was that the school was 'a very closed system and I could not accept that'. Jaba said that he did enjoy parts of school life, especially when the school 'arranged visits with public school students in our school, and we met our peers and made friends with them'. He also appreciated his teachers, he said, as they helped him a lot. However, he was accustomed to staying within the school all the time, and could not handle it. He started running away, and the school looked for him, but he eventually decided to make a run further away, to Tbilisi.

At the time of the interview, he had been staying on the streets of Tbilisi for the past year. His father is alive, but Jaba said he prefers not to be in touch with him. He sleeps in Internet cafés for five lari a night, or in hidden spaces in commercial buildings, and lives from selling paper napkins, begging at street lights and bus stops, and stealing money from cars. He is a good runner, he explained, but was recently caught by the police as he was trying to steal money from a parked car. He hopes to be diverted to a juvenile programme instead of criminal prosecution.¹¹ His dream, he said, is to get off the streets, become an electrician, marry, and have a family.

Similarly, Irina, a 15-year-old girl, recounted that she ran away from the foster family she was transferred to from an orphanage several years ago. Another child, a friend, was also placed in the same foster family, but she ran away, as she could not accept the conditions in the family: 'They treated me too strictly', she said, and continued: 'they forbade me everything, and never let me go. They did not even let me meet my friends, and I decided to escape.' Irina left to wander the streets. She first stayed in one park, then another, and then spent the night in a vacant building where she lit a fire. She did not beg, but people had come up to her to ask whether she was alright: 'Once, a woman even bought a pie for me'. She met a 17-year-old friend, who took her home to her apartment. When

¹¹ In line with the referral system for the current study, this boy was enrolled into one of the 24-hour day care centres and has started studies for a degree in electrical systems.

her friend's boyfriend later arrived, he suggested that Irina go to one of the 24-hour shelters in Tbilisi, where she was living at the time we met her.

Variations in parental relations and accompaniment

As the above accounts demonstrate, the relationships between children and parents, and the extent to which they engage in street activities together or separately, vary greatly according to the child's history and past family experience.

Children who run off to escape parental or relatives' control and abuse, often with a 24-hour presence in the streets and only sporadic parental contact, represent one end of a broad spectrum. Other children accompany their parents in begging and petty trading of different sorts. Some of these children portrayed these activities as involuntary and forced by parents, whereas others expressed a strong sense of obligation towards their parents or relatives and felt a duty to contribute, a difference that (not surprisingly) reflects the emotional aspects of the adult-child relationship, and the comfort otherwise provided by the adults.

Whether children engage in street activities with parents or on their own also varies with the child's age: As children get older, they increasingly spend time on the streets on their own, either bringing money to the family or gradually establishing more independent lives. The sense of obligation towards parents in need, however, continues to impact many children, in particular those who have siblings and whose parents are unable to care for them for health reasons.

In the case of the Azerbaijani girl whose mother commuted between Karabakh and Tbilisi, the stricter policing practices in Azerbaijan were an explanation for her family's choice of place to earn a living. Her account illustrated a pattern of children and adults jointly earning a living in the streets. As noted, this system of children contributing to the family income through street activities is often associated with traditional Roma or Azerbaijani Kurdish livelihoods. Again, it should be emphasized that, though less visible, patterns of children supporting family are also found among ethnic Georgians, especially following the illness or death of a parent. Children often expressed a sense of obligation for contributing to the household in such cases.

Sub-categories of street-connected children in Georgia

Based on the dimensions of street-connectedness described so far, we distinguish between four sub-categories of children. The categories display (nuanced) differences with respect to social ties to, and accompaniment by, parents or other kin, and reasons for being in the streets. In addition to representing categorically different group belongings, the categories convey life phases of street childhood. Below, we assess some joint features as a starting point for the exploration of further dimensions of street connectivity in the subsequent chapters.

Homeless youth/children of the street

'Homeless youth/children of the street' live and work in the streets. They are unaccompanied by adults while in the street but may stay in touch with their parents on occasion. Many of the children here considered 'homeless' come from disintegrated families, or families suffering from a combination of poverty and alcohol or drug abuse, as well as a violent atmosphere. Children in this sub-category lead lives relatively independently of their parents. They include runaways, castaways, and illegal immigrants who are not accompanied by adults, travelling instead on their own or with siblings or friends. Both boys and girls are represented in this category. They live from a wide range of street activities, legal and illegal. Many homeless youth and children of the street in Georgia engage in seasonal migration, following domestic and international tourists to the Black Sea resorts and returning inland after the tourist season. Many of these children have previously attended school, but few still attend.

These children and youth often constitute different groups in the cityscape, each of which has a different organizational structure. Some groups have gang-like structures (cf. Aptekar & Stoecklin 2014:79-80, Heinonen 2011), in the sense that they have a hierarchical organizational structure, rules of conduct (that are difficult to evade) and initiation rituals (in the case of one of the groups locally referred to as a 'sect', this applies especially to girls). Other constellations of homeless children and youth in cities constitute loose associations rather than groups. However, most relationships contain informal rules of reciprocity, in which children help each other out, for instance by lending each other money, cooperating and accompanying each other in economic activities or dividing profits from crime. Practices of reciprocity among peers in this sub-category tend to be stronger than among friends or peers among street children who live with family, perhaps because the peer group is a more important social attachment in daily life and because they rarely receive assistance from family.

Unaccompanied children/youth in the street, sleeping at home

Many children spend most of their daytime hours in the street, working or otherwise engaging in economic activities, unaccompanied by adults, but return to a place they recognize as 'home' at night. We refer to them here as 'children in the street, sleeping at home'. The families they return to own or rent a home where they live at any given point. These families have at least one adult who regards him- or herself as responsible for the child, regularly provides the child or youth with money or food, and receives part of the child's income and/or assistance at regular or irregular intervals. Children in this group are usually older than those accompanied by adults while they are in the street. In cases of abuse in the family, many children in this sub-category eventually leave to take up street lives independently of the home. However, many children who do earn a living in the streets belong to intact families, and their sense of obligation to parents and/or siblings continues in the longer term. This sub-category also includes older children of street families.

In spatial terms, this sub-category includes children who live in shelters who engage with caretakers on a regular basis. However, the focus here is on the nature of relationships to parents or other close relatives, which in this case continue and can be built on in the way services are offered, which is not always the case when children move into 24-hour shelters.

Children described here as 'unaccompanied, sleeping at home', belong to all ethnic categories. Some of their families are 'professionals', or in other words they practice a particular craft or speciality, and older children assist their kin by operating in the streets, returning at night. Some youth from Dom families are thus encompassed by this description.

Street children of mobile street families

Street children of mobile street families usually work on the streets but do not sleep there. They accompany or are accompanied by adults, who are also street workers. Street families are highly mobile and engage in seasonal migration. In this group, or during this life phase, parental responsibilities are usually distributed among a wider set of relatives, for instance uncles, aunts, or grandparents, and children thus spend periods with extended family. Many of these families have an additional home away from where they engage in street activities, and they commute between these places. The facilities they sleep in while engaged in street livelihoods are usually rented by the day, week or month.

Street children of homeless families

Street children of homeless families are similar to the group described immediately above. Additionally, however, they sleep in the street with their parent(s). This does not make them permanently homeless: they may return to homes elsewhere for periods of time, but while in the city, they earn a living, or try to do so, in the streets without a house or apartment available. This implies poor hygiene standards and poor cooking facilities. Usually, children in this sub-category sleep outside with their parent or caretaker, typically in metro stations or by entrances to buildings, not unlike homeless youth/children of the street (though not ordinarily in the same places).

Intersections with ethnicity

To some extent, the distinctions underlying the different sub-categories outlined here reflect ethnic distinctions. Inference of ethnicity should be made with particular care, however, as different ethnicities are represented along the entire spectrum of street circumstances and at different phases of childhood.

Among the group of *homeless youth/children of the street*, representatives of all ethnic origins are to be found. However, children of Azerbaijani Kurdish origin are rarely to be found among the youngest of these children, and even when older, they tend to remain in touch with relatives at irregular intervals. We did not encounter Azerbaijani Kurdish girls among this sub-category during our fieldwork, however. It should be underlined that Roma youth are also represented among the homeless youth, challenging stereotypes about the universal tightly knit sociality of Roma families mentioned earlier.

The *unaccompanied children/youth in the street, sleeping at home* sub-category also includes all backgrounds, and many of these girls and boys self-identify as ethnically Georgian. However, among the *street children of mobile street families*, there is an over-representation of Moldovan Roma and Azerbaijani Kurds, including both boys and girls. The same applies to *street children of homeless families*.

In the next chapter, we pursue these distinctions in an exploration of the survival or economic activities of street-connected children, as well as their practices of mobility. We also explore aspects of the internal organization and dynamics of the different groups of street-connected children in greater detail. Elements of peer group relationships, identities and roles within the groups are also described here, along with the age dimension that partly conveys some typical development cycles or 'careers' (cf. Aptekar & Stoecklin 2014: 18) of children's street life.

3. LIVING IN THE STREETS: ACTIVITIES, ROUTES AND PEER DYNAMICS

This chapter explores the internal organization and dynamics of the different groups of street-connected children in greater detail. Aspects of peer group relationships, identities and roles within the groups are also assessed, along with the age dimension that partly conveys some typical development cycles or 'careers' (cf. Aptekar & Stoecklin 2014: 18) of children's street life. By assessing social organization among different sub-groups of children, we hope to uncover social mechanisms that contribute to perpetuating life in the streets.

Economic activities and means of survival

As noted, children who live and/or work in the streets are associated by other Georgians with the activities they are seen or thought to carry out: girls stereotypically with selling flowers and religious icons, as well as begging, and boys with petty trade and, stereotypically, with petty crime. However, children in the streets secure a living in a variety of ways – depending on whether street work is an adaptive strategy of the family in which children take part or pursued relatively independently from adult caretakers; on the child's age; and on season and location. In this last respect, the distinction between rural and urban livelihoods is significant.

A main distinction in urban areas can be drawn between children accompanying parents or relatives, and simultaneously being supported by them, on the one hand, and children engaging in street work independently or in cooperation with other children and youth, without assistance from adult relatives, on the other. Among children of street families in Georgian cities like Tbilisi, Kutaisi and Rustavi, a common activity is selling small items (candles, napkins, religious icons, flowers) at main traffic junctions, in metro and train stations, and outside restaurants. The dialogue with Fatima and Gregory's account in the previous chapter provide examples of this pattern. Begging for money, too, is widespread, both in traffic hubs and in other public places where people gather, as well as outside of restaurants and hotels. Boys also accompany parents or other relatives, but are not as visibly engaged in begging alongside adults as girls are. Among street families, younger boys assist adults in petty trading, especially. Boys also work alongside parents in marketplaces, selling goods, transporting merchandise, and so forth. Scrap metal collecting is also a common activity among boys, especially among slightly older boys, and is undertaken by boys who accompany male relatives, as well as by unaccompanied and homeless children and youth.

Among unaccompanied children and youth (regardless of whether they can be considered homeless, abandoned or still in regular contact with parents), both boys and girls who live and work in the streets engage in begging. Moreover, begging is included in activities that children and youth themselves refer to as *pakhaoba*, meaning to 'work hard', 'struggle' or 'hustle'. This is routine and daily work, but it has its peaks, for instance on Sundays, in connection with Mass outside of churches, at Easter in the graveyards, on New Year's Eve in the streets, and on Fridays near the mosques. Among older street boys, *pakhaoba* is seen negatively and many claim that they refrain from begging, or assign this activity to younger siblings. This distribution of labour is also related in part to evaluations of who makes the most effective beggars, with younger children being regarded as more likely to raise the sympathy needed to illicit donations.

Among unaccompanied children, the drive to obtain money for survival is strong. Sources of income mirror those described for children moving with mobile families – including, in addition to begging, the selling of small merchandise – as demonstrated in the accounts of both Jaba and Maria in previous chapter – and petty crime (a point to which we return below). Unaccompanied children also enter into longer-term and more predictable labour relationships.

Luka

Luka, a boy of 14, recounted that while he was still living with his mother, he sought out employment at the age of 12 with a car-wash service, cleaning cars' exteriors and cabins. He did this work for five months, earning 10-20 lari a day and bringing money, food and other things back to his mother. After a while, Luka spent increasingly more time in the street, he spent many nights with friends in internet cafés, and the contact with his mother became irregular. He continued to assist her with money from time to time, but simultaneously tried to secure an income to cover his own needs directly by assisting a man in road construction who had been hired by the city: "We made speed bumps for cars on the road, and we also drew also the zebra crossings", Luka explained. When the man later turned to construction work in building sites, Luka accompanied him: 'I was helping him, would supply cement, other things, later we usually ate cheese-filled bread (*khachapuri*)'. When asked how much he was paid for this, Luka answered, 'It was quite enough, 100 lari per month'.

Children have quite varied strategies for income collection, as demonstrated by Elene, a girl of 16. Elene explained that she used to go to different districts of Tbilisi, including Mukhiani, Gldani, Sanzona and Nadzaladevi. She made a new friend who introduced her to other children in one of the main streets, Rustaveli, where they engaged in many different activities to earn money:

I would take part in concerts there, play the guitar; we would organize street concerts to get some money. Once our guitar broke and we came up with the idea of writing posters. If it was a friend's birthday, we wrote a poster about it and collected money. People were giving us money. I was always smiling unlike other children and each kid got 50 lari in a day.

In Georgia, children's urban livelihoods are mostly visible in the busy streets of the big cities, in areas that attract tourists, around public buildings, and in traffic hubs and in marketplaces. In urban Azerbaijan, children who live/and or work in the street hide their begging activities. They appear in large traffic junctions, in parks and railway stations. They clean the windows of cars or sell small items and request money in return. Largely, children who end up in the streets of Georgia are engaged in activities in marketplaces. This applies both to urban and to rural areas.

Livelihoods in rural centres and areas

Children's economic activities in rural areas are far less visible than in urban centres. In the rural areas of Azerbaijan that border Georgia, a main economic activity is the collection of leftover goods from marketplaces, especially vegetables and fruit. For example, several young girls spend their days in the Gasakh bazaar. Fieldworkers talked with one of them, an Azerbaijani Kurdish girl of eight.

Zahra

Zahra told fieldworkers that she stays with her grandmother, who is disabled and has great difficulty providing for all the children of the family. Zahra's mother is in prison. Zahra explained that her grandmother sends her to make money and collect food for subsistence in the

bazaar in order to ease the burden of upkeep. Zahra arrives around 10 a.m. and stays until well after the bazaar closes at 2 p.m. She collects foodstuffs that the keepers of the market stalls do not want to sell, and at closing time, she collects leftovers on the ground. After the bazaar closes, she continues to the park where boys are engaged in different activities in efforts to obtain cash, like renting out toys for children. When offered, Zahra accepts money that people give her, and makes average of three Azerbaijani manat per day in total, by her own estimate.

Most children who work in the streets in rural areas seem to stay in touch with parents or relatives and spend nights in their care. Many of them are children of mobile street families that keep a home in the rural areas and migrate to urban areas in Georgia or elsewhere on a periodic or seasonal basis. We also encountered homeless children or youth in rural areas who were runaways and explained that they preferred to sleep in marketplaces or find other provisional shelter for the night to avoid conflict and/or abuse in the home. Many of these children conveyed hopes of futures in urban areas, as avoiding family in small communities is challenging in the long run.

Among rural street families, children occasionally tag along when adults go door-to-door asking for money, and rural, street-connected children also collect scrap metal. Another activity among mobile families, when based in rural areas, is wage labour in agricultural fields, in particular harvesting potatoes. Children take part in agricultural work of this kind, as do mothers younger than 18 who struggle to provide for their own children. A day's wage of 10 to 12 manats for such work is the usual amount mentioned. The extent to which this line of work should be considered 'street work' is questionable, however, and in legal terms such work is considered child labour, regardless of its location. Even so, the observations in the Georgia–Azerbaijan border areas demonstrate that children and youth respond to their particular economic and personal circumstances by actively combining economic activities, in urban as well as rural locations, adapting to the seasons to do so.

A source of rural livelihood directly connected to the street, though, is transport services at traffic hubs and at the border. Fieldworkers spoke with children at the border crossing by the so-called Red Bridge, where one youth explained that he earned from 10 to 12 Azerbaijani manats per day assisting people carrying their luggage or goods. He lived with his mother in Gazakh but had spent the four nights preceding the interview at the border and told fieldworkers that he had not slept during this time. He also supplemented his income by arranging transport across the border, although he could not carry luggage across the border personally, as he did not possess a passport. A group of three girls also explained that they worked regularly at the border crossing, connecting people who wanted to cross the border with boys who did the heavier lifting and who could cross through customs. The girls also asked for money in exchange for carrying luggage or otherwise assisting travellers. They travelled back and forth between Agstafa and the border, arriving at 10 a.m. and leaving at 10 p.m., spending an hour en route each way. They took some days off, they explained, when the police officers on shift were not of the pleasant type: police occasionally bothered them, they said, explaining that the activities they carried out were dependent on flexible police and customs personnel.

Many of the children explained that their staying in 'the regions', namely rural areas, was a temporal affair. Many of the children were of Azerbaijani origin but had been born in Georgia, and several of the young mothers had themselves given birth in Georgia. They had accompanied parents who had moved to the tourist sites along the Georgian Black Sea coast.

Movements and seasonal migration

The livelihoods of mobile street families from Azerbaijan rely on import of goods from Georgia for resale in Azerbaijan, where there are profits to be earned from the price difference between the two countries for certain goods. Livelihoods also rely and on the pursuit of economic opportunities within Georgia, like petty trade of vegetables and fruit, resale of clothing purchased at wholesale, and begging. Opportunities for economic activities increase when tourists gather at seaside resorts in summer, especially along the Black Sea, and migratory patterns have a clear seasonal aspect. Some families also go back and forth at regular intervals throughout the year, as conveyed in Fatima's account (in the previous chapter), in which she described accompanying her mother every three months.

