



Written Contribution for the EU-Georgia Human Rights Dialogue 2015

ChildPact welcomes the on-going efforts of the Georgian authorities in their endeavour to improving the life conditions for the vulnerable children in the country. Nonetheless, as emphasised by the most recent ENP Progress Report, children still have to go a long run for a decent life as, to begin with, child poverty in Georgia is on the rise, with a level of poverty among children 50 % higher than among the general population.

Our concerns below aim to further detail the current child protection challenges hindering progress in Georgia:

- A.** Child protection is a field encompassing a wide range of sectors, such as labour, education, health, social protection and judiciary. However, **the cross-sector coordination and cooperation mechanisms** needed for tackling child issues are not fully developed in Georgia. There are no protocols for coordination between the social, education and health services. There is no functional labour inspection body established to monitor the delivery of social services. There are no detailed guidelines for cross-sector cooperation and there is no clear definition of the roles of the various actors who should be involved in dealing with the child protection cases.
- B.** Tackling **child labour** is still a concerning gap which needs to be addressed by the Georgian child protection system.
- *In terms of policy / legal framework:* the regulatory framework does not define nor assign competent authorities to investigate complaints and referrals of child labor. Therefore, child labour cases remain uninvestigated and undocumented. Moreover, no national strategy has been adopted in the last 5 years in order to reduce child labor.
 - *In terms of services:* (1) specific services needed by the victims of child labour can be provided only if the child labor and exploitation cases are recognized and reported as cases of violence (abuse, neglect) against children or if these situations are related to children working in the streets; (2) although child labour victims need psychological counseling, there are only 11 psychologists employed in Georgia and therefore, many children experiencing traumatic events are left without any kind of psychological support.
 - *In terms of coordination:* No specific regulations, protocols or guidelines have been adopted to regulate the appropriate national or local coordination mechanisms to allow a cross-sector intervention to address the overall needs of victims of child labor.
- C. Quality of child protection services:** not all child protection services are regulated by quality standards. For instance, there are no specific standards developed for psychological and legal counseling services, for foster care or for early intervention services. Quality standards have been so far adopted only for the 24 hours/residential care centers and for day care services.

D. The complaint mechanisms available to vulnerable children are limited to complaint boxes that are standardly required by the care services - for instance, by the 24 residential care centers or by the day care services. However, these complaint boxes are largely unused and do not really serve their purpose. Even more, these poor complaint mechanisms were not developed through direct consultation nor input of the children themselves.

ChildPact's Child Protection Index is a tool which looks into the state of play of those UNCRC articles that are the most relevant for the reality of the vulnerable children in the region: Separation from parents; Child's right to protection from all forms of violence; Children deprived of their family environment; Adoption; Rights of children with disabilities; Periodic review of treatment; Child labour; Children and drug abuse; Sexual exploitation of children; Prevention of abduction, sale and trafficking; Protection from other forms of exploitation; Protection of children affected by armed conflict; Rehabilitation of child victims. *The Child Protection Index points out how each country performs across more than 500 indicators, adapted from the official UNCRC implementation checklist.*

The Child Protection Index has been piloted in Georgia and its results will be presented in Tbilisi, on the 5th of June.

ChildPact's written contribution for the EU-Georgia Human Rights Dialogue is mandated by our Georgian child-focused member, the Coalition for Child and Youth Welfare, reuniting 51 NGOs working and advocating for better child welfare in Georgia.

ChildPact, the Regional Coalition for Child Protection, is a network of 10 child-focused national networks from 10 different countries: Armenia, Albania, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Georgia, Kosovo, Moldova, Romania and Serbia. Bringing together 600 NGOs, our members work with more than 500.000 vulnerable children from the Western Balkans and the South Caucasus areas. ChildPact's four objectives are: **1.** Monitor and influence child-related policies at regional and European levels; **2.** Strengthen the capacity of its members by actively supporting their expertise development, visibility and credibility; **3.** Advocate for regional cooperation at inter-governmental and civil society level; **4.** Raise public awareness of child rights and protection issues. Find more information about ChildPact at: www.childpact.org.

For further information regarding ChildPact's recommendations on child protection and child rights issues in Georgia, please contact:

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