

# PRACTICE OF PROVIDING HOUSING FOR HOMELESS GROUPS



WHAT ARE THE SPECIAL NEEDS OF WOMEN?

# **Practice of Providing Housing for Homeless Groups**

What are the Special Needs of Women?

Social Justice Center

2022



The Document was prepared with the support by the Swedish Association for Sexuality Education (RFSU). The views expressed in the document reflect the position of Social Justice Center and may not express the position of the Swedish Association for Sexuality Education (RFSU).

**Authors of the Research:** Mariam Janiashvili, Osiko Kontselidze

**Research Supervisor:** Tatuli Chubabria

**Editor of Georgian Text:** Medea Imerlishvili

**Translator:** Mariam Janiashvili

**Cover Design:** Salome Latsabidze

It is forbidden to copy, reproduce or distribute this material for commercial purposes without the written permission of the organization.

© Social Justice Center

Address: I. Abashidze 12b, Tbilisi, Georgia

Phone: +995 032 2 23 37 06

<https://socialjustice.org.ge/>

[info@socialjustice.org.ge](mailto:info@socialjustice.org.ge)

[www.facebook.com/socialjustice.org.ge](http://www.facebook.com/socialjustice.org.ge)

## Table of Contents

<b>Foreword</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Analysis of Social Housing Service</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>Methodology</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>1. Social Housing Service – Essence and the State Obligations</b> .....	<b>7</b>
1.1. Social Housing Service – Main International Standards .....	7
1.2. The Essence of Social Housing Service .....	8
<b>2. Social Housing Service – Functioning and Key Challenges</b> .....	<b>11</b>
2.1. The Process of Inclusion in the Service .....	11
2.2. The Living Conditions in the Housing .....	12
2.3. The Socio-Economic Vulnerability of Residents .....	13
<b>3. Service Modification – a Necessary Step?</b> .....	<b>14</b>
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	<b>16</b>
<b>Recommendations</b> .....	<b>17</b>
<b>Living in a “Dream City” – Needs and Resettlement Process</b> .....	<b>18</b>
<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>18</b>
<b>Methodology</b> .....	<b>18</b>
<b>1. International Obligations towards the Residents of Informal Settlements</b> .....	<b>19</b>
<b>2. “Dream City” Settlement – the Main Challenges of the Residents</b> .....	<b>20</b>
2.1. The Establishment of a “Dream City” Settlement.....	20
2.2. Living in a “Dream City” – Main Challenges and Needs .....	20
<b>3. The Resettlement Process of a “Dream City” Residents</b> .....	<b>23</b>
3.1. Working on the Resettlement Criteria.....	23
3.2. The Process of Provision with Housing into Ownership – Challenges and Long-term Perspectives	25
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	<b>26</b>
<b>Recommendations</b> .....	<b>27</b>
<b>Assessment of the Shelter Service for Persons with Psychosocial Disabilities</b> .....	<b>28</b>
<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>28</b>
<b>Methodology</b> .....	<b>28</b>
<b>1. Content and Architecture of the Shelter Service</b> .....	<b>29</b>
1.1. Shelter Service – Basic International Standards.....	29
1.2. The Shelter Service in Georgia .....	29
<b>2. Main Challenges in the Functioning of the Shelter Service</b> .....	<b>32</b>
2.1. Challenges in the Service Management and Delivery .....	32
2.2. Challenges of Protecting the Rights and Independent Living of Shelter Beneficiaries .....	33

<b>3. The Possibility of Service Transformation.....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>Recommendations .....</b>	<b>37</b>

## **Foreword**

Ensuring adequate housing and combating homelessness is an issue that requires complex and multifaceted measures by the state. International standards clearly indicate that homelessness is a much broader concept than living on the streets and, among many other forms, includes living in housing services, institutions with different purposes, as well as in inadequate and overcrowded housing. On the other hand, the obligation of the state to guarantee adequate housing is not limited to providing physical space to people but also includes providing access to essential services and infrastructure, physical and financial accessibility, protection against eviction, and more.

Despite the severity of the homelessness issue in the country, guaranteeing adequate housing has not become a government priority for years. Work on the systemic challenges in this area has not yet been carried out - there is no national housing strategy and action plan, the relevant legislation is extremely flawed, and in the absence of a proper understanding by the central government of its responsibilities, municipalities are focusing only on fragmented and temporary housing solutions for certain groups.

Given the current context, the Social Justice Center is expanding its discussion of housing and homelessness policies and assessing the needs of different homeless groups. The document, on the one hand, reviews the situation of the beneficiaries of social housing and the persons living in the shelter for people with mental disabilities, as well as the transitional nature of these services. On the other hand, the document assesses the largest informal settlement in the country, the so-called “Dream City” and the main needs of its residents, as well as the content of state obligations undertaken towards them. The research process also focuses on the needs of women, who are most acutely affected by homelessness and lack of adequate housing.