Children of Azerbaijani street families are an integral part of these migratory flows. Many children travel along with kin, and they pass border controls with adults in line with the requirement of being registered in the passport of a parent or guardian. Interlocutors in Azerbaijan, both children and adults, emphasized that the conditions for earning a living in the street by petty trading and begging are far easier in Georgia than in Azerbaijan, where begging is outlawed and regulation of informal economic activities is enforced more strictly than in Georgia. Many adults and children in Azerbaijan mentioned that income from begging is higher in Georgia than in Azerbaijan, and they explained this with reference to people in Georgia being more 'generous'.

The way in which children are integrated into mobile livelihoods of families is not limited to children accompanying adults. Some children are placed with uncles and aunts or grandparents in order to facilitate their parents' movements. Others are left behind with relatives in Georgia when their parents return to Azerbaijan. Several of the parents we spoke with in Azerbaijan explained that they had tried to bring children along across the border into Azerbaijan without the proper documents (they had not tried or had failed to obtain documents for them after mothers had given birth in Georgia outside of healthcare facilities). Attempts to bring these children across the border and into Azerbaijan had led to criminal prosecution and convictions, and with a parent in prison, children had been placed with other kin for longer periods of time. Several Azerbaijani Kurdish parents mentioned that their children were in 'boarding schools' in Georgia, which as far as we could determine referred to service facilities with schooling for street children. Parents travelled back and forth between the two countries, waiting for an opportunity to bring their children along again or trying to determine their exact whereabouts. Moreover, the practice of delegating parental roles to other kin is widespread, and is connected with migration. However, patterns of movement do not always convey tightly integrated family units in which adults distribute parental roles or accommodate childcare in a systematic or predictable manner. Instead, narratives of migratory livelihoods are characterized by challenges, problems with official documents and administrative hurdles.

Migration partly takes the form of seasonal migration. The mobility of Azerbaijani rural street families takes the form of commuting to petty trading in urban Georgia in winter, regular returns to Azerbaijan with goods for sale, migration to tourist areas along the Black Sea during summer, and returns to perform agricultural work in the rural area in the late autumn.

Many of our Azerbaijani Kurdish interlocutors explained that they commuted between rented facilities in Georgia and communities in Gasakh, Agstafa, and Yevlakh, which they considered home. Mobile street families usually rent homes along the Black Sea and pay daily or weekly rates. In Azerbaijan, some had privately owned housing, but this was far from the case for all: Many lived in

rented accommodation in Azerbaijan too, or they returned to elderly relatives who rented housing. Thus, to regard Azerbaijani Kurdish cultures of mobility as practices of commuting between owned housing and real estate in Azerbaijan and rented housing in Georgia – a commonly held view – is to oversimplify the matter.

The seasonal migratory movements in pursuit of tourist flows bring not only Azerbaijani families but also Georgian street families and unaccompanied children and youth to the cities of Batumi, Kobuleti, and Ureki on the Black Sea shore, and other tourist sites along the Black Sea. Children walk along the boulevards, on the beaches, and in the bus stations and main junctions selling flowers and fruit and asking for money from tourists. Unaccompanied children and youth travel regularly by train between Tbilisi or other inland centres and the Black Sea coast.

Ana

Ana, a Georgian girl of 15, recently moved into one of the centres for street-connected children in Tbilisi. Until a few years ago, she used to accompany her mother when she was working in marketplaces and elsewhere. Ana still stays in touch with her mother, and occasionally returns to her home. However, most of her time, including nights, is spent in the street, sometimes for a fortnight at a time. Before coming to the centre, she slept in different outdoor spaces, or in internet cafés, along with friends or her brother. On three occasions, she also spent the night in the so-called Morgue territory in Tbilisi, an underground area controlled by a group of street-connected youth and children (see below).

Ana gradually stopped accompanying her mother and began selling paper napkins, candles and icons in specific areas of Tbilisi, teaming up with her brother or with friends. She continued to give half of their earnings to her mother. The half that Ana kept for herself was spent on food and clothes, she reported. Ana would earn 30 to 40 Georgian lari per day from this activity and from begging. She and her friends adapted to the calendar, travelling accordingly, for instance to the annual celebration of Georgia's ancient capital city Mtskheta on 14 October, where she once earned her record daily income of 950 lari for one day's work of begging.

Ana told fieldworkers that she had gone to Batumi for several summers. She remembered one summer particularly well, as she spent six days in Batumi without sleep, a personal record. That time, she went with friends, and hitchhiked to Ureki, and after a while, further on to Batumi. The first night in Batumi they went to an internet café, and spent two lari to be allowed to stay for half an hour each. The following five nights they joined a group of friends, boys and girls, who had also travelled to Batumi, 'hanging out in the boulevard, the square and station territory', she said.

The summer after that, Ana again went to Batumi, but this time along with a mother and daughter who were neighbours of her own mother. According to Ana, her mother had given her money to live off of, and rather than begging in the street, she explained that she was resting before returning to Tbilisi.

Unaccompanied children and youth, described the prospect of going to Batumi and other coastal areas as tied to the increased opportunity of earning money where people gather, as well as to their own entertainment. In fact, some children described summers they had not been able to go to Batumi as particularly unfortunate, conveying not only their need for enjoyment, but also a common notion among street-connected children that regular seasonal mobility is a normal condition – and not exceptional.

The livelihood of street children– and their seasonal migration to tourist areas – is also connected with petty crime. Some of the youth we spoke with explained that staying on the move – for instance, changing hang-outs between Batumi, Tbilisi and Rustavi – is a way to stay invisible to the police.

Petty crime

Ana, whose travels to Batumi are recounted above, is one of many girls among street-connected children in conflict with the law. At the time we spoke with her, she was involved in a so-called juvenile diversion programme, introduced in 2010 as an amendment of the Georgian Criminal Procedure Code. New rules of discretionary prosecution were introduced, entailing that juveniles without a prior criminal record committing less serious crimes could be diverted from criminal prosecution to a follow-up programme run by a social worker, involving the drawing up of a civil contract signed by the juvenile, his/her parents, the prosecutor, the social worker and the victim of the crime.¹² The arrangement demonstrates the Georgian government's realization of the need for rehabilitation of children in conflict with the law – and the cases at hand demonstrate that petty crime is a part of daily life for many street-connected children, both boys and girls.

Among the activities described by the boys and girls we spoke with, the most common criminal acts were pickpocketing, stealing mobile phones (especially along the beach), petty theft from shops and stalls, as well as breaking into cars and houses stealing valuables, robbing drivers and passengers in cars and holdups on the street where the children forced victims to hand over cash and phones with threats of personal violence.

Children of street families who give accounts of petty crime mostly tell about stealing from stalls or shops. Some children claim that fellow street children are forced by family members to steal from shops, but we never encountered personal testimonies of this. Several children of street families reported that their mothers told them *not* to steal. At the same time, many simultaneously recounted that their fathers and elder brothers had been jailed for theft, and that they themselves also had skills, with girls often hiding goods under their clothing and boys stealing or getting money illegally in other ways. One young boy from Azerbaijan explained, for instance, how he combined begging in the tourist area by the Black Sea, with other activities:

In case I can't get something from begging, then I usually steal, it doesn't bother me. In a shop or a market, I take screwdriver, open the metallic plastics, take money and go. Or, we use the screwdriver to open the door at shops when they're closed at night. We don't go where cameras and signalization are [to avoid police]. So we go to the big shop where there is no camera.

Children and youth unaccompanied by adults account for a broader range of criminal acts than petty theft. Daviti is an example. We include a longer excerpt of the conversation with Daviti, as it also illustrates other aspects of children's street living.

12 According to the terms of contract, the juvenile will be provided with services that he/she needs and will also be responsible to fulfill certain obligations. The state and various non-governmental organisations will provide assistance to the juvenile. The social worker monitors compliance with terms, i.e. how well the juvenile follows the terms of the contract.

Daviti

Daviti is a Georgian boy of 13. Though he did not talk about this himself, the social worker who interviewed him recounted that he had been abandoned by his mother a few years previously, along with his brother. The two were left with a grandmother, but they have spent most of their time in the streets of Tbilisi ever since. The social worker explained that Daviti was traumatized by his mother's abandonment.

Daviti told fieldworkers that his father is in prison, and that he has no information about his mother's whereabouts. When we asked him how he spends his time in the street, he answered that he doesn't do anything special, and that he spends time with his friends. The dialogue continued as follows:

Interviewer: *And when you and your friends need money how do you get it?*

Daviti: *I don't know... I will come up to a guy and take money from him by force.*

Interviewer: *How?*

Daviti: *First, I will come up to him and tell him to give it to me, but if he resists I will beat him and take money from him in this way.*

Interviewer: *And this happens often?*

Daviti: *Not very often.*

Interviewer: *Have you ever begged money from people in the streets?*

Daviti: *No.*

Interviewer: *Have you ever stolen?*

Daviti: *Yes, mostly food and cigarettes from the shops or stores.*

Interviewer: *With whom do you usually steal?*

Daviti: *I usually steal alone.*

Interviewer: *And you spend the nights alone or with your friends?*

Daviti: *Sometimes alone and sometimes with my friends.*

Interviewer: *Alone? Why? Why do you spend nights in the streets alone?*

Daviti: *I just don't want to go home.*

Interviewer: *Are you bored at home? Do you have a computer at home?*

Daviti: *No, I don't have [one] anymore... I passed my laptop to the pawnshop.*

Interviewer: *How do you eat or care about your hygiene?*

Daviti: *I have money for it.*

Interviewer: *And how do you get it?*

Daviti: *I know the ways.*

Interviewer: *How do you buy clothes for instance?*

Daviti: *I ask the older guys and they always give me money, they know that I always pay my debts.*

Interviewer: *Do you like to be in the streets?*

Daviti: *Yes, I do.*

Interviewer: *And what exactly do you like?*

Daviti: *The street lifestyle itself.*

Interviewer: *The street mentality?*

Daviti: *Yes*

Interviewer: *And what does it mean?*

Daviti: *I can't explain it in one sentence, but I can say that the street is my home, I prefer to be there than at my home.*

Interviewer: *And what does the street give you?*

Daviti: *The street gives me everything I need.*

The interviewer, who knows Daviti well, asked him about a concept that has come up in earlier conversations and with other children. It concerns the notion of being a 'good guy':

Interviewer: *To talk more about the street mentality, can anyone or you call yourself a "good guy"?*

Daviti: *Not yet.*

Interviewer: *What do you need to get this title or nomination? Who gives it to you?*

Daviti: *Of course, a "thief in law".*

Interviewer: *And what does a thief in law go through? Does he have to go to prison for sure?*

Daviti: *He should have a thief's tattoo – a star.*

Interviewer: *And who has a right to make this tattoo on his body?*

Daviti: *One should be a thief or a "good guy".*

Interviewer: *So I guess you want and plan to become a "good guy".*

Daviti: *Yes.*

The notion of a "good guy", or a "thief in law", conveys an image of a professional thief, or criminal "boss", involved in organized crime¹³. Despite his young age, Daviti aspires to such a title. Regardless of whether his statement reflects his plans for the future or conveys an effort to show off and saving face vis-à-vis the interviewer, the notion conveys the way in which crime is normalized among unaccompanied boys.

Many acts of petty crime are carried out by groups of children who operate together, where the younger children are put in charge of carrying the loot. The reason for this practice is for older boys to avoid criminal prosecution, as children younger than 14 are considered juveniles under Georgian law. This pattern brings us to the internal organization of groups of children.

Groups of cooperation and assistance

The distinctions between homeless children and youth; unaccompanied children in the street, sleeping at home; children of mobile street families; and children of homeless families are drawn in order to describe some common characteristics of categories of children. The diversity of children who live and/or work in the street in the different cities and areas additionally consists of distinctions between different groups, cliques or clusters of children that stay and move together. These groups try to find places to spend the night, and children in them cooperate on petty trading, begging or

13 The term thief in law is inspired by notions of organised crime that were in use during the Soviet era (see Tevzadze n.d.). In 2005, the Georgian government criminalised 'being a thief in law' and 'membership in thieves' underworld', punishable by 5–10 years of imprisonment (Criminal Code of Georgia, art. 223). For a discussion of the implications of the latter law, see: https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php/_print.php?id=27489.

criminal activity, travel together and entertain friendships, as demonstrated in several of the accounts provided earlier in this chapter, for instance in Elene's account of cooperating to generate income.

Groups of children who stay and move together often not only assist each other in income generation, they occasionally also share the income they get from different activities. Another aspect of intra-group relationships is children lending each other money when in need, as Daviti indicated. Children also go in debt to others, especially to shopkeepers, and then assist each other to pay off external debt. For instance, the 14-year-old boy Luka, whose history of informal employment we recounted above, explained that he worked up debt to a shop-keeper for chocolate, beverage and other items. He first had a debt to one shopkeeper, then switched to another one in Tbilisi. At one point, he owed the shopkeeper 120 lari. Eventually, Luka's cousin paid off the debt. This was not the only time, however, Luka explained:

When I was returning from school hungry, I used to ask for things at the store for my friends as well; me and my friends would eat and drink. They knew me, I asked for [goods on credit] and they gave [them]. After, I went to my cousin and told him that I was in trouble and needed his help and he gave me 250 lari.

Some groups of unaccompanied youth seek to control different territorial areas of the city. One former street child, who had been affiliated with a group of homeless street youth, explained that he and his friend would try to scare other groups out of their areas: 'We would approach them and say "Come on, get out of here!", and if that did not work, we used to beat them'. Another boy, himself homeless youth, added, 'or we let them stay for money, for instance 20 lari, in favourable places'. By favourable places he meant particularly popular restaurants, where prospects of getting money from begging, petty trade or pickpocketing are greater.

Children of street families can be divided into smaller sub-groups in the cityscape, as can unaccompanied children who return home to street families at night. The two boys just quoted above described groups of children belonging to Moldovan Roma street families and Azerbaijani Kurdish street families as separate groups, 'untouchable' by others. The following are excerpts from the conversation with them:

- 'They have [inner groups], but generally they are protect their own.'
- 'Kurds, it's better not to mess with them... Gypsies and Moldavans have their own groups [too] and are never forced to work for bosses in other groups.'
- 'Kurds, they're begging, their people make them, are already used to it and are obliged, too.'

One point that was made repeatedly was that children of street families were tied by strong obligations to their parents or guardians – and they were protected by them. Therefore, these groups of children and youth were 'untouchable', and they would not be integrated with their peers.

This description hides variations: We interviewed several children who had become less bound by obligations to their street families as they grew older and become affiliated with groups of homeless youth. In any case, the narratives convey that the population of street children and youth is characterized by internal distinctions between social entities partly defined by internal codes of conduct and hierarchies. Moreover, the other side of the coin of children's mutual assistance is the creation of structures of sub-ordination and superiority.

Issues of rank, age and life cycle

Egalitarian groups that provide mutual assistance are not the only groups that move together. Informal structures of subordination also develop, and children and youth report that subordinate children are pushed to carry out work or criminal activities and hand over profits. Often, criminal activity – like stealing from shops and stalls and breaking into cars and stealing valuables – is carried out with older children keeping guard and younger children carrying the loot. This is related to the lower age limit in Georgia of 14 for criminal prosecution; older children thus use younger children to remain untouchable by the law.

In one of the service centres in Tbilisi, we organized a group discussion with former street children and encouraged them to talk about the differences between groups of youth and children in Tbilisi. To a great extent, they distinguished different groups according to their internal rank organization. We paraphrase sections of the discussion to illuminate the complexity of this phenomenon.

Children gather in particular places, like Elbakidze Street, on Rystaveli Avenue, on Shardeni, in internet cafés, and near night clubs and traffic lights. They stay there during the daytime, but mostly in the evenings, because police control these places during the daytime and more people are there in the evenings.

One of the group mediators asked what the children and youth do in these places:

Mmm... mostly they are begging or stealing... Some of them have parents, and in many cases they have everything at home, food, clothes, and so on. But they prefer to go out in the streets where they meet each other to hang out or for kicks... Therefore they have to hide from police. They become distance from the real life; for instance, for them an ordinary boy is 'a bad guy' (*Cudi bichi* in Georgian), or a 'mama's boy' (*dedikos bichi*)... They defend themselves, they can even stab their rivals. They mostly move in groups, they don't walk alone.

They are from 10 to 16 years old. Then they realise that the street is not for them any more.. they are afraid of cops, of being arrested. Under 14 they generally do not go to prison, but over 14 they try to keep out of sight of the police.

The youth in this discussion distinguished between groups, and referred to one typical group as 'repeaters' (*Charchenilebi*), a term derived from the tendency of these children and youth to have repeated classes in school: 'They are generally very aggressive and you can recognize them immediately. They use narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, and girls who move in this circle have only one thing on their mind – to get money to buy drugs and pills to get high.'

The boys who took part in this discussion further distinguished between roles within groups of children and youth: 'shields' (*Shnirebi*, from Russian street jargon), and 'bullers' (*Bulerebi*), or persons who bully others around:

When guys like that [the repeaters] turn 16 or 17 years old, they realize that they cannot go on like that and they can go to jail, so they force smaller guys, like 10- to 14-year-olds, to get money for them, and not only money. If they cannot make them do what they want, they trick them into gambling, so these poor little things have no other choice than to borrow lost money from them.

Creating subordinates through gambling debts is a technique mentioned time and again by interviewed youth. Ordinarily, however, older 'bullers' are skilled in evaluating the stamina of younger kids, spotting who they can 'work on' psychologically in order to get an upper hand. In turn, they offer protection in case of conflict.

The boys in our discussion also described rivalries over leadership, with reference to their own experiences with group life. One of them said,

To become a leader, [a boy] ought to be very smart. It's impossible to become a leader only by announcing 'I'm the Boss!'. When you successfully and wisely deal with a case and don't get caught, you earn a reputation and when this is repeated many times, you gradually become a leader of the group.

In other words, leadership derives from acquired skills, reputation and authority. One of the boys in our conversation had himself been a leader of a group in Tbilisi. He explained the nuances of gaining leadership through self-control and intimidation in the following way:

You have to know how to behave. For instance, if anyone swears at me and I beat him here, it won't be a reasonable act. But if I take him to the side and beat him there, I will become an example, and such behaviours step by step make you a leader.

In turn, relations between different groups are related to leadership: The reputation of a group's leader affects the way that others relate to both him and those who hang out with him. A violent leader affects the reputation of the members of his group. Moreover, in cases where a leader is known to be brutal, the organizational structure is strictly hierarchical, and internal codes of conduct are exercised through violence, sub-groups of children and youth resemble gangs (as defined in Aptekar & Stoecklin 2014:79-80, Heinonen 2011).

There does not seem to be a coordinated effort from police or the city on the criminal activities of gangs. Notably, one sect-like group in Tbilisi (known as the Morgue children) is territorially located in an under-ground area, and former members report that children are initiated into the group through rites, both by older youth and adults. Several youth we spoke with, who had been members of the group, held that the initiation rites for boys includes self-infliction. According to one former member, the group is led by a priest (kurum), who spends time with newcomers:

"He performs a lot of rituals, for instance, harming oneself. They believe in reincarnation of the soul. Members have to prove their fidelity to the devil. When you become a member of this sect, a lot of things take place: initially the kurum talks a lot to you, decides if you are a reliable person and if you deserve to become a member of the sect or not. The priest decides."

Fieldworker: So, what do you need to do to be trusted?

"If you are a girl and want to be trusted... They [girls] are usually sexually abused ... If you successfully overcome all these rituals and testing, you become a member and if not... you should get ready for the worst things! Then, they all do the worst things to you: They damage you, mutilate you physically."

One of the former members of this group suffered psychological trauma. Both youth formerly associated with the group, and other youth who had been in the territory explained that the territory the group occupies is left uninspected by state and city authorities.

Quite independently of the accounts from and about the Morgue children, narratives about internal group structures convey a pattern in which roles and activities among street-connected children change with age: Many children who formerly worked alongside their parents or kin gradually become more independent. Children younger than 14 are prone to being used on the front line of criminal activity, whereas older children attempt to control younger ones in order to avoid prosecution. Not all children attain superior patronage roles even as they become older, and this felt as a problem among many former street children.

Other aspects of street living, sleeping and violation of rights

During this study, fieldworkers did not ask former or current street-connected children direct questions about experiences of sexual abuse. However, service personnel talked about counselling street-connected children who had been involved in prostitution. Without adult guardians, girls seem to be particularly vulnerable to sexual abuse. Psychological trauma from violence and drug abuse were also reported by children and service personnel.

In one account, a boy who had lived in the street in Tbilisi explained that he, along with other friends, used money earned in the street to pay for sexual services. He listed this as one of the activities commonly undertaken by street children for entertainment. Other sources of entertainment specifically relate to social media, computer games and use of the internet. Children spend much time in internet cafés, they use Face-book and other social media to stay in touch, and they pay for access to use the internet.

At the same time, paying for access to internet cafés is also a pathway to shelter. Both boys and girls re-ported having paid from two to five lari to spend parts of the night in internet cafés. In some cafés, children are allowed to sleep, whereas in others, they stay awake and leave when the time they paid for is up or when the café employees tell them to. Children also sleep outdoors, in entranceways, under covers they collect themselves, and under the tables in bazaars and marketplaces and elsewhere. One group of children in Tbilisi had also teamed up and bought a tent, which they put up in an area near the city. Street families, as noted, often rent small flats by the day. Others put up shacks in the outskirts of the cities. In Kutaisi, one group of street families complained that they were often harassed by city youth, who disliked their presence.

Interviewers asked children about alcohol and drug use. The most commonly cited drug is marijuana, which seems to be easy to access and inexpensive, if not free of charge, when coming from local gardens. Most children express fear of stronger drugs. Cyclodol (an anti-Parkinson's drug affecting the central nervous system) is among the most commonly used drugs among those who admit to using, and some children said that they took one sheet of pills when they needed to get high. Cyclodol pills can be bought from drug-stores, and children often obtain them by buying them off friends and acquaintances. Alcohol use is also mentioned, whereas the sniffing of glue was hardly mentioned.

In addition to food, clothing, and internet use, children also spend money in public baths. While children who stay in touch with parents who dispose of a house or flat may return to take care of their hygiene, this is not the case for homeless children and youth. Many pay for showering or bathing and hide away toiletries in order to visit public facilities at more or less regular intervals. Most children know how to get help in cases of medical emergency, but regular medical check-ups are non-existent.

Some street-connected children recounted having combined street lives with schooling in some periods of their lives. Full-time schooling without delays is exceptional, however, where street-connected children are concerned. Challenges involved in introducing street-connected children to education include mental and physical challenges and lack of life skills more generally. Children who have attended school in their earlier childhood express intense wishes to return to education. When talking about their dreams for the future, obtaining an education is high on the list. Among careers, the children and youth we spoke, both boys and girls, mentioned becoming a cook. Others spoke of working in car and motor cycle repair maintenance, as electricians, or within the styling and beauty industry, as well as becoming teachers. Artistic professions are also held up as ideals.

In sum

Children stay and move together in groups or clusters in order to protect each other, to find places to spend the night, to create spaces for leisure and entertainment, to cultivate friendships, and to cooperate in economic activities like petty trading, street begging and petty crime. The internal organization of groups of street children corresponds to children's struggle for survival, as well as to their needs for protection. At the same time, groups develop codes of conduct and internal ties of dependence that potentially contribute to the perpetuation of street lives over time. Economic indebtedness also ties children to street livelihoods. Ties of dependence and structures of subordination also contribute to the recruitment of children younger than 14 to criminal activity. This is related to the lower age limit in Georgia of 14 years for criminal prosecution; older children use younger children to avoid criminal prosecution.

4. ENCOUNTERS: SERVICES, FAMILIES AND CHILDREN

This chapter addresses the needs for services among the different groups of children that live and work in the street. It also asks how existing services respond to the needs of sub-groups of street-connected children. In addition, we assess encounters between parents and services.

Sub-groups of children, different circumstances and needs

For the purposes of portraying children's different connections and dependencies in street circumstances, this report distinguishes between the extent to which children are cared for, controlled and/or accompanied by parents or adult kin. Services and preventive strategies must be assessed according to the particular circumstances and attachments of children.

Homeless children and youth (of the street) live and work in the streets, unaccompanied by adults and without protective care from parents. Some homeless children and youth stay in touch with their parents at irregular intervals. For this category of children and youth, relationships with parents are particularly challenging. Many of these children have chosen to avoid contact with one or both parents, or with other guardians in the home, because of a history of violence or as a result of conflict. Services, therefore, cannot assume that partnership with caretakers is ideal. In many cases, children should be protected from former caretakers. This must be kept in mind when attempting to reunite children with their parents, which, in many cases, is not possible or should be avoided.

Services for homeless children and youth should be sensitive to the fact that their social networks encompass *other* street-connected children and youth. Homeless children and youth should be regarded as valuable resources for the inclusion of new children into assistance programmes through practices of chain recruitment. The particular dynamic in children's social networks will necessarily involve both resources and threats: Children involved as subordinates in hierarchical street structures must be guarded against the latter, while not being deprived of the friendships they have made and that constitute a primary element in their emotional safety nets.

Unaccompanied children in the street, sleeping at home, spend most of their daytime hours working or otherwise engaging in economic activities in the street, unaccompanied by adults. They are provided for with food and/or resources by a parent on a regular basis, and themselves contribute with income to the family. Services to children in this category must encompass parents or current guardians as much as possible, yet be sensitive to children's potential need for protection from caretakers. Many of these children feel morally or otherwise obliged to contribute to the survival of their parents or guardians, or are tied to them by different forms of dependency and/or coercion. Additional economic support to parents should be considered to prevent children from taking part in economic activities in the street.

Street children of mobile street families is a diverse group that includes children who accompany or are accompanied by adults who are also street workers, and who work, but do not sleep in the streets. Social workers' existing contact with many families must be cultivated – and providing support to families is a main priority as starting point for assistance children. All services should aim at building partnerships with parents, unless histories of violence and/or other abuse indicate that children's

protection from their parents should be a main aim. Similar concerns relate to *children of homeless families*, but the children's medical needs must be devoted particular attention.

Five major language groups are represented among the street-connected children, in addition to a range of smaller ones. The five larger groups are Georgian, Moldovan Roma, Roma spoken by people identified as Boshia or Lom, the language spoken by Azerbaijani Kurds and Azerbaijani. Smaller groups include Armenian and Russian-speakers. Azerbaijani Kurdish, and the two different Romani languages are not mutually intelligible. Language barriers are significant in communication with these three groups.

The absolute majority of street-connected children tie their dreams of the future to obtaining an education. As Wargan & Dershem point out (2009: 55), barriers to schooling relate to the economic burden of providing children with school supplies, children's falling self-confidence when school performances are poor, difficulties to adapt to the rules and routines of school, and difficult conditions to concentrate on home-work. Also, the obligation felt by children to assist parents rather than going to school and the need of parents for their children's assistance in generating income are factors contributing to dropout and low enrolment. Among mobile street families in particular, expectations that children's education will pay off in economic terms are low. An additional factor that emerged during our interviews with parents in Azerbaijan is stigma: parents expected their children to be treated unfavourably because of their Kurdish identity. It is important to provide educational programmes for street-connected children to reduce the delay in their schooling.

These factors relating to children's education illuminate the value of close cooperation with parents. Before turning to parent's encounters with various services, however, we provide a brief overview of existing frameworks.

Current services in Azerbaijan and Georgia, an overview

Social assistance

Both Azerbaijan and Georgia have social assistance schemes for families with low income. In Azerbaijan, targeted social assistance (TSA) was introduced to low-income families in 2006. It is intended to cover the gap between minimum needs and income. In 2016 the amount need criteria was AZN 105 per month per family member (approx. USD 62), and in 2017 it was AZN 116 per month per family member (approx. USD 68). TSA is given only to those who are in possession of an ID card, and can be granted for up to two years (with possibility of renewal following a new application process). TSA is calculated based on number of family members. However, family members residing outside the country, or under governmental care, such as in prison, the military, or institutions for elderly, infants, children, disabled and so forth, are not included in the calculation for TSA.

In Georgia, targeted social assistance is provided for families in need. Families' needs are assessed by agents from the Social Service Agency (under the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs). The benefits are graded according to a score ranging from GEL 30 to 60 per month per family member (approx. USD 12–25) (see annex 1). As in Azerbaijan, persons in residential care are excluded from targeted social assistance, but in Georgia, there is no limit to the number of years that a family can receive TSA.

Services for children

The services available to street-related children vary between Georgia and Azerbaijan. In Azerbaijan, there are three main actors in the field relating to street-connected children:

First, among **government** actors, the *Ministry of Education* operates closed facilities for children who commit offences before the lower age of criminal responsibility, as well as those placed there for other reasons.

On a district level, there is a *Commission on the Protection of Rights of Children and Affairs of Juveniles*, which is tasked with preventive work on behalf of at-risk children and families. However, on the district level, no system of social work exists, nor is there a staff of qualified, trained social workers.

Every district benefits from two *Police Child Inspectors*. They have more of an accusatory role than a protective profile, as their mandate is to deal with children who demonstrate disruptive or ill-adapted behaviours. Police stations are equipped with temporary detention rooms. Suspected offenders, including children, can be kept in isolation for up to 48 hours. Street children are sometimes kept in these detention rooms for preventive purposes. Beggars, children purposely avoiding education, and children with disruptive or ill-adapted behaviours are listed as minors that require such preventive actions.

There are 11 family support centres under the supervision of and receiving financial support from the *State Committee on Family, Women and Children Affairs*. These centres are intended to serve poor families, but are not directed at children outside a family structure.

The *Department of Public Security* coordinates activities of one transit centre/shelter in Baku where children who are not under parental care are referred by the police. The children are kept there until they are reunited with parents/guardians or referred to public care.

Second, organizations related to the **United Nations**, including UNICEF and IOM, have ongoing programmes for street children. IOM financially supports the Azerbaijan Children Union to cover some of the expenses at a shelter for expanding social services for migrants, including children who are vulnerable to trafficking. UNICEF supports the government to design programmes and services to address the needs of street children. In addition, UNICEF cooperates with NGOs in five regions to provide free legal services to children and their families.

Third, **NGO** actors have changed in recent years. Most international organizations left Azerbaijan in 2013. The 11 above-mentioned family centres were established by Save the Children before being handed over to the state. The above-mentioned transit centre/shelter in Baku is run by a local NGO. It provides temporary placement to street children identified by the police. The local NGO Place of Hope provides shelter and help to street children and has a capacity of 40 children. Moreover, some NGOs are indirectly involved with street children, providing assistance to victims of trafficking, victims of violence and abuse, young offenders in detention centres, and vulnerable children and poor families. Some NGOs also provide free legal aid.

In contrast to the closed facilities in Azerbaijan, services in **Georgia** are characterized by a focus on rehabilitation and reintegration. First, among the **government** actors, there is a psychosocial rehabilitation and reintegration sub-programme for vulnerable children below 18 years of age in Georgia under the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs. The sub-programme includes three activities:

- (1) Mobile teams react on referrals, visiting reported locations. Authorized social workers from the Social Service Agency coordinate the work of the mobile teams.
- (2) Day care services provide different services such as food, individual care, and medical and psychological support, in addition to trying to maintain links with biological families.
- (3) 24-hour shelters include night stays and an additional meal in addition to the services offered by the day care centres.

Note that as part of this programme, the Ministry of Education and Science has programmes that include vulnerable children while raising anti-stigma awareness raising for parents in public schools. A programme for out-of-school children is supported by the Ministry of Education and Science, with the aim of providing 'second chance education' to dropouts, linking day-care services with the conventional schools. This transitional educational programme provides teachers and school principals with training, and provides former street-connected children with life skills training in order to enable learning.

The government programmes partly grew out of cooperation with **UN actors**. From 2011 to 2014, UNICEF and the EU supported the establishment of mobile teams, shelters, day care centres and other services. This also includes foster care arrangements and small group homes. UNICEF currently has no programme that directly supports children living and working in the streets.

As for **NGOs**, World Vision and Caritas Georgia provide services in day care centres and 24-hour shelters. They also contribute to the mobile team service. MoLHSA contributes financially to these services, but in order to provide proper quality, the organizations must contribute about the same amount as the state. In addition, a local NGO provides state-funded services.

It should be noted that Georgia has implemented a general de-institutionalization policy, dismantling the Soviet-era orphanages. However, large institutions for children are still run by the Orthodox Church in Georgia. We do not have information about the conditions in these facilities.

ID papers, the gateway to services

ID papers are required in both Azerbaijan and Georgia to access educational and health services, to receive targeted social assistance, and to obtain a passport. The lack of ID papers comes up repeatedly in children's narratives of problems with schooling. In Georgia, arrangements have been put in place in a manner which allows statutory social workers from the Social Service Agency to provide temporary ID papers, even in cases where a birth certificate is lacking. In Azerbaijan, local NGOs (Azerbaijan Children Union and Place of Hope) and public residential institutions for children assist children in getting ID, following their official recognition as guardians by court decision.

Even though some schools in Georgia do allow children to attend school without ID papers, children encounter difficulties when sitting for exams. For instance, Lizi, a 17-year-old Georgian girl, explained that she was born out of wedlock in Georgia to a Georgian mother and a father from Dagestan, the latter whom she has never known. Her mother gave birth at home, according to Lizi, as she was an 'unwanted child' and the birth was regarded as socially illegitimate. In effect, she never obtained a birth certificate and had no ID card. One of the service centres had recently helped her obtain temporary ID papers, which she received a month prior to our conversation. However, the lacking papers had caused her educational troubles. She attended two different schools over 10 years: 'I

suppose having a document wasn't necessary at that time, my mom took me to school'. However, she could not go on to grade 11, as school personnel required her to pay (an illegitimate fee) in spite of the fact that the school was public: 'I had to pay money due to lack of documents'. Also, she says, there was a requirement to sit an exam before transferring to the 11th grade, which she could not do due to lacking ID papers.

Many Romani families in Georgia lack ID papers and thus are not qualified to receive targeted social assistance. In Azerbaijan, attempts to obtain ID papers among the Azerbaijani Kurdish population seem to be complicated by a series of factors. Many families complain about complex relationships with state representatives in local communities (ex-Comms) who are meant to facilitate the process. However, several Azerbaijani Kurdish families expressed the view that they do not expect service from the state, and that contact with the state and provincial authorities does not pay off: It is time-consuming and expensive. In effect, many quite systematically withdraw from state services – they avoid registering births, do not seek ID papers, and do not apply for social support. Some also seem to withhold ID papers and other documentation in an effort to keep away from state officials. Some government officials interviewed for the current study legitimated these families' scepticism, describing Azerbaijani Kurdish families as drug users and their children as unfit for ordinary schooling.

Parents and families

What are the factors facilitating new groups of children to move into urban areas in Georgia from rural and suburban areas to live in the streets? In the case of children moving from Azerbaijan, most are accompanied by adults or guardians, and hence adult perspectives are key. As noted in the introductory chapter, we have limited information on non-Azerbaijani Kurdish migrants into Georgia. For Azerbaijan, only ethnic minorities were interviewed. The material is biased towards the perspectives of parents who accompany children into the street, at the expense of perspectives of parents of homeless children and/or abandoned children and runaways. As for Georgia, few interviews were carried out with parents, and here too, the material contains a bias in favour of parents of street families. Interviewing Georgian parents whose children live and/or work in the street due to conflict, alcohol or drug abuse in the home as not possible within the framework of the current study.

Cultures of mobility: Past success and present decline

As described in chapter 3, migration between rural and urban areas in Georgia, and from rural areas in Azerbaijan to Georgia, partly takes the form of migration related to seasonal livelihoods of trade, imports for petty commerce, begging and other forms of street work and agriculture. Despite notions of families' traditional adaption to travelling livelihoods among Azerbaijani Kurds and traditional handicraft and metal work occupations among some sedentary Roma in Georgia, the older generation expressed a profound sense of changing economic times and lost opportunities lost. This colours their own perspective on the difficulties and challenges faced by their children and grandchildren. One older man from the Azerbaijani Kurdish community expressed the following opinion:

Murad

The man we here refer to as Murad is in his mid-sixties and has nine adult children who all (except one daughter with a disability) earn a living in a way that involves extensive travelling and seasonal migration, mostly back and forth to Georgia: 'A migratory way of life is our

tradition', he said. However, his offspring are stay increasingly longer in Georgia. A case in point is one of his sons who originally left to settle in the town of Yevlakh in Azerbaijan. Murad's son has nine children, but no regular employment: 'He doesn't have anything either. He is a man "without gown". He sells different stuff in Georgia. Georgia is a place for orphans', Murad said, indicating that his son is a person with no job and place to live. Now, his son stays almost permanently in Georgia, travelling along with some of his children between Kutaisi, Batumi, Sukhumi, Varkilidze, Rustaveli and Samqori, says Murad. They rarely return, not even for weddings and funerals.

When asked whether he himself ever held a permanent job, Murad answered, 'Yes, during Soviet times I worked and had a decent salary. But then the world changed, deteriorated, and with it, people's lives deteriorated. Now there are officials who cannot read nor write, but people should bow to them. There are such things ..'

After the fall of the Soviet Union, Murad started travelling between Georgia and Azerbaijan: 'At that time, the children were very small. They were about 5 or 6 years old. Since then they mostly live there, in Georgia. But 20 years have passed since I travelled back and forth there.'

Murad explained that his children in Georgia travel around with their children and do not rent regular housing: 'You know, like Garachi. We can't deny that we are Garachi. The family scatters around in order to bring bread to home'. This lifestyle is difficult to maintain, he explained, sharing that his contact with his children and grandchildren is becoming increasingly less frequent:

'More precisely nowadays it is technology time... They don't [stay in] touch [with] me, don't tell me a word. I have a daughter-in-law who has come to the area no, she has been here for one or two months, but didn't visit me yet or serve me a cup of tea. When my sons send me money, I send some to her. She's got small kids. She needs help more than I do, I am alone. It is not so difficult to care for one person.'

The interviewer also discussed the issue of education with Murad:

Interviewer: *Did you give education to your children at that time, when you were in Georgia?*

Murad: *No, they didn't want to go to school. A child should also have desire to study.*

Interviewer: *What about your grandchildren? Do they have a desire to go to school?*

Murad: *No, they don't have a desire to study either.*

Interviewer: *Have you ever tried to enrol them [your own children] in school?*

Murad: *Other children were calling them Garachi so my children didn't want to go to school.*

Interviewer: *Do you think that was the reason why they didn't go to school?*

Murad: *They, too, had no desire. On the other hand, they are so used to living there [in Georgia], nothing can keep them here. You can stop them by placing them in remote places, districts, cities, boarding schools. Otherwise, these rural schools are useless to involve them in education.*

Interviewer: *Would you like your grandchildren to study?*

Murad: *Of course, I would. I'd like them to be educated. It is a pity to live an illiterate life and die illiterately, especially at a time like today.*

Interviewer: *Give it a try to enrol them in school.*

Murad: *I don't think it will work.*

Interviewer: *You said earlier that you wanted to enrol the children in school but didn't as other children called them Garachi. What other barriers do you encounter to their schooling?*

Murad: *Being Garachi in some way, it is like black paint on you. Being Garachi says it all. If someone starts to call you Garachi, others will also start calling you that. One will soon become 15 people. How can a child go to school in such circumstances?*

The devaluation of the manat in 2015 also gave rise to difficult economic circumstances in Azerbaijan. Several older people in the border areas talked about these difficulties as factors increasing the need to find livelihoods elsewhere. Another commonly held view among Azerbaijani Kurds, both young and old, is that people are more willing to give money to strangers in Georgia than in Azerbaijan.

'We know what you want': Protecting children from child protection

The experience of stigma expressed by Murad in his statements about his children's lack of schooling conveys a deep-seated sense of discrimination. This came to the fore also in the conversation with Murad, when he was asked about social assistance.

Interviewer: *Have you ever applied for social allowance?*

Murad: *No one gives that to us.*

Interviewer: *Did you go to the Department of Social Protection here?*

Murad: *They say we don't qualify.*

Interviewer: *Have you ever applied? What did they say you?*

Murad: *They bring up different reasons. When my wife was still alive, she paid a lot of money for the preparation of documents, but that didn't work either. They don't give us an allowance.*

Interviewer: *Do you receive any allowance for your daughter who is sick [diasabled], the one who lives with you?*

Murad: *We receive only 55 manats. This amount hardly covers expenses for electricity, gas, money for weddings and funerals. It doesn't cover those expenses, of course; therefore we borrow, and when we receive a pension, money goes to debt.*

Interviewer: *Do any of your children [in Georgia] with many children receive child allowance?*

Murad: *When the wife of my eldest son passed away, he used to receive an allowance for his children. Now he receives only for his son, and that will be stopped soon.*

Interviewer: *Your children have small children. Most likely they didn't apply. You said earlier that they stay permanently in Georgia. They need to fill out required documents for the application here. Whoever has more than five children qualifies for the child allowance.*

Murad: *We applied for the allowance but they didn't give [it to us].*

Murad's sense of resignation may conceal actual benefits that his children are receiving in Georgia. Even so, the sentiments he expresses conveys a more general sense of stigma and anticipated prejudice, which is widely shared. Similar sentiments came to the fore when we contacted young Kurdish parents in the border areas to talk about their children's schooling. A standard response to fieldworkers' initial inquiries was 'We know what you want!' Parents believed that the real agenda of fieldworkers was to document child neglect, and they expressed fear – and anger – about Georgian authorities taking Azerbaijani children into their care.

The mothers who expressed these views referred to experiences among other Azerbaijani Kurdish parents of losing their children to Georgian Social Services. Following a legal amendment in Georgia in June 2016, this fear has renewed force, as seen from the point of view of parents. In this amendment to the Law on Combating Domestic Violence, Assistance and Protection for Victims of Domestic Violence, the authority of a social worker of the Social Service Agency was expanded to include separating a child from his or her family or other responsible person in case of violence against the child. Separating children from their parents is a measure of last resort when other measures for the protection of the child prove ineffective (cf. annex 1). Nevertheless, stories exchanged among parents may contribute to increased withdrawal from contact with services for children. Communication about the practices of social services with this group of parents therefore seems particularly important.

Encounters between services, caretakers, families and children

As noted earlier, the stigma felt in minority communities in both Azerbaijan and Georgia is partly expressed by service providers, too, in their claims about the ethnic origin of beneficiaries, especially among the Azerbaijani Kurds. In Azerbaijan, there is a generally held view that Azerbaijani Kurds are lying about their origin: 'They are not who they say they are' is a common statement among ex-Comm representatives in the districts and among police officers, teachers and health workers. Even in the Baku shelter for street children, the same view was presented as a fact.

An underlying assumption about the success of services appears in some contexts of service provision. It concerns the transition to 'life after street life', especially in foster care arrangements that implement ideals of strict discipline. Some of these programmes, as experienced by children, convey the idea that children should be separated and isolated from their former life in order to reduce bad influences and increase their chances of being reintegrated as a new social person in the future. One example was given in the statements by Irina (chapter 2), who ran away from the foster family she was placed in. Another child, a friend, was also placed in the same foster family, but they ran away as they could not accept the strict conditions in the family. According to Irina, the family did not allow her to go out or socialize with her friends. Therefore, Irina left to stay in the street.

A similar opposition to strict rules was described by Jaba (also in chapter 2), whose childhood in Samtredia involved being put in the special school for juvenile offenders. He escaped, he said, because the school was 'a very closed system', and he longed for the times when pupils of his same age from the nearby public school came for visits.

Moreover, accounts from youth convey that they experience harsh discipline as an attempt to limit their social world in a manner they cannot live with. Quite obviously, foster families partly attempt to isolate youth from the criminal activity – and dependencies – in which they have previously been engaged. This must be done with particular care, though, as the categorical cutting off of contact with a personal network may lead to social isolation.

In Azerbaijan, the notion of a rite of passage, the passing between categorically different stages of childhood, also had ethnic overtones. Upon a visit to the Baku shelter for children in difficult life situations, one employee recounted having seen immense progress in one beneficiary, a young girl from a Garachi family. In order to prove the success of the programme the employee stated, 'you see, if you put this girl in the middle of a line of other children, no one can detect that she was once

a Garachi! In this context, then, rehabilitation is attributed a highly performative dimension. The transition to a new social state is portrayed as dependent on a total break with one's cultural origins.

A long trajectory of discrimination, not to mention parents' fears of losing custody of their children, contributes to the particular difficulties experienced in outreach to members of the Azerbaijani Kurdish community in Georgia. Language barriers are also an issue – not simply because they inhibit communication, but also because language differences lie at the heart of Azerbaijani Kurdish identity, and of the stigma against them.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The aim of this study is to provide information in order to better tailor prevention and exit strategies for children at risk of living or already living in the streets. The study demonstrates that the population of children living and/or working in the street in both Georgia and Azerbaijan is highly diverse. Though street lives and characteristics of street children are complex, we can identify certain patterns. Responses to challenges street children face should be assessed in line with these patterns. This chapter sums up the main elements that have been raised relating to characteristics, needs and challenges of sub-categories and groups of children, and builds on these insights to present policy recommendations.

Lessons learned

The presentation of the main findings is organized in line with the seven research questions outlined in chapter 1.

Differentiation of children: Parental accompaniment and ethnicity

Question 1:

How can the internal differentiation of children living and/or working in the streets – and their circumstances – be described in terms of children's accompaniment of adults, family or relatives, and children's ethnicity and/or geographical or national origin? How can we describe children living and/or working in the streets in terms of sub-groups according to the mentioned criteria, as well as age, gender and other relevant parameters?

The circumstances of children's street connectedness in Georgia can be portrayed in terms of parental accompaniment and contact, namely the extent to which children are cared for, controlled and/or accompanied by, parents or adult kin. Based on this dimension, findings from Georgia suggest that the population of street-connected children in Georgia can be classified as follows:

- Homeless children and youth (of the street): Youth/children who live and work in the streets, unaccompanied by adults and without protective care from parents. Most of them stay in touch with their parents at irregular intervals.
- Unaccompanied children in the street, sleeping at home: Children who spend most of their daytime hours working or otherwise engaging in economic activities in the street, unaccompanied by adults, but who are provided for with food and/or resources by a parent on a regular basis, and who themselves contribute with income to the family.
- Street children of mobile street families: Children who accompany or are accompanied by adults who are also street workers, and who work, but do not sleep in the streets.
- Children of homeless families: Children of homeless families are similar to children of mobile street families, but they do not return to a home at night.

Note that both boys and girls are represented among all the groups of street-connected children outlined here.

The population of street-connected children can be differentiated along linguistic and ethnic lines: In Georgia, ethnic Georgians, two groups of Romani-speakers, Azerbaijani Kurds, and children of refugees from Armenia and IDPs from South Ossetia and Abkhazia predominate.

The diversity of street-connected children according to parental accompaniment has an ethnic dimension, but diversity and variation cannot be understood in ethnic terms alone: To some extent, the distinctions underlying the different sub-categories outlined here reflect ethnic distinctions. Among the group of *homeless youth children of the street*, representatives of all origins are to be found. However, children of Azerbaijani Kurdish origin are rarely to be found among the youngest of these children, and even when older, they remain in touch at irregular intervals with other kin. We did not encounter Azerbaijani Kurdish girls among this sub-category during our fieldwork, however. It should be underlined that Roma youth are also represented among the homeless youth, quite contrary to stereotypes about the universal tightly knit sociality of Roma families. The *unaccompanied children/youth in the street, sleeping at home* group also includes children of all backgrounds, and many of these girls and boys self-identify as ethnic Georgians. However, among the *street children of mobile street families* there is an over-representation of Moldovan Roma and Azerbaijani Kurds, including both boys and girls. The same applies to homeless families.

At the same time, inference of ethnicity should be made with particular care, as different ethnicities are represented along the entire spectrum of street circumstances and at different phases of childhood. Moreover, though patterns within the population of street-connected children have an ethnic dimension, the street child complex should not be regarded as a cultural phenomenon alone, or an issue of 'mentality'.

Children's affiliation to street sub-groups is as much as aspect of age and life cycle as it is a substantive belonging: Some children tend to move from accompanied to unaccompanied with increasing age. Again, we caution about ethnic stereotypes: Minority children (like Azerbaijani Kurds or Roma) are *also* represented among the groups here labelled unaccompanied and homeless youth, thus breaking with the received idea that all Roma children are part of closely-knit family structures.

The social organization of children's street lives

Question 2:

How can the social organization of children be described – internally within sub-groups and between different groups – particularly with respect to cooperation regarding livelihood, hierarchies and structures of dependency, and debt and indebtedness? To what extent does this coincide with drug use and violence, or threats of violence? How does this contribute to the perpetuation of street life in different ways among different sub-groups?

Older children develop separate codes of conduct and internal ties of dependence: These ties are part of the informal protection strategies children themselves develop, but may also contribute to the perpetuation of street lives over time, as they occasionally involve the introduction of children into criminal activity and violent behaviour.

The diversity of children who live and/or work in the street additionally consists of distinctions between different groups, cliques or clusters of children. The internal organization of these groups partly entails practices of assistance and sharing: Children stay and move together in groups or clusters in order to protect each other, to find places to spend the night, to create spaces

for leisure and entertainment, to cultivate friendships, and to cooperate in economic activities like petty trading, street begging and petty crime.

Internal group structure occasionally implies that children go into debt to each other and/or to outsiders: Debt potentially ties children to street livelihoods in the longer term.

Some groups of children divide children into seniors/superiors and subordinates: The other side of the coin of children's mutual assistance and protection is the creation of structures of subordination, talked about among children and youth as using subordinate children as 'shields' – pushing them to carry out criminal activities and hand over profits to other children and youth. Often, this is organized so that criminal activity – like stealing from shops and stalls, breaking into and/or stealing valuables from cars – is carried out by younger children, with older children keeping guard while the younger children carry the loot. This is related to the lower age limit in Georgia of 14 years for criminal prosecution; older children use younger children to avoid criminal prosecution.

The police seem to make active use of the minimum criminal age of 14 years, thus encouraging 'superior' children's use of younger children for criminal purposes: Children give accounts of the ways in which police officers, when arresting groups of children in connection with theft or other criminal activity, assume or actively suggest that the children younger than 14 should admit guilt. Youth speculate that they do so in order to avoid paperwork and follow-up.

Some sub-groups of children and youth in the street have gang-like structures: These groups may be small or large. Their organization has a territorial aspect, with groups attempting to control parts of town or neighbourhoods in order to control opportunities for economic activities (petty trading, begging, etc.). There are occasionally clashes over control over districts between these groups. As noted, internal codes of conduct and ties of dependence may contribute to the perpetuation of street lives over time, and are a potential source of recruitment into criminal activity and violence.

Factors facilitating children's street lives and new recruits

Question 3:

What are the factors facilitating or pushing new children to take to the streets? What encourages new groups to move into Georgian urban areas from abroad, and from rural and suburban areas, to live in the streets?

Main factors contributing to the introduction of new children to lives in the streets include

- Parents' poverty and involvement of children in activities aimed at assisting parents, effectively leading to situations of child labour either due to a deep-felt sense of obligation among children vis-à-vis parents, or as a result of relatives' demands on children's labour
- Parents' forced migration and ensuing livelihood challenges, causing difficulties in providing for children
- A parent's death, imprisonment, illness and/or substance abuse, leading to child abandonment or neglect and a need for the child to provide for him or herself
- Domestic violence – physical or psychological – leading to the child's preferring life outside of the home

- Strict discipline – i.e. categorical limitations of their social networks and overly strict rules – in rehabilitation or service institutions, foster family care or closed juvenile schools, leading children and youth to prefer street lives to rules, and leading to repeated escapes from care institutions
- Socialization among children and youth, leading children to (gradually) reduce the time spent in the home and increasingly spend more time with other street connected youth

A factor that also seems to encourage children’s living in the streets relate to the possibilities of earning a living in the tourist resorts by the Black Sea: Street-connected children’s livelihoods take the form in part of seasonal migration. This applies both to children of mobile street families and to many of the unaccompanied children. The seasonal migratory movements in part follow the agricultural seasons, as some mobile families take part in agricultural work in Azerbaijan. Most of all, though, migrants follow tourist flows that bring not only Azerbaijani families but also Georgian street families and unaccompanied children and youth to Batumi, Kobuleti, Ureki, and other sites along the Black Sea in the tourist season.

Differences in social assistance schemes in Georgia and Azerbaijan, and different legal frameworks, lead many Azerbaijani families to migrate to Georgia: With particular reference to new groups of Azerbaijani adult and child migrants to Georgia, factors encouraging migration underlined by interlocutors include

- deteriorating economic circumstances in Azerbaijan following devaluation of the currency, and longer-term challenges relating to unemployment and the continuation of traditional livelihoods;
- stricter enforcement of the legal prohibition on street work and begging in Azerbaijan and the higher willingness to give money (as charity) to street workers and beggars in Georgia; and
- the economic profit to be earned from the import of certain goods from Georgia for resale in Azerbaijan.

Essential rights violations

Question 4:

What are the most important rights violations among children living and/or working in the streets, including violations of rights to health and educational services, issues of protection relating to violence, etc.?

Violence, education and health: Children who work and live in the street are particularly vulnerable to violence from caretakers and fellow street youth. The absolute majority of street-connected children do not have access to either education or medical services beyond emergency care.

Internal group dynamics among street-connected children may also entail sexual reward structures that expose girls to abuse: With reference to one of the groups in Tbilisi, testimonies from children who were affiliated in the past reveal that girls must supply sexual services to older gang (or sect) members. Former affiliates of other groups reported using part of their incomes to pay for sexual services. This indicates that trauma from sexual abuse among street-connected children is likely, a point reiterated by psychologists interviewed for the current study. Other forms of psychological trauma from violence and drug abuse are also reported by children and service personnel.

The hard-to-reach Azerbaijani children in Georgia

Question 5:

Based on the experience of service providers, children who identify themselves (and speak) Azerbaijani are the most difficult to reach in Georgia. What are the factors contributing to this relative isolation or hard-to-reach-ness? Is it related to language barriers, social organization (e.g. children's different bonds to parents, employers or others), issues of discipline, or other factors?

A long trajectory of discrimination and fears of losing custody of children contribute to the particular difficulties experienced in outreach to members of the Azerbaijani Kurdish community in Georgia. Parents withdraw from services in fear of losing custody of their children. The language issue is also relevant: lack of Azerbaijani Kurdish language competence in services inhibits proper communication and feeds into experiences among Azerbaijani Kurds of being accused of lying about their backgrounds.

Younger children among Azerbaijani Kurds participate in household income generating activities, and many parents rely on their services. Among children with Azerbaijani Kurdish backgrounds, younger children accompany their parents and assist them in securing income for the home.

Needs for services

Question 6:

What are the different needs for services of the different groups of children living and/or working in the streets?

The majority of street-connected children lack access to education, medical services beyond emergency care, and services to protect them from violence and abuse, including child labour.

Unaccompanied children in the street, sleeping at home: In order to secure children's rights to education and health services, services should as far as possible encompass parents or current guardians. Many unaccompanied children sleeping at home feel morally or otherwise obliged to contribute to the survival of their parents or guardians, or are subject to different forms of coercion by parents or other family members forcing them to engage in labour activities. Providing additional economic support to parents and helping them finding employment should therefore be considered as strategies to prevent children's income-generating activities and strengthen parental caregiving capacity. Parents and guardians should also be included in partnerships to ensure their children's participation in education.

At the same time, services to unaccompanied children sleeping in a home must be initiated by an assessment of the conditions in their current home. In cases of substance abuse among parents/guardians, violence and/or mental health issues in the home, possibilities of building partnerships with parents may be limited. Children's need for protection from violence and abuse from current guardians must also be assessed, and in some cases, separating children from their parents should be considered, in line with legal provisions.

Street children of mobile street families: As with services for unaccompanied children sleeping at home, services for street children of mobile families must encompass the families. The aim must be to strengthen parents' caregiving capacities. All services should aim at building partnerships with parents, unless there is a history of violence and/or other abuse, in which case protecting children from their parents is more important.

As noted, Roma and Azerbaijani Kurds are over-represented among mobile street families. Services must therefore take into account the social and cultural stigma associated with these ethnic affiliations. Moreover, the informal discrimination against members of Roma and Azerbaijani Kurdish in the labour market must be taken into account in efforts to secure employment. Again, however, the overall aim is to facilitate regular and long-term of employment that does not require labour input from children.

The seasonal migration of street families raises particular challenges in terms of the children's education. Providing assistance to families to arrange for children to remain in school while their caretakers travel should therefore be a priority. Alternatively, educational solutions enabling children to commute between educational institutions in their different homes should be encouraged. The latter solution could be facilitated by arranging for seasonal educational facilities, for example by the Black Sea coast, and encouraging partnerships with parents related to children's participation in such arrangements.

In more general terms, social workers' existing contact with mobile families must be cultivated. Offering services to families in their own language must be a priority, and recruitment of service workers from these language communities is an urgent need.

Similar to services for unaccompanied children (discussed above), services for children of mobile families must encompass assessments of children's need for protection from current caretakers. Child labour concerns are paramount in this context.

Children of homeless families: Services for children of homeless families are very similar to those for street children of mobile street families; however, assisting these families in finding shelter must be a main priority, and is a precondition for enabling the children's enrolment in school. It is highly likely that children in this category have particular needs for medical assistance, given challenging hygiene conditions and the lack of facilities for food preparation. Given that most of these children are young, their vaccination status should also be closely monitored.

Homeless children and youth: Most homeless children and have been abandoned or they have left their home for a reason. Consequently, establishing partnerships with parents is particularly challenging and children in this group will often need protection from parents or guardians. This must be kept in mind when attempting to reunite children with parents, which, in many cases, should be avoided.

Services for homeless children and youth should build on their existing social networks of mutual assistance. Educational programmes should bear this in mind, and should encourage skills and vocational training that enable the children's future participation in (or establishment of) commercial activities and other sustainable income-generating activities that interest them, *in cooperation with other youth*. Ideas for such services could be within mechanics, car and motorcycle maintenance, food preparation and serving, childcare and youth outreach, body art and beauty services, and so on. Apprenticeship arrangements should be developed in conjunction with educational programmes.

Educational programmes, including vocational training and network development of this kind, should simultaneously include the development of mechanisms for sharing experiences among peers, for instance through regular meetings, social media portals, etc.

Homeless children and youth often have particular rehabilitation needs as a result of longer-term neglect. Psychological counselling must be strengthened to address experiences of physical and mental abuse, including sexual abuse. Also note that the economic indebtedness of many of these children and youth must be assessed at the start of rehabilitation. Many will also be creditors, serving as patrons to other children, who owe them money or services. Such ties of debt and dependence must be taken into consideration at the beginning of rehabilitation, and obtaining information about such ties requires the building of trust between service workers and children.

Existing services

Question 7:

How do existing services respond to the needs of sub-groups of children living and/or working in the streets?

In Georgia, existing services aimed at street-related children, including day-care services, 24-hour shelters and mobile team activities, currently focus on children's needs. In Azerbaijan, there are no mobile teams and services provided to children are limited.

In both countries, services for parents and families of street children are limited. Social assistance to families exists in Georgia, but is less developed in Azerbaijan, and should be evaluated in both countries with a view to how it effects children's living conditions. Assistance for parents in securing employment must be strengthened, as lack of regular employment and sudden loss of work are factors contributing to children's involvement in household income-generating activities and introduction to street life. Moreover, an overall approach that emphasizes establishing partnership with families, rather than sanctioning parents, should be privileged. Among mobile families, in particular, the potential intervention of mobile teams is often associated with risk of losing custody of children (cf. chapter 4). Separating children from their families must be a last resort, otherwise services risk being interpreted as contributing to deepening the stigma faced by mobile families. Moreover, the tools for supporting families should be expanded.

Providing services for both children and families requires increased funding. The services for children in day-care centres and in 24-hour shelters currently require NGO funding in addition to government funding.

As noted, service personnel should reflect the ethnic diversity of the street child population. Services must also reflect the fact that different children need different services, depending on their different street trajectories.

Recommendations

Recommendations are grouped in preventive and responsive measures and distinguished according to whether they are directed at government agencies and service providers. Within each of these categories, we have made a prioritized list of recommendations. However, as the recommendations are directed to different actors and target groups, these priorities should not be considered as absolute.

Preventive measures

Generally, current services for street-connected children should be regarded as preventive initiatives as well as ameliorating measures, as they prevent younger children from continuing onto new stages of street life.

Government agencies

Preventive services should involve the following:

1. **Screening tools:** Considering the factors that introduce new children to street lives (listed above), primary prevention should include a screening tool tailored to the needs of at-risk children and families to be used in government services that encounter at-risk parents. The screening tool should include an assessment of the conditions of children in the adult's care. Such a screening tool should be in use in:
 - the prison service, when a parent is sentenced to imprisonment;
 - health services, when a parent suffers a sudden physical or mental health issue;
 - police services and/or social services following the death of a parent, cases of parents' substance abuse and in cases of domestic violence; and
 - social services in cases where parents are continually unemployed or suddenly are out of work.
2. **ID papers:** A recurrent complaint among mobile street families from Azerbaijan is the lack of ID papers for children born outside of health facilities in Georgia. Outreach to families in Georgia – as well as in Azerbaijan, must have as a main aim that all children be provided with ID papers at birth, whether they are born in health facilities or not.
3. **Minority policies and work to reduce stigma:** Minority policies and politics of integration must be geared towards the particular needs and risks of children. In both Azerbaijan and Georgia, research on language diversity among minority populations should be encouraged. Moreover, insights from this research should be systematically communicated to policy makers, service and assistance workers and the general population. The aim of these efforts is to reduce the stigma against minority populations in both countries and to raise the level of competence in public offices, which today is remarkably low and remains based on assumptions and ill-advised identity labels that the populations in question resent.
4. **Cooperation between Georgia and Azerbaijan on rules and the application of law:** Migration of children from street families between Azerbaijan and Georgia is a particular concern, and one

that requires direct cooperation between authorities in the two countries. Harmonization of rules and the application of law relating to economic street activities would reduce the incentive for regular travel.

5. **Social services:** Cooperation between social services in Georgia and Azerbaijan is difficult due to the lack of mobile teams and social services in local communities in Azerbaijan. Social services in Azerbaijan should be strengthened, both to help prevent children's recruitment to street life and to enable cooperation between the two countries on the establishment of joint referral mechanisms. International donors can assist in facilitating competence development in such a process.

Service providers, including NGOs

Secondary prevention measures should include

1. **Education of foster families** to encourage alternative and less strict rules for children placed in foster care.
2. **Redefinition of rules in rehabilitation and service institutions**, such as closed juvenile schools, as overly strict rules and the cut-off of children's friendships lead to children and youth escapes and re-introduction to street life.
3. **Screening tool:** The development of a screening tool to be used in day care services and 24-hour shelters, to cover at-risk siblings and close relatives of street-related children.
4. **Additional economic and social support to at-risk parents.** Support to families must include improved supervision in finding employment, and assistance in establishing income-generating activities. Again, the overall aim is to facilitate families' regular and longer-term employment that do not require labour input from children. Services must take into account the social and cultural stigma associated with Roma and Azerbaijani Kurdish ethnic affiliations, and the informal discrimination against these populations in the labour market.
5. **Psychological counselling of parents:** Preventive strategies involving parents should also include psychological counselling in cases when a history of mental health issues, substance abuse and violence in the family put children at risk of entering street lives.

Response measures

Government agencies and international donors

1. **Availability of services:** Service centres should follow the migratory flows between Georgia and Azerbaijan and, more specifically, the higher numbers of street-related children along the Black Sea coast in the tourist season. Authorities must set aside funding for services along the Black Sea coast, where social service coverage is lacking. In this area, both children accompanied by parents and unaccompanied children engage in economic activities, and hence, the availability of services in both day-care centres and 24-hour shelters should be expanded. In addition, specialized services along the border areas on the Azerbaijani side are lacking and should be developed.

2. **Social safety net for families of street-connected children:** The establishment and strengthening of social safety nets are not only preventive measures, but should be considered as response mechanisms. Capacity building relating to – and funding for – social services for families of street-connected children should be a priority for government agencies and international donors.
3. **The funding of NGO services for street-connected children:** Georgian authorities channel funding of services for street connected children partly through NGOs. This funding, however, is not sufficient to cover NGOs' expenses. To ensure sustainable and quality care services, funding should be increased to cover de facto costs.
4. **Legal reform: Child exploitation as a separate crime:** The Georgian Criminal Code does not list child exploitation as a separate crime (it addresses this issue only in relation to trafficking). To strengthen children's legal protections, this legal void should be addressed.
5. **Response of city authorities and police to criminal activities:** There does not seem to be a coordinated effort from police or city authorities regarding criminal activities among street-connected children and the abuse of children. Consequently, city authorities and police must respond to the following:
 - Areas in cities of Georgia, Tbilisi in particular, are known for criminal activities that involve children (e.g. the so-called Morgue area), but are left in peace by police and city authorities. Reports of criminal activities involving children must be investigated.
 - Reports of police officers suggesting (or accusing) below-14-year-olds for crimes to avoid legal follow-up of older children, is highly unfortunate: it makes difficult the forwarding of below-14-year-olds to support services and facilitates the pursuit of criminal activity among children. It also inhibits the proper follow up of above-14-year-olds engaged in criminal activity.

The follow-up of children and youth involved in criminal activity requires a multi-sectoral and multi-disciplinary approach.

Service providers, including NGOs

With regard to response measures, special attention should be paid to the following:

1. **Participatory programming:** Generally speaking, all programmes for children and youth should be made as participatory as possible, balancing children's need for rehabilitation and protection against their sense of personal integrity and need for social continuity.
2. **Outreach to the families of street-connected children** should be an emphasis, in accordance with the qualifications discussed with respect to findings on the sub-groups of children. Assistance should include:
 - **Increased economic assistance**, economic counselling, and assistance seeking employment (including for at-risk families) should be a priority.
 - **Emergency fund for parents:** There should be a special emergency fund in services for parents of street-connected children, less bureaucratic than at present, which will assist

families and children financially and satisfy their immediate needs for health services, rent, etc.

3. **The recruitment of minority-language speakers into services** for street-connected children should be a priority. Language sensitivity must be a core concern in all outreach to families of street-connected children.
4. **Competence building with respect to street families:** The stigma against Roma-speaking peoples is pervasive in some circles, and even more so with respect to the Azerbaijani Kurds, which contributes to this population's withdrawal from social services. This should inform competence building in social services and care institutions. Competence on minority languages should also be a priority in the education programmes.
5. **Training programmes for children, commercial cooperatives and apprenticeships:** Educational programmes, including vocational training, should build on children's interests and wishes for future livelihoods. Vocational training should build on the strengths of street-connected children's networks, and should encourage transfer of skills into business or work opportunities later in life. Commercial cooperatives over the establishment of cafés and auto-repair services are ideas in this respect. Apprenticeship arrangements with successful former street-connected children as mentors should be developed.
6. **Economic counselling of children:** Upon a child's enrolment in a service programme, the mapping of his or her individual needs must also address any debt burden. Counselling of the child must involve schemes for how to assist the child in freeing him- or herself from economic and other commitments.
7. **Services beyond the 18-year limit:** This further implies that services and support for street-connected children and youth should be extended beyond the current 18-year age limit.
8. **Peer experience sharing:** Network creation should simultaneously include the development of mechanisms for sharing experiences among peers, for instance through regular meetings, social media portals, etc.
9. **Psychological counselling and therapeutic follow-up:** The capacity for psychological counselling and therapeutic follow-up must be strengthened and should involve specialized competence on sexual abuse and trauma resulting from long-term domestic violence

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ANNEXES

Annex 1. Institutional study Georgia

Provided by UNICEF Georgia

Legal Framework

Situation Overview

A study published in 2009 revealed that there was an average of 1,049 children living and/or working on the streets of Tbilisi, Kutaisi, Rustavi and Batumi in 2007.¹⁴ According to the Government Decree on Child Protection Referral Procedures, a child living and/or working on the streets shall be identified by a social worker of the Social Service Agency based on a formal questionnaire.

According to the Social Service Agency (SSA), from 2013 until the end of 2015, 634 children were identified as living and/or working on the streets of Tbilisi and Kutaisi, of which, about 60% of them were not Georgian citizens (approximately half of the children were from Azerbaijan or belonged to the Roma community)¹⁵.

Based on the information provided by the SSA, in December of 2014, about 300 children living and/or working on the streets benefited from the services provided by day-care centers. Out of these, 140 children did not have official identification documents, which made it difficult for them to access education, health and social services. As of March 2017, the Social Service Agency identified 813 children living and/or working on the streets, of which, 140 of them are currently receiving state child care services (39 children in a 24-hour child care shelter)¹⁶.

Additionally, the major findings highlighted in the Public Defender's report of 2015¹⁷ are as follow:

- As a result of the monitoring, it became clear that the beneficiaries of the sub-programme for the Provision of Shelter for Homeless Children are victims of violence. Most of the beneficiaries have psychological/mental issues and are in need of professional help. Children with challenging behavior and emotional disorders face issues in their relationships with caregivers. Thus, for example, an employee of a center was physically attacked by one beneficiary and the patrol police was engaged in the matter. No specific preventive measures have taken place with this beneficiary. It is noteworthy that most beneficiaries continue to beg in the streets while they reside in the shelters, as they are coerced to do so by their family members.
- There are cases when beneficiaries escape from shelters and information about this is provided to the police. However, in most cases, children return to the shelters themselves or mobile groups

14 See Katarzyna Wargan and Larry Dershem for Save the Children, "Don't call me a street child: estimation and characteristics of urban street children in Georgia" (March 2009).

15 The Minutes of the Meeting at the Ministry of Justice, 23 December 2015

16 Information provided by the Social Service Agency

17 See Public Defender of Georgia, "Situation of children's rights in Georgia" (2015).

discover them. Sometimes beneficiaries, who might be suffering from severe health conditions, return to shelters for several days to get sleep, medical treatment and food and afterwards return to the streets and carry on with their usual activities.

- Members of the mobile group have pointed out that children residing and working in the streets have a supervisor, who, in most cases are their family members. This is particularly noticeable in Tbilisi's metro, where these supervisors do not allow mobile group members to work with children.

The Special Rapporteur took note of the numerous challenges faced when addressing the phenomenon of children living and/or working on the street. First, there is a lack of up-to-date and reliable data or comprehensive research and analysis on the background, recruitment and forms of exploitation of the children to inform effective policies. Information and evidence is anecdotal and knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon is missing, due partly to existing prejudices. Secondly, responses have not addressed the root causes and are therefore not preventive. A systematic approach is lacking and interventions are sporadic¹⁸.