The assessment of services and problematic issues identified in the study will ultimately enable the analysis of the degree of compliance and adequacy of the national system with the needs of the homeless persons, as well as the preparation of relevant recommendations for central and local authorities.

## Analysis of Social Housing Service

### Introduction

The content of the state's commitments to combat homelessness and guarantee the right to adequate housing is complex and multifaceted. It includes the implementation of reactive measures to respond to homelessness, as well as the introduction of a preventive homelessness policy.<sup>1</sup> Given the widespread prevalence of homelessness globally, governments in different countries focus on comprehensive measures that would reduce and, in the long run, eliminate homelessness. However, given the challenges associated with this phenomenon, measures taken by countries, with few exceptions, cannot ensure a reduction of homelessness.<sup>2</sup>

As mentioned above, one (though not the only) component of homelessness policy is the implementation of response measures, the focus of which is on providing housing services to groups in need. In turn, housing programs are diverse in content and, *inter alia*, include the operation of long-term housing (including social and affordable housing), shelters, monthly subsidized housing, and hostels. Despite the diversity of services, studies have shown that long-term housing services, combined with tailor-made support programs, are most effective in combating homelessness.<sup>3</sup>

Homelessness has been an unrecognized problem in Georgia for years. The government failed to develop a national housing strategy and action plan that would cover the steps to be taken by the state, both in the short- and long-term manners. In the absence of a unified policy and standards, only a few municipalities carry out the registration of homeless persons and provision part of them with certain services – shelter, rent allowance, and/or social housing. Given its content, unlike the shelter and rent allowance services, social housing was to become a relatively long-term, transitional service that would strengthen the beneficiaries and ensure their independent living.

The present paper focuses on the social housing service and its transitional nature. For this purpose, it analyzes the content of the service, the preconditions for inclusion in the service, and the challenges that are faced by homeless persons after their inclusion in this program on the example of the three largest social housing units in the country (Orkhevi, Kutaisi and Rustavi social housing). Given its content, the document is divided into 3 main parts. The first part analyzes the general content of the social housing service, the second part assesses the main challenges faced by the service recipients and their human rights situation, while the final part reviews the possibility of service transformation and addresses the government agencies with relevant recommendations.

### Methodology

For the evaluation of the content of the service, the relevant national legislative acts, bye-laws and international standards were analyzed during the research. Additionally, the public information received from Tbilisi, Rustavi and Kutaisi municipalities, as well as the relevant international and national reports were examined.

The research also used a qualitative research method - *in-depth interviews*. The research tool was a guide consisting of open-ended questions. The target groups of the study were people with different social statuses

---

<sup>1</sup> Baptista I., Marlier E., Fighting Homelessness and Housing Exclusion in Europe, A Study of National Policies, European Social Policy Network (ESPN), 2019, p. 91-94.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 13.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, pp. 13 – 14.

living in social housing in Tbilisi, Rustavi and Kutaisi. Within the framework of the research, individual and group interviews were conducted with 15 beneficiaries of Kutaisi social housing, 8 beneficiaries of Rustavi housing and 3 beneficiaries of Tbilisi housing. A total of 26 respondents were interviewed. Additionally, an individual meeting was held with the representatives of Kutaisi Municipality City Hall.

## **1. Social Housing Service – Essence and the State Obligations**

According to the European Typology of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion (ETHOS), the concept of homelessness includes, among other groups, people placed in services for the homeless. Such a definition of the concept, *inter alia*, implies a wide range of obligations of the state - it is not limited to providing a physical environment for homeless people, but includes various dimensions, for example, the social dimension. The purpose of this chapter is to briefly review the state obligations towards social housing beneficiaries in light of international standards, as well as analyze the content of social housing service and the criteria for inclusion in this program.

### **1.1. Social Housing Service – Main International Standards**

As mentioned above, the obligation to ensure adequate housing goes beyond providing only physical housing to homeless people and involves the provision of active and effective support with the ultimate goal of overcoming homelessness and social vulnerability. Additionally, despite the temporary nature of the housing service, it should meet the internationally recognized criteria towards adequacy and take the utmost account of the individual needs of the beneficiaries.

As a result of the analysis of international standards, it is possible to identify several major directions/state obligations regarding social housing:<sup>4</sup>

- Ensuring the legal protection mechanisms for security of tenure and protection against eviction;
- Providing access to services, materials, infrastructure (including, water, sanitation);
- Ensuring the habitability of the living environment, including, protection from cold, dampness, heat;
- Providing access to various social and health services and educational institutions;
- Ensuring housing accessibility for persons with disabilities and the elderly;
- Ensuring cultural adequacy;
- Combating stigma and discrimination against residents of social housing;
- Developing a complex and comprehensive housing policy aimed at providing long-term housing services;
- Ensuring the involvement, active participation and access to information of service recipients in the relevant decision-making process.

Only through the observance of the above principles and their application in policy and practice, it is possible to provide effective social housing services in line with human rights standards and bring beneficiaries out of the homelessness situation.