Legislative Framework on the Protection of Children from Violence

The significant legislative amendments concerning the rights of the child were passed in 2014 and in 2016 with the technical support of UNICEF. The legislative package adopted in 2014 included the following major provisions:

- **Civil Code of Georgia:** the prohibition of child-rearing methods which might cause physical or psychological suffering in a child¹⁹;
- **Criminal Code of Georgia:** coercion to marriage committed against a child (by parents and/or other persons) shall be punishable by 2-4 years imprisonment²⁰;
- **Law of Georgia on "Combating Domestic Violence, Assistance and Protection for Victims of Domestic Violence":** "Neglect" is defined as the "Violation of the parental duties to provide the child with physical, psychological support, basic education, protection, birth registration documents, medical and other care, if a parent and/or a legal representative is able and has access to proper information and services"²¹; A foreign citizen or a stateless person who is a victim of domestic violence, is eligible to receive a temporary residence in Georgia²²;
- **Code of Administrative Offences:** Parents or substitutes shall be sanctioned in case of non-compliance with their child-rearing responsibilities (failure to provide the child with proper care, education possibility, accommodation, food and other conditions for his/her normal development; drug and alcohol consumption by a child, hooligan behavior, carrying a knife, illegal acts against sexual integrity, etc.)²³. A professional or an organization involved in child

18 See para. 26

19 Art. 1198¹

20 Art. 150¹

21 Art. 4 "e"

22 Art. 17 „t"

23 Art. 172 as added in 2014

protection referral procedures shall be sanctioned in case of failure in mandatory identification and reporting violence against the child²⁴;

- **Law on Patient`s Rights:** It is forbidden to intervene in the family and personal life of a patient except in cases of domestic violence and where the threat of repeated incidents of domestic violence against the patient is identified and in cases where intervention is necessary for protecting the rights and interests of the patient (art. 29);

In November 2014, a working group (with the participation of UNICEF, among other state, non-state and international organizations) was created within the Ministry of Justice to discuss the problems related to children on the streets and to establish possible legislative solutions. The Working Group revealed two major problems (based on the data provided by the Social Service Agency): 1. A significant number of children living and/or working on the streets did not own identification documents, which created obstacles to their enrolment in education, healthcare and social services programs; 2. In cases of violence against the child, there was no effective referral mechanisms guaranteed by the law²⁵. As a result of the working process, the following legislative amendments were adopted in June of 2016:

- **Law on Social Assistance:** a “deprived child” was added in the category of “persons in need of special care”. “A deprived child” is defined as a child living and/or working on the streets as identified by a social worker²⁶.
- **Law on Registration of Georgian and Foreign Citizens, Rule of issuance of ID and Passport:** A social worker is authorized to act on behalf of the child for addressing the Civil Service Agency for issuing an ID for access to education, healthcare and social services²⁷.
- **Law of Georgia on “Combating Domestic Violence, Assistance and Protection for Victims of Domestic Violence”:** Expansion of the authority of a social worker of the Social Service Agency to separate a child from the family or other responsible person in cases of violence against the child. Separating a child from his/her parents is a measure of last resort when other measures for the protection of the child prove ineffective.
- **Government Decree on Child Protection Referral Procedures issued in September 2016:** all professionals, institutions and organizations (including municipalities) working with and/or for children, are obliged to identify and report violence against the child. Failure to do so shall be subject to administrative sanctions²⁸.

However, there are still significant challenges within the legislative framework, policy and practice for effective child protection and child-friendly access to justice. UNICEF is currently supporting the state in its efforts to revise the policy and legislation pertaining to access to justice for children. Major challenges include the lack of legal regulations (licensing, monitoring, childcare standards) of

24 Art. 172⁶ as added in 2014

25 Statement by the Ministry of Justice concerning the legislative amendments, 22 June 2016 <http://www.justice.gov.ge/News/Detail?newsId=5204>

26 Art. 4 “o.e”

27 Art. 3, 5

28 Government Decree on Child Protection Referral Procedures, 16.09. 2016, please find the Decree translated into English

childcare institutions (especially large-scale religious institutions, boarding schools for vulnerable children); lack of access to child-friendly (age appropriate and adapted to special needs) complaint mechanisms and procedures in cases of violence against the child; lack of formally established criteria and procedures with regard to determining the child's best interests and the provision of needs-based rehabilitation and care for child victims of violence.

Begging and informal economy

In Georgia, the act of begging is not prohibited, but the act of involving a minor in begging or any other antisocial acts (non-medical use of substances, prostitution) is prohibited and punishable according to the Criminal Code of Georgia²⁹.

Illegal entrepreneurial activity (unregistered, unlicensed and/or in violation of licensing conditions) which causes significant harm or results in a significant amount of profit constitutes a criminal offence³⁰. However, this does not include street trading. The regulation of street trading, street exhibitions and street markets is under the independent and exclusive authority of the local municipalities³¹. The inspection services of the municipalities are responsible for enforcing the regulations³² and the police may intervene to assist the municipal service upon their request to enforce the decision on prohibition of street trading in certain public places³³. Street trading without permission is an administrative offence and shall be fined ₾20-50. In cases of non-compliance to a police order to quit street trading, the administrative offender shall be fined ₾50-100 or will be subject to administrative detention of up to seven (7) days³⁴.

In addition, it might be useful to mention that the Criminal Code prohibits the selling or buying of a child or committing other illegal agreements against the interests of the child, hiring, as well as transporting, concealing, sheltering or receiving a child with the aim of exploiting the child (8-12 years of imprisonment); the same crime committed: against an economically dependent child; or against the two or more children; or taking the child or children abroad with the threat to health or life (11-15 years of imprisonment); the same crime committed by a group (17-20 years of imprisonment)³⁵.

The Law on Protection of Children from Harmful Influences³⁶ aims to protect children from the harmful influences of alcohol, tobacco and gambling. **The Labor Code** sets the minimum age for employment at 16 years of age. A legal representative and/or guardian or care agency must consent to the employment of a child under the age of 16 if the labor does not contradict his/her best interests. Children under the age of 14 can be employed only for activities related to sports, arts, culture and advertisement. However, there are not more detailed regulations and safeguards for children in this regard.

29 Criminal Code of Georgia, Art. 171

30 Criminal Code of Georgia, Art. 192

31 Code of Local Self-Governance, adopted in 19.02.2014. Art. 16.2 "i"

32 All the municipalities have the typical regulations covering, inter alia, regulation of street trading

33 The typical statutes of the Police departments in all regions contain, inter alia, prohibition of street trading

34 Code of Administrative Offences, art. 1533

35 Art. 143²

36 Geo version <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/15652>

Compulsory schooling

The Law on General Education ensures mandatory schooling for nine (9) years. Parents shall be fined (up to ₾300) in cases where they fail to provide their child with compulsory schooling (neglect of basic needs of the child).

The Civil Code of Georgia provides that parental rights shall not be carried out in a way which damages the child's interests³⁷. A child has the right to protect him/herself from domestic matters (parent's failure in child-rearing responsibilities, abuse of parental rights, etc.) by addressing the Guardianship and Care Agency from the age of 14 and/or apply to the court³⁸.

The Civil Code provides that the decision on the removal of parental rights is taken by the court as a measure of last resort by the request of the guardianship and care agency or the child who attained 14. The parental rights will be removed in cases where the abuse of parental rights is seen, that have a negative influence on the child due to immoral behavior, or involving the child in antisocial behavior (among others, begging and/or vagrancy) or abandoning the child³⁹.

Regulation of Childcare Services

The Law on the Licensing of Child Care Services⁴⁰ provides licensing regulations for all 24-hour childcare institutions, with the exception of boarding schools, medical residential facilities and foster care. Each childcare institution shall meet the criteria with regard to number of personnel and qualification, infrastructure and material resources, as well as the Government Decree on Child Care Standards. The law considers large-scale childcare institutions (among others, set up by the Orthodox Church) to be licensed (without actually having checked their compliance with the mentioned standards). At the same time, the Government Decree on Child Care Standards sets a deadline of January 1, 2020, for all large-scale institutions to meet the standards (without mentioning any action plan to deinstitutionalization). It is important to mention that these institutions were considered to be licensed the same way in March of 2009. However, they were never inspected in terms of compliance with the standards.

The State Program for Social rehabilitation and Childcare includes the sub-program for sheltering "homeless" children. The program uses an inquiry form for obtaining the information about a child who is living and/or working on the street and, in the case of the child's consent, provides various services (support to education and health and day care services, etc.). The inquiry form contains questions about:

- **General information:** Contact established with a child (date and place) / or indicate if the child does not allow any contact; name, surname and birth-date of a child (according to the ID card or conditional name (or nickname) and birthdate if the ID is not available); Nationality; place(s) where the child spends the most of the day and/or nights; frequency and reasons for living/ being on the street; the child's activities on the street; appearance (height, weight, eye color, etc.);

37 Art. 1999

38 Art. 1198¹

39 Art. 1206

40 Geo version <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/3307127>

- **Health state:** External signs; any signs of violence; chronicle any known diseases; substance addiction (alcohol, glue, tobacco, etc.); Any emergency health issues;
- **Education:** School education; literacy (language, ability of reading and writing, difficulties, etc.)
- **Experience of being in institutions:** Experience of living in any childcare institution; any incidents where the child has been in conflict with the law

The Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs has initiated the second phase of the deinstitutionalization process to target non-public residential institutions. Unregulated private childcare institutions are run by third parties, such as religious institutions, local governments and private individuals. According to one NGO, there are 36 non-public residential institutions that provide care to 1,146 children, most of them from vulnerable families. The majority of these institutions were created from 2000 onwards and developed parallel to the deinstitutionalization process for public residential institutions led by the government⁴¹.

As a conclusion, it must be underlined that the legislative framework does not adequately regulate large-scale institutions and does not provide effective monitoring standards. At the same time, the statistical information being collected by the state program is not sufficient for the analysis of children in street situations.

Children in the Justice System

In the justice system, the social workers of the Probation Agency prepare pre-trial individual assessments of the children in conflict with the law, which includes detailed information about their personal circumstances, family and school situations. The individual assessment reports are shared with the Prosecutor's Office and the Judiciary in the process of diversion, criminal prosecution, trial proceedings and sentencing. In cases where a child who might be a victim of domestic violence or out of parental care (or has any other special needs for protection) is identified, the Probation Agency launches a referral to the Social Service Agency, which is the primary responsible body for following-up the case. The Probation Agency does not make a referral if the child in need of SSA's support has already been placed in pre-trial detention due to the lack of authority and capacity of the Social Service Agency to enter the penitentiary institution and follow-up the case. The Probation Agency made four (4) referrals in 2016 and four referrals as of March 2017. As of today, there are only 17 juvenile convicts residing in the juvenile penitentiary system.

Otherwise, the Probation Agency, the Prosecutor's Office or the Judiciary do not process and analyse the disaggregated data pertaining to the children living and/or working on the streets.

It is important to further discuss the issue with the mentioned agencies and also, with the Crime Prevention Center (working on prevention and also on the preparation of release programs).

In addition, it would be interesting to highlight that the multidisciplinary meetings on the implementation of the Juvenile Justice Code adopted in June 2015 and enacted in January 2016, revealed several significant challenges, *inter alia*, regarding children in street situations. In particular, judges raised the issue of applying non-custodial sentences on juveniles who do not have stable residences. For example, children living on the streets (although not having any statistics). The enforcement of the non-custodial sentences requires a stable residence and a responsible caregiver

41 See the report of the Special Rapporteur published on 21 December, 2016. para. 69

for the child, otherwise the probation agency is unable to ensure the proper execution of such sentences⁴².

The Law on General Education⁴³ provides the principles and conditions for the provision of general education, rules for establishment, operation, re-organization, liquidation, authorization and accreditation of schools. The law provides the principle of inclusive education measures for students with special needs (those who have difficulties in learning). The law also provides the referral procedures for children with anti-social behavior, including those under the age of 14 of criminal responsibility, who committed an offence. The referral measures include the transferring to another school, involving the child in educational and/or care programs or sending the child to boarding school (located in Samtredia, in the Imereti region). The decision on sending the child to boarding school is issued by the Expert Group of the Ministry of Education and Sciences and approved by the court. The court approval is not needed in cases of parental consent.

The Juvenile Justice Code of Georgia⁴⁴ provides special rules for Juvenile administrative and criminal responsibility, administrative and criminal proceedings and the implementation of sanctions. The code provides legal safeguards for resocialization and rehabilitation of juveniles in conflict with the law, the rights protection of child victims and witnesses and the prevention of secondary and re-victimization, as well as the prevention of re-offending.

Cross-border movements

Foreign citizens need a visa to enter Georgia or the benefit of a visa-free regime if they are citizens of the certain countries. Citizens of the countries (among others, Azerbaijan) as approved by the Government of Georgia, have a right to enter Georgia visa-free and stay for a year⁴⁵.

The Law on Legal Status of Foreign Citizens and Stateless Persons provides that a person may be banned from entering Georgia if, she/he presented false documents or does not give information or give false information about the purpose of his/her travel. The refusal is not justified.⁴⁶

It is a criminal offence to illegally cross the Georgian border (up to five years of imprisonment). However, the following persons are exempt from criminal responsibility: a foreign citizen or a stateless person who entered Georgia from the territories where he/she was under the threat of life and freedom and/or was a victim of human trafficking⁴⁷. The code prohibits the illegal transfer of migrants and/or the facilitating their illegal residence in Georgia (up to five years). The aggravating circumstances are, among others, committed by using falsified documents, inhumane and degrading treatment towards the migrants, etc.⁴⁸

42 UNICEF Report of the Multidisciplinary Meetings, December 2016. Para. 3.3.3

43 Adopted on 08.04.2005/ Geo version <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/29248>

44 Adopted on 12.06.2015 / English version <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/2877281?impose=translateEn&publication=2>

45 Government Decree on the list of countries with visa-free regime with Georgia, issued on 05.06.2015

46 Art. 11

47 Art.344

48 Art. 344¹

Actors in the field relating to street children, and programs and activities of actors:

Ministerial programs:

The Ministry of Labour Health and Social Affairs, within framework of wider state program (social rehabilitation and child care) has established a subprogram that provides shelter to vulnerable children. The goal of the subprogram is the psychosocial rehabilitation and reintegration of vulnerable children.

The subprogram activities include the following:

- Mobile team (psychologist, driver, peer-educator) service. The mobile group works every day except weekends and holidays in locations where vulnerable children might potentially work or live. The mobile team reacts to referrals by visiting reported locations. Team members establish contact with children, defining their needs and provide counselling and social work services. Mobile team members facilitate medical and psychological care/service when needed. The team members provide children with personal hygiene items and support the protection of children. The mobile teams arrange/gather identification documents of children. Whenever possible, the teams undergo the identification of the child's biological family and conduct a primary assessment of the family. Authorized social workers of Social Service Agency coordinate the work of the mobile teams. WorldVision and Caritas Georgia are managing mobile teams in Tbilisi, Kutaisi and Rustavi.
- Day center services including: daily service with twice-a-day meals (one of them should be a 3 component meal); individual care; the facilitation and/or provision of medical and psychological support; the teaching of non-formal and formal social skills; support for the transition to public education; involving beneficiaries in cultural and sports activities; maintaining links with biological families.
- 24-hour shelter including night stay and additional meal for beneficiaries.

The target group of the subprogram is children under 18 years of age identified as vulnerable by authorized social workers. The budget of the subprogram for 2017 is ₾620,000. Funding is provided to the registered local service provider NGOs in the form of a voucher. The day service is funded with ₾9 per child per day and ₾20 for the 24-hour shelter.

The MoLHSA is providing the subprogram of **Emergency Support to Families with Children who are in Crisis**. The eligibility criteria for the emergency support includes: families of reintegrated children; families with at least one child with disabilities; families with 3 or more children and socially vulnerable families with children with the defined social rating score below 65,001.

The subprogram includes the procurement of goods and services for eligible families. The program is implemented by the Social Service Agency. The budget for 2017 is ₾1,514,000.

MoLHSA, through the SSA, is also administering the **Targeted Social Assistance Program**. The criteria and methodology for receiving monetary support is defined by government decree⁴⁹. The social agent of the SSA conducts an assessment based on the methodology defining rating score. Families below the 57,001 score are recipients of monetary support in a following way:

⁴⁹ Government decree N93 of 2010 March 30 and Decree N758 of 2014 December 31.

- Families with a score below 30,001 receive ₾60 per family member per month.
- Families with scores ranging 30,001 to 57,001 receive ₾50 per family members per month.
- Families with scores ranging from 57,001 to 60,001 receive ₾40 per family members per month.
- Families with scores ranging from 60,001 to 65,001 receive ₾30 per family members per month.
- All families with scores below 100,001 receive an additional ₾10 per child below the age of 16.

Families start to receive benefits after two months from the defining the score. Individuals in residential state care are excluded from the targeted social assistance.

In 2015, the **Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia** started the pilot project “**Transit Education Program for Vulnerable Children**”. The beneficiaries of the program are children from the day centers and 24-hour shelters for children living and working in the streets in Tbilisi, Rustavi and Kutaisi. From 2015-2017, the program has provided support to up to 100 children, out of which, 24 were enlisted in public schools and six were enrolled in vocational education programs. For awareness-rising purposes, the ministry has conducted training courses for administration and teachers of those schools where vulnerable children were enlisted. The training courses were conducted for 200 teachers in 46 schools. The anti-stigma awareness-rising activities also included workshops for 1,150 parents in 26 public schools.

The Legal Aid Service is a state-funded legal aid provider, which delivers free legal aid services with a call-in scheme by public advocates on duty for various vulnerable groups of the population and in cases when the aims of justice require so. The state-funded legal aid system operates in accordance with the Law on Legal Aid and the Juvenile Justice Code, which provides special safeguards for access to legal aid for children. Access to free legal aid is ensured for adults and children from socially vulnerable families and other specific vulnerable groups (IDPs, orphans, children with disabilities). Children accused of crimes have access to state-funded legal aid without considering their financial circumstances. Child victims have access to free legal aid without a means test, while child witnesses benefit from free legal aid only if they are insolvent. There is no special programs or statistics collected by the Legal Aid Service on children living/working on the streets.

UN programs (UNICEF ongoing engagement and programs):

From 2011-2014, mobile teams and other services were established with UNICEF/EU support shelters and day care centers. UNICEF has no current programs directly supporting children living and working in the streets.

NGOs and their Programs

National branches of the international NGOs World Vision and Caritas Georgia are service providers of the day care and 24-hour shelters in Tbilisi, Rustavi and Kutaisi for children living and working in the streets. These two NGOs also provide the mobile team services described above. The local NGO Child and Environment also provides state funded service in Tbilisi.

Annex 2. Institutional study Azerbaijan

Provided by UNICEF Azerbaijan

Legal framework

According to Article 17 of the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan⁵⁰, it is a duty of the parents to take care and ensure the upbringing of their children. The state ensures control over the fulfilment of these duties and children's rights. The involvement of children in activities that have a negative impact on their life, health and morality is prohibited.

According to **Article 20** of the Convention⁵¹, a child temporarily or permanently deprived of his or her family environment, or in whose own best interests can not be allowed to remain in that environment, shall be entitled to special protection and assistance provided by the state.

According to **Article 60** of the Family Code, the parents shall be answerable for the education and development of their children. They are responsible for the health of their child and of their physical, mental, spiritual and moral development. Those parents exercising parental rights to the detriment of the rights and interests of the child shall be made accountable to the law, in the established procedure.

According to **Article 64** of the Family Code, parents may be deprived of parental responsibility if they abuse their parental rights, treat their children cruelly, (this includes physical or mental suppression) or infringe upon his/her sexual inviolability. One of the reasons for children living on the streets is violence at home and the abuse of parental rights.

According to **Article 115** of the Family Code, in cases, where parental rights are revoked due to deprivation, the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health, should carry out centralized registration of the data, before presenting it to the State Committee on Affairs of Family, Women and Children, who should then assist them in the adoption of these children by other families.

Prohibition of begging

The Code of the Azerbaijan Republic on administrative offences⁵² (This code was approved by the Law of the Azerbaijan Republic of 11th July, 2000, No. 906- IG) A new Code of Administrative Offences of the Republic of Azerbaijan ("New Code") became effective as of March 1, 2016. It will be referred to the "New Code" further in the paper as changes applied in 2016.

50 The Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Art. 17, available at <http://www.wipo.int/edocs/lexdocs/laws/en/az/az057en.pdf>

51 Convention on the Rights of the Child, Art. 20, available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>

52 The Code of the Azerbaijan Republic On administrative violations available at: http://www.ombudsman.gov.az/upload/editor/files/Azerbaijan_Code%20on%20Administrative%20offences_2000_eng.pdf

Article 307-1 Vagrancy 307-1.1. For vagrancy, citizens will be warned or if by circumstances and taking into consideration the personality of the disturber, these measures will be considered insufficient, then administrative arrest for the period of up to 10 days will be applied. Foreigners and stateless persons will be warned or expelled from the Azerbaijan Republic in an administrative order with imposition of the penalty in the amount 20-25 manat or without penalty application. 307-1.2. **Involvement of under-age persons by their parents or other persons to vagrancy** — entails the imposition of a penalty in the amount of 10-15 manat (it was changed to 50 -90 manat in 2016, Article 523.2) or if by circumstances and taking into consideration the personality of the disturber, the application of these measures will be considered insufficient, then administrative arrest for period up to 15 days (it was changed to 5-15 days in 2016, Article 523.2) will be applied. Note: Persons without permanent place of residence and living allowance, not involved in any socially useful work or professional activity (except for persons, received unemployed status in an order established by the legislation), constantly engaged in pilfering/stealing or earning their maintenance **by panhandling/begging** are considered as the 'persons engaged in vagrancy' mentioned in this article.

Prohibition of gambling

Article 309 Gambling games. Participation at gambling games for money, things and other values, as well as, staking by private persons at sport and other measures — entails the imposition of a penalty in the amount of 15-20 manat with or without confiscation of the game accessories, as well as money, items and other values, which were stake at game.

Change applied in 2016:

Article 525

Fines applied to persons participating in gambling have been increased to 400-600 manat, along with the confiscation of the gambled money and/or other gambled possessions. Note: 1. Game is considered as a gambling game when money, material or other goods (prizes) are won by any uncertainty and chance. 2. It is not applied to lotteries/drawings and sport games' stake established/allowed by the legislation.

Compulsory education

Education is compulsory for all children between the ages of 6 and 15 in Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan's school system is made up of primary education (grades 1-4), basic education (grades 5-9), and secondary education (grades 10-11). Up to grade 9, school education is compulsory under the Law on Education.

Article 51. Non-fulfilment or improper fulfilment by parents or persons legally replacing them (adopters, guardians) liabilities of on bringing-up and education of underage children— shall involve penalization at the rate of 20 to 40 manat.

Change applied in 2016:

Article 189

189.1 The non-fulfilment or improper fulfilment by parents or persons legally replacing them (adopters, guardians) liabilities of on bringing-up and education of underage children – liable persons are given

a warning or fined with the amount of 40-60 manat. 189.3 in cases if mentioned in 189.1 resulted in leaving minors careless – fines are issued from 60 to 100 manat. 189.4 in cases if mentioned in 189.1 resulted in involvement of minors in alcohol consumption, illegal and psychotropic drugs use, **vagrancy**, or any action by minors that may entail crime responsibility or if 14 -16 years old minors' actions cause administrative offences shall be fined up to 100 manat.

It is worth noting that contributes to the increase of street children the fact that if there are State regulations in place regarding school truancy: even though education is in principle compulsory, as stated in laws and regulations, in practice there are neither means nor to measure the dimension of the cases of school dropout neither to strictly oblige parents to ensure the school attendance of their children.

Cross-border movement related to minors

Since August 2013, both Georgia and Azerbaijan have applied a bilateral visa-free regime, with 90 days set as the allowed duration of stay in the territory of both countries without visa. In 2015, however, this was changed to stay period of one year.

Article 11⁵³

Exit of a minor from the country 11.1. Except the cases set forth in Article 11.2 of this code, a minor citizen can exit from the country with his/her parents, adopter, guardian or custodian. 11.2. When the minor citizen exits from the country together with one of his/her parents, a notarized permission of the other parent is required. When the minor citizen exits from the country alone, notarized permission of his/her parents is required, and if the minor citizen is parentless, a notarized permission of his/her adopter, guardian or custodian is required. If any of those individuals fails to provide their permission, the exit of the minor citizen should be decided via court decision. 11.3. In cases of the existence of a death certificate of minor citizen's parent, a court decision on the statement of one of the parents as dead or as a missing person or on the deprivation of him/her from the right of parenthood, or a reference approving that the data on father in the birth certificate granted by the relevant executive authority was written according to the information provided by mother, permission from both parents is not required. The minor citizen presenting notarized consent of his/her single (the only) parent in addition to the mentioned documents, can exit from the Republic of Azerbaijan.

11.4. A minor citizen of the Republic of Azerbaijan, adopted by foreigners or stateless persons, can only exit from the country in a way envisaged by the law. This can be done by presenting the court order (entered into force) on his/her adoption and the certificate on adoption.

11.5. Parents, adopters, guardians or custodians of the minor citizen from the Republic of Azerbaijan are responsible for his/her life and health, and for the protection of his/her rights and legal interests abroad.

11.6. When minor citizens exit from the country in a group, without accompaniment of their parents, adopters, guardians or custodians, the leader of that group must execute the obligations of a legal representative. (The Migration Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan was approved by the Law of the Azerbaijan Republic of 17 April, 2013, No 1/144)

53 THE MIGRATION CODE OF THE REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN, Available at <http://www.unesco.org/education/edurights/media/docs/78e8125a20ac5c5f1e66760d7e328a398b3ed5b5.pdf>

Article 399. Periods of administrative arrest

399.2. Persons who violate the state border control regime, border-patrol troops regime or the rules applied for points of passage through the state border of the Azerbaijan Republic and also idling about, foreigners and persons without citizenship living in the Azerbaijan Republic without registration or staying therein illegally, may be arrested for a period of up to 24 hours in order to clarify the circumstance of the administrative violation and identification, or by the decision of judge for the period of up to 3 days in the absence of any identification documents.

Major migration challenges for Azerbaijan include high migration flows from rural areas to urban centers in Azerbaijan, and cross-border migration in search of employment opportunities.

In October 2015, the Cabinet of Ministers issued a decision expanding social services for migrants, including children, who are vulnerable to human trafficking; the decision also requires the continual training of migration, customs, and border officials to help them identify migrants as potential victims of human trafficking.

Trafficking and sexual exploitation

Street children, children from poor or marginalized families and children in residential institutions, are all mentioned as particularly vulnerable categories exposed to trafficking.

The National Action Plan on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings 2014– 2018, aims to identify and combat those vulnerable to human trafficking in Azerbaijan. It also seeks to improve the identification, protection, and the provision of services to victims, and to ameliorate the social conditions that make victims vulnerable to human trafficking,

According to **Article 144.1** and **144.2** of the Criminal Code, kidnapping committed against a minor or by negligence resulting in the death of the victim or other serious consequences is punishable by imprisonment for the term of ten to fifteen years. Article 171 of the Criminal Code prohibits the involvement of adolescents in prostitution.

Street selling

(Introduced in the new Code of Administrative Offences of the Republic of Azerbaijan in 1 March, 2016)

In accordance with the “Law on Licensing and Official Permission” dated from March, 2016, individuals must receive official permission for any trade activity, including street selling as well.

Article 454

Illegal Street selling

Illegal street selling, a selling of goods or providing services without the appropriate official permission provided by the local government authorities shall be fined in the amount of 80 AZN.

*Hooliganism***Article 297**

The responsibility of parents or persons substituting for them for minor hooliganism of a juvenile minor’s hooliganism, committed by individuals between the ages of 14-16, entails the imposition of a penalty on the parents or persons substituting for them in the amount of 30-40 manats.

Changed in 2016 to

Article 512. Fines have increased to 60-100 manat

Child labor

Azerbaijan ratified the ILO Minimum Age Convention (138) in 1992, and the ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention in 2004. Under a 2009 amendment to the constitution, it is illegal to employ persons under 15 years of age. According to **Article 46.4** of the Labour Code, individuals between 15 and 18 can only enter an employment contract with the written consent of their parents, an adoptive parent (guardian), or a legally authorized representative.

Under Decision 58 of the Cabinet of Ministers on March 24, 2000, it is prohibited to use the labour of persons under the age of 18 in hard work, hazardous workplaces, underground tunnels, mines and other underground facilities, as well as in the places “negatively affecting morality” such as night clubs, bars and casinos, and places producing, transporting and storing alcoholic beverages, drugs and toxic substances. It is also prohibited to involve persons under 18 years of age in work requiring heavy lifting and moving. There are also restrictions concerning the need for medical examination, additional statutory time off work and the prevention of night time or weekend work.

The government introduced both administrative and criminal penalties in 2014 for those employing people without an effective employment agreement. If children are involved in any illegal employment, the employer and the owner of the company will be fined in accordance with the Code of Administrative Offences – (1,000 to 1,500 AZN for employed children under 15 and 3,000 to 4,000 AZN for any circumstance that threatens the child’s life, health, or psychological status).

Administrative responsibility for minors

Article 15. The administrative responsibility of natural persons 15.1. Individuals who have reached 16 years of age upon performing the administrative violation shall be called to account for an administrative violation. 15.2. The persons aged 16 to 18 who have committed an administrative violation may be released from bearing the responsibility by the Commission on the Protection of the Rights of Children and the Affairs of Juveniles taking into consideration specific circumstances of the case, their psychological development, life conditions, health and education conditions, and with regard to these persons, measures of influence, provided by the Regulations for commissions on cases and protection of rights of juveniles may be applied.

Criminal responsibility for minors

The age of criminal responsibility in Azerbaijan is 16, or 14 for specified serious crimes (the Criminal Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan⁵⁴ became effective in 2000). Article 20. 20.2. Individuals who have reached the age of 14, at the time of committing a crime, shall be subject to criminal liability for deliberate murder, deliberate causing of heavy or less heavy harm to health, kidnapping, rape, violent actions of a sexual nature, theft, robbery, extortion, auto theft the or any other vehicle without the purpose of plunder, deliberate destruction or damage of property under aggravating circumstances, terrorism, hostage taking, hooliganism under aggravating circumstances, plunder or extortion of fire-arms, ammunition, explosives and explosives, plunder or extortion of narcotics or psychotropic substances, reduction unsuitability of vehicles or means of communication.

54 CRIMINAL CODE OF THE AZERBAIJAN REPUBLIC, available at <http://www.refworld.org/docid/4417f82d4.html>

Persons under the age of 18 can be sentenced to detention for periods of up to 10 years.

Devaluation of the local currency

The devaluation of the local currency occurred on February 2015, following the switch to a managed float exchange rate regime in January of 2016, which changed the manat (AZN) value to be more than double less than US dollar (USD).

Actors in the field related to street children, and programs and activities of actors:

Government:

Ministerial programs (e.g. Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs). Importantly, included in this should also be the criteria for inclusion in social benefits (e.g. minimum salary/poverty line, citizenship, ID papers and so on), as well as child compensation (amounts and regulations).

State Targeted Social Assistance

Targeted social assistance (TSA) for families with low income is means tested. The TSA was introduced in 2006. Any resident of the Republic of Azerbaijan whose average monthly income per family member for the previous 12 months is less than established for a year amount of need criteria has a right to apply to receive the difference between the amount of need and average monthly income.

Reasons:

Loss of the ability to work by any family member; disability; all children under 8 years of age and disabled children under 18 years of age; getting undergraduate education till age 23; registered as "a jobless" at the State Employment Agency in accordance with the procedure established by the legislation; death of a family member; having family member lost or considered to be dead via court decision; and having family member imprisoned.

ID is needed when applying for TSA. TSA can be granted for up to two years, with the possibility of further extension. During calculation of the TSA, those who are currently not residing in the country, as well as those who are currently living on government subsidies (in the military, in public institutions for the elderly, infants, children, the disabled, or prisoners) are not counted as a family member to get this specific financial support. The amount of need criteria established by the Law fin 2017 is 116 AZN (it was 105 AZN in 2016).

Families with children receive two types of benefits from either social insurance or social assistance programs: grants for childbirth (one time cash benefit in the amount of 99 AZN) and childcare benefits (children aged less than 3 for insured families and children aged less than 1 for non-insured/low-income families). Information on benefit payments, as well as on all households receiving targeted social assistance and those that have applied for it, is fully computerized and records are updated in real time. The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection is the responsible agency tasked with assigning social allowances. The average allowance for 2016 was 35.49 AZN.

The Ministry of Education operates a closed facility for children who commit offences before reaching the age of criminal responsibility, as well as children placed there for other reasons. The situation of

children without parental care continues to be monitored through a database, which is regularly updated by the Deinstitutionalisation and Child Protection Unit under the Ministry of Education.

The following government agencies are responsible for children placed in residential care in the country – the Ministry of Health (for children below the age of three), the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (over the age three for children with disabilities, boarding homes) the Ministry of Education (over the age three for all other children, boarding schools), and local ExComs (over the age three, child homes).

The gap present in Azerbaijan’s social service system is that there is no social work system and no staff comprised of qualified and trained social workers in each district. Under each district administration there is a commission on the Protection of the Rights of Children and the Affairs of Juveniles that has been tasked with carrying out prevention work with children and families at-risk and in need of social services. For instance, this Commission makes decisions on the placement of children in institutions, access to education services for children with disabilities; maintains registrations of children to be adopted and persons applied for adoption. However, this commission is under-staffed, making it extremely difficult for them to do their job adequately. In addition, this commission does not have the social workers or financial resources needed to carry out case management and conduct home visits to vulnerable families and children in need of services.

11 Family Support Centers (Shuvalan, Goygol, Goranboy, Aqdam, Saatli, Sabirabad, Hajiqabul, Zardab, Qabala, İsmayilli, Zaqatala) are functioning under the supervision and financial support of the State Committee on Family, Women and Child Affairs. The centers provide case management for every child, woman and/or family who applies for the assistance. These centers are mostly oriented towards poor families, families with many children, lonely parenting families, families with a disabled member(s), and so on. Also available at the centers are knowledge and skills learning activities such as computer and language courses and art classes. Over the years of functioning, the centers developed a well established referral system to connect to the services of other governmental agencies upon the need.

The Commissions on Minors under the CabMin and District (ExCom), the State Committee on Family, Women and Children Affairs, the Ombudsman’s Office and its National Prevention Group are among the governmental institutions that aim to promote and protect children’s rights in the country.

Police:

Public order and security are ensured under the responsibility of the Ministry of Interior. Several police stations distributed all over the country coordinate police units patrolling the territory. They are often in contact with several groups of children, minors reported as having infringed upon the law, but also abandoned children, street children and child victims of trafficking and abuse. Often the police are also involved in the referral of children to care institutions.

Police stations are equipped with temporary detention rooms (commonly known, using the Russian acronym, as KPZ). Suspected offenders – including minors - are kept in isolation in such units during the very first phase of investigations; the maximum detention period allowed is 48 hours. No information is available on the number of cases temporarily arrested in police station (KPZ) and released after a few days – treatment is often reserved for street children, as frequently declared by the same children. From official statistic reports, we also know that these children have been registered

by police as “warned” or kept under control for preventive purposes. This is done in accordance with “The Law on the Prevention of Negligence and Human Rights Violations of Minors” Article 5. About persons required individual preventive work 5.1.2. Beggars, children purposely avoiding education and children with disruptive or ill-adapted behaviors are listed among minors that require such preventive actions.

Every district benefits from the services of two police child inspectors who are mainly involved in the preventive work with children. They have more an “accusatory” rather than “protective” profile, as in general, all the figures are mandated to deal with children with disruptive or ill-adapted behaviors.

Police inspectors report to the Unit of Prevention and Prophylaxis of Adolescents, under the Department of Public Security, supervising the work of police units and collecting data on the cases of minors accused of law infringement (with a breakdown per type of crime) and of minors sentenced during the year.

The department also coordinates with the activities of the one transit center/shelter in Baku, where children encountered without parental care are referred by the police and kept until either the parents/guardians are found or children are referred to public care. The Counter Trafficking Unit has been functioning since 2005 within the Ministry of the Interior.

The judiciary

According to official statistics, the number of offences committed by juveniles over the last eight years has generally been stable. The number of juveniles convicted is substantially lower and is also seen to be stable over this period. Meanwhile, the number of the convicts imprisoned under the ages of 14-18 slightly increased in the period of 2012-2015.

Table 1. Number of children aged 14-18

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Committed crime	498	453	439	475	490	514	418	477
Convicted	267	222	238	241	235	272	280	286
Imprisoned	61	51	46	45	76	68	72	95

Table 2. Distribution of children aged 14-18 that committed a crime by social-demographic characteristics

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Number of children that committed a crime - total, person	498	453	439	475	490	514	418	477
By sex								
Boys	482	425	414	460	472	504	465	466
Girls	16	28	25	15	18	10	16	11
By age								

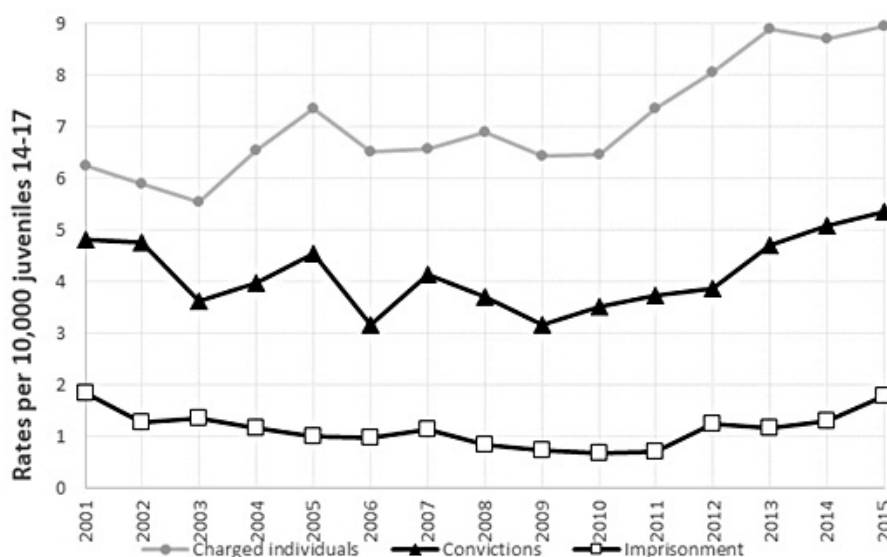
	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
14-16	76	70	79	102	80	112	127	112
16-18	422	383	360	373	410	402	354	362
Committed crime								
By group	301	253	259	289	293	357	338	328
In drunken condition	11	6	4	5	7	12	9	12

As seen from the table, children aged 14-18 that have committed crimes, are mostly boys aged 16-18 and committed the crimes mostly in groups.

The data on the number of juvenile offenders and crimes come from the public website of the State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan. This data is reported in aggregated form, and as a result, it is not possible to follow the path of individual juveniles over time nor to know their individual socio-economic characteristics, crime (or crimes) committed, and individual punishments, diversion or rehabilitation programs the individual received.

2016 Juvenile Justice Assessment carried out by UNICEF shows that many of the children offenders are noted to be living in fragile and fractured families, affected by poverty, low enrolment or attendance of children in school, unemployment, mental health problems, absent fathers and loss.

Figure 1. Delinquency rates for juveniles aged 14-17 in Azerbaijan (per 10,000 juveniles)



Source: Elaboration based on data from The State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

The above chart shows that following an increase in the rate of juveniles charged with a crime in

2011-2013 (resulting in an increase in the rate of convicted individuals with some lag due to the length of the judicial proceedings), in the past couple of years, the rate of charged individual has not kept on growing as in 2011-2013.

Alternatives to the deprivation of liberty are not sufficiently considered and applied. There is a pilot project for diversion. The project, which began in 2007, has established a Centre for Social Rehabilitation (NGO "Reliable Future") in Baku, which is used by the police and Commissions of Minors from Baku and nearby districts. 96 children in 2015 and 58 in 2016 were diverted to the center by Commissions on Minors and child-police inspectors. Every referred child has been enrolled to the special diversion scheme for between four and six months. The center also houses a child rights legal clinic and a child hotline. A hotline service is functioning in Ganja as well. The center was funded by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection through a social contract under the Law on Social Services in 2013, and in 2014-2015, it was supported by UNICEF. The center is now on the brink of closing.

UN programs *(UNICEF ongoing engagement and programs)*

Among the currently working agencies in the country, UN agencies such as FAO, IFAD, ILO, IOM, UNDP, UNECE, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF and UNODC, none of them state to have a program relevant to street children at present. IOM and UNICEF have such a kind of involvement: the IOM financially supports the Azerbaijan Children's Union to cover some salaries of its shelter's workers as assistance to expand social services for migrants including children, who are vulnerable to human trafficking; and, UNICEF supports the government in designing programs and services to better address the needs of street children, Roma children and children affected by human trafficking through the collection of evidence-based data such as with this research. Other UN agencies such as UNODC, ILO, UNDP, UNHCR, WHO and UNFPA according to their respective mandates at some extent are involved in children-related activities overall.

Within the EU funded Access to Justice for Children Project, UNICEF cooperates with NGOs in five regions of Azerbaijan (Gabala, Agjabedy, Shamkir, Shirvan and Mingechevir). UNICEF provided free legal aid services to more than 1,000 children and their families from vulnerable strata of the population of children rights issues through hired legal consultants and local NGO partners. The project will be continued through August, 2017.

NGOs and their programs

International NGOs and national their branches

There are no international organizations or their branches involved with the street children currently present in the country. Most international NGOs (World Vision, Save the Children, Open Society institute Foundation (Soros Foundation) and etc.) have left the country starting from 2013 and handed over their overall activities to the state agencies as a result of the country's ownership and future sustainability. For example, 11 family support centers (Shuvalan, Goygol, Goranboy, Aqdam, Saatli, Sabirabad, Hajiqabul, Zardab, Qabala, İsmayilli, Zaqatala) established by Save the Children upon a certain time of functioning were transferred to the State Committee on Family, Women and Children Affairs. These regional units continue providing their support to most socially and economically vulnerable families, with most emphasis on children and women, in the regions

under full government financial support. The Council of the State Support to NGOs, established in December 2007, took over the role of granting organizations (previously, this was done mostly by the Soros Foundation till 2013) to support civil society development, cooperation between NGOs and governmental agencies, participation of NGOs in various projects, research, community awareness campaigns, and capacity building of NGOs with small grants (up to 8 000 AZN). These grants are considered by the most NGOs as insufficient for the provision of services, particularly at full-scale and extensive geographic coverage. The Law on Social Services adopted in 2012 and followed by the “Regulations for Social Ordering by the Government of NGO Services” allow the ministries directly financing and/or contracting NGOs to render their services. The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, through its social contracts, supports 7 local NGOs in providing services by day care centers to prevent children from institutionalization and increases access of children from poor families to social services in 2017. The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, the only ministry that practices it, has announced a competition once a year since 2013. However, in recent years, as a result of the withdrawal of funds by many international NGOs and the absence of formal state recognition and co-funding of services, there has been a decrease in the services provided by NGOs.

Civil Society organizations, e.g. Legal aid services?

In absence of the needed flexibility to answer to children’s needs by public services, several experiences have been set up upon the initiative of local NGOs.

Directly engaged with street children:

- 1 NGO in Baku (Azerbaijan Children Union) provides a shelter for street children. At the moment of the visit, there were 21 children from the regions across the whole country. This shelter serves as a Transit Center used for the temporary placement of the children identified by the police. It provides street children with hot meals, hot showers, and several recreational activities during the day, and an overnight stay as well. It is currently budgeted mostly from personal donations; some workers are financed by the IMO.
- 1 group home in Baku (Place of Hope) provides a shelter and helps them to be re-admitted to school; with a capacity for 40 children. This NGO has received its budget from the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection under the social order service contract over the last few years.

NGO-run shelters do not receive consistent funding from the government. The unpredictable nature of funding prevents long-term planning and the capacity building of shelters. The Azerbaijan Children’s Union shelter noted that most of its staff worked on a voluntary basis due to the lack of government funding and its inability to receive foreign assistance caused by the restrictions imposed on NGOs over the last two years.

Laws on Amendments to the Law on Grants and to the Law on Non-Governmental Organizations became effective October 2014. In 2015, a series of rules have been adopted to secure the implementation of the new laws on funding to NGOs: a) On June 5, 2015, the Cabinet of Ministers adopted new rules on the registration of grant agreements; b) On October 21, 2015, the Cabinet of Ministers adopted a decree on “On registration of Contracts on the provision of services and works at the expense of foreign financial sources by non-governmental organizations, as well as branches or representative offices of foreign non-governmental organizations”; and c) On October 22, 2015, the Cabinet of Ministers approved the “Procedure on Obtaining the Right to Give a Grant by Foreign Donors in the Territory of Azerbaijan”. All these regulations and amendments to the laws have resulted in a stringent legislative framework for NGOs.

Indirectly involved with street children

(Work with children from marginalized and poor families, children in conflict with the law, victims of violence and so on)

- 1 NGO in Baku (Clean World) provides assistance to victims of trafficking, with shelter, support and further initiative to facilitate their integration into society.
- 1 NGO in Baku (Center for Psychological Counselling) provides psychological support to children victims of violence and abuse, where children are referred either by other local NGOs, or by the parents themselves
- 1 NGO in Baku (World of Law) works with young offenders in the detention center
- 5 NGOs in five regions provide free legal aid; financially supported by UNICEF
- 9 day care centers (7 local NGOs) for vulnerable children and poor families; budgeted by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection through social service contracting

SOS Children's Villages has provided family-based child care to abandoned, destitute and orphaned children since 2000, with a total capacity of not more than 200 children.

Approaches used: Summary (based on the above information) which basic methods/approaches ongoing programs adhere to, e.g.

In Baku, street children are largely diffused, where they find it easier to find work in the informal sector, practice begging and hide from the authorities, and therefore, most services are concentrated and provided in the capital. Children living on the street (i.e. without a home) also seem to be the minority in Azerbaijan, as the majority of them spend most of their time on the streets making earnings for themselves and their families. Therefore, their placement in residential care is not often possible unless the deprivation of parental care is officially recognized by the local authorities. The cases are mostly recurrent – the same children find themselves in the shelter repeatedly over a period of time. According to the Head of the Azerbaijan Children Union, most of the children begging on the streets in Baku are part of the Roma community.

Street children are among those more exposed to the risk of violence and abuse – both in the street and in their contact with the public system. The first and probably main institutional contact street children have with the state is represented by the police. Brought to the shelter, they are generally kept there until it is determined that somebody is not coming to pick them up (parents/legal tutors traced by the police). In other words, they are detained even when not suspected of any crime. Every year in Baku about 500/600 cases are registered (including the same children brought there several times). In 2016, it was reported that 450 street children exposed to begging were identified by the police raids; 272 cases were sent to the respective agencies to consider imposing of guardianship and custody; for more than 200 cases administrative measures against parents were applied.

According to the legislation, the Commission on Minors are supposedly involved in the management of all cases related to children. Those among the street children who don't have a family are sent to residential institutions. Foster care exists as a service by law – under Article 142 of the Family Code – but since there are no regulations pertaining to the foster family, it does not exist in practice. As of November 2013, the government support and funding for small group homes have been ensured.

The only other option available in Baku is represented by two centers set up spontaneously by NGOs: the shelter already mentioned, and the group home called 'Place of Hope' in Baku, which provides a shelter for street children and helps them to be re-admitted into school. The house hosts around 40 children and deserves attention for the positive attitude of its volunteers and their openness to find alternative solutions for children, in the awareness that institutions are not the appropriate solution for them.

Annex 3. Data registration forms

Registration form:			
Focus Groups (Obtain consent. Respondents above 7 years of age)			
Registration Form number	Initials of the interviewer	Group no	
Group led by	Names		
Date	_ _ - _ _ - _ _		
Duration of session	(time of start – stop) Start: _ _ hh _ _ min	Stop : _ _ hh _ _ min	
Place for focus group	1=Tbilisi ; 2=Rutsavi; 3=Kutaisi; 4=Batumi; 5=Baku; 6=Other (specify) _ _ 		
Which language was used under the interview?			
Was a translator used during the interview? 1=Yes, whole session; 2=Yes, for part of the session; 3=No _ _			
	Given name (for conversation only)	Age	Sex M/F
Child No	Individual interviews? Yes/No	if Yes Fill reg no	
1		Team _ _ Child no _ _ _ _ _ or Adult no _ _ _ _ _	
2		Team _ _ Child no _ _ _ _ _ or Adult no _ _ _ _ _	
3		Team _ _ Child no _ _ _ _ _ or Adult no _ _ _ _ _	
4		Team _ _ Child no _ _ _ _ _ or Adult no _ _ _ _ _	
5		Team _ _ Child no _ _ _ _ _ or Adult no _ _ _ _ _	
6		Team _ _ Child no _ _ _ _ _ or Adult no _ _ _ _ _	
7		Team _ _ Child no _ _ _ _ _ or Adult no _ _ _ _ _	
8		Team _ _ Child no _ _ _ _ _ or Adult no _ _ _ _ _	
9		Team _ _ Child no _ _ _ _ _ or Adult no _ _ _ _ _	
10		Team _ _ Child no _ _ _ _ _ or Adult no _ _ _ _ _	
Other people present in the room during the group session? Add lines if needed			
Name Position			
Name Position			
Name Position			
.....			
Any special characteristics of the group? Any particular observations from the group session?			
.....			
.....			

Registration form: Individual Adult Interview Obtain informed consent		
AD01	Questionnaire number	Initials of the interviewer _ _ Adult no _ _ _ _
AD02	Interviewed by	Name of fieldworkers :.....
AD03	Interview date	_ _ - _ _ - 1 7
AD04	Place for interview	1=Tbilisi 4=Batumi 2=Rutsavi 3=Kutaisi 5=Baku 6=Other (specify) _ _ Town/village: Country:
AD05	Which language was used under the interview?
AD06	Was a translator used during the interview?	1=Yes, for all questions 2=Yes, for some questions 3=No _ _
AD07	Capacity of respondent	1=Parent 2=Other relative 3 Other (specify) _ _
AD08	What is your name?	For conversation only. Do not enter in final version to be sent
AD09	How old are you?	In whole years; 99=No answer _ _ _
AD10	Sex	1=Male; 2=Female _ _
AD11	Any link to a child that has been interviewed?	1=Yes 2=No _ _
AD12	If yes:	Add Id Number from child registration form Team _ _ Child no _ _ _ _ Describe relationship:
AD13	Any particular observations from the interview made Willingness to talk, any behavioural characteristics, anything worthwhile to note about the interview situation

Registration form: Individual child interview. Obtain consent.		
ID01	Questionnaire number	Initials of the interviewer _ _ Child no _ _ _ _
ID02	Interviewed by	Name fieldworkers :
ID03	Interview date	_ _ _ - _ _ - 17
ID04	Place for interview	1=Tbilisi 4=Batumi 2=Rutsavi 5=Baku 3=Kutaisi 6=Other (specify) _ _ Town/village:..... Country:
ID05	Which language was used under the interview?
ID06	Was a translator used during the interview?	1=Yes, for all questions 2=Yes, for some questions 3=No _ _
ID07	What is your name?	For conversation only. Do not enter In version sent
ID08	How old are you?	In whole years; 99=No answer If less than 7 years : end interview _ _ _
ID09	Sex	1=Boy=1; 2=Girl _ _
ID10	Where were you born?	1=Tbilisi 4=Batumi 2=Rutsavi 3=Kutaisi 5=Baku 6=Other (specify) _ _ Town/village:..... Country:
ID11	What is your citizenship?	1=Georgian 3=Don't have any 2=Azerbaijani 4=Other (Specify) 5=No answer _ _
ID12	Which ethnic group do you belong to?	1=Georgian 3=Azerbaijani-Kurds 2=Roma (Specify) 4=Other (specify) 5=No answer _ _
ID13	Where did you sleep last night?	1=House/flat 4=Other (specify) 2=In the streets 5=No answer 3=Shelter _ _
ID14	Are your parents alive?	1=Both are dead 4=Both alive 2=Mother alive 5=Don't know 3=Father alive 6=No answer _ _
ID15	If one or both parents alive: Do you have contact with your parents?	1=Yes, daily 3=No 2=Yes, but not daily 4=No answer _ _
ID16	If one or both parents alive: Are you currently staying with one or both of your parents?	1=Yes, both 3=Yes, only father 2=Yes, only mother 4=No 5=No answer _ _
ID17	Have you ever attended school?	1=Yes; 2=No; 3=No answer _ _
ID18	Are you currently enrolled in school?	1=Yes; 2=No; 3=No answer _ _
ID19	How many years have you attended school?	In whole years; 99=No answer _ _ _
ID20	Can you read and write?	1=Yes, easily 3=No 2=Yes, with difficulty 4=No answer _ _
ID21	Are you currently living/working in the streets alone or together with others?	1=Alone 2=Together others 3=No answer _ _
ID22	Any particular observations from the interview made? Link to adult interview, willingness to talk, any behavioural characteristics, anything worthwhile to note about the interview situation