---

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, General Comment No. 4: The right to adequate housing. (art. 11 (1) of the Covenant), 1991; Report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context, Balakrishnan Rajagopal, A/76/408, 2021; Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, A/67/286, 2012; Report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context, A/HRC/43/43, 2019.



## 1.2. The Essence of Social Housing Service

The development of social housing service has started in Tbilisi, Kutaisi, Batumi, Gori and Zugdidi within the framework of a project of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation – “Social Housing in a Friendly Environment”. A special working group was set up in 2008 and developed special eligibility criteria for applicant households, while the settlement began in 2009.<sup>5</sup> Eventually, dozens of socio-economically vulnerable and/or internally displaced households were provided with housing under the program.<sup>6</sup> Although this project has been significant innovation in providing housing for the homeless, over the years, the lack of a consistent vision to strengthen the residents and tackle their homelessness has become a significant problem.<sup>7</sup> In the absence of adequate support, the main reason for residents leaving the service was death or, in the case of IDPs, provision of another long-term housing.<sup>8</sup>

In parallel with the increase in citizens’ applications for housing provision, various municipalities have developed rules for the registration of homeless people and the provision of housing services. Such regulations were adopted in Tbilisi in 2015, Kutaisi - in 2017, and in Rustavi - in 2018. At the same time, social housing services commenced in these municipalities. Orkhevi Social Housing (currently about 250 residents) and Kutaisi Social Housing (currently 70 families and 11 homeless people) received their first residents in 2017, while Rustavi Social Housing (currently 52 families) received its first residents in 2019.<sup>9</sup>

It should be noted that in the case of all three municipalities, the decision on registration and provision of housing is made by the commission of the Municipality. Based on their positive decision, the person or household is referred to the relevant service (if there are any vacant places). Despite the importance of the above-mentioned regulations, the criteria for registration of homeless persons are heterogeneous in municipalities, which poses a significant challenge, precludes the development of a uniform policy and creates unequal protection mechanisms for people who have similar needs but reside in different municipalities.<sup>10</sup>

Municipal regulations also define the procedure for providing housing to homeless persons and households after registration. A special points award system is used to determine the order of applicants<sup>11</sup> in the service provision process. Unfortunately, as in the case of homeless registration, there is no uniform methodology at this time and the priorities differ between municipalities.

**Table N 1. Criteria applicable in the process of housing provision**

<i>Criterion/Municipality</i>	<b>Tbilisi</b>	<b>Kutaisi</b>	<b>Rustavi</b>
<i>Living Conditions</i>	4.8 – 9.5 %	3.1 – 18.75 % (According to the rating score of the list of socially vulnerable)	13.7-17.1 % (According to the rating score of the list of socially vulnerable)
<i>Person with Severe Disabilities</i>	9.5 %	18.75 %	7.5 %, no more than 13.7 % (in the case of additional family member with disabilities)

<sup>5</sup> Report of the Public Defender of Georgia on the Situation of Human Rights and Freedoms in Georgia, First Half of 2009, p. 246.

<sup>6</sup> The Public Defender of Georgia, The Right to Adequate Housing: Special Report, 2015, pp. 14-15, 17-18.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, p. 18.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Municipal Unit of Health and Social Services of Tbilisi Municipality, Statistical Collection, 2020, <https://bit.ly/3HjPSeV>; Correspondence N 01-3821321273 of Rustavi Municipality City Hall, 17.11.2021; Correspondence N 01-4421316324 of Kutaisi Municipality City Hall, 12.11.2021.

<sup>10</sup> Additionally, see, Social Justice Center, The Notion of a Homeless Person and the Criteria for Determining the Status of the Homeless, 2020.

<sup>11</sup> The household with the highest score is satisfied in the first place.

<i>Person with Significant Disabilities</i>	9.5 %	12.5 %	5.5 %, no more than 11.64 % (in the case of additional family member with disabilities)
<i>Person with Moderate Disabilities</i>	-	6.25 %	3.4 % (in the case of 1 person); 9.6 % (in the case of 2 or more persons)
<i>Children with Disabilities</i>	-	12.5 %	-
<i>Pensioner</i>	-	6.25 % (as a recipient of public pension)	2.1-6.2 % (based on the number of pensioners)
<i>Family member(s) of a veteran of war and military forces, who was deceased, disappeared or died as a result of wounds received for fighting for the territorial integrity, freedom and independence of Georgia</i>	4.8 %	6.25 % (as a recipient of public pension)	3.4 -6.8 % (based on the number of such persons)
<i>Family member who lost the breadwinner</i>	9.5 %	12.5 %	1.4 -7.5 % (based on the number)
<i>Person with the status of single parent and his/her minor child/children</i>	14.2 %	-	2.7 %
<i>Child</i>	14.2 % (in the case of 3 or more children)	6.25 %, an additional 3.1 % for fourth and more children	4.1-8.2% (based on the number)
<i>Person awarded under the Law “on the Establishment of State Awards of Georgia” and/or recipient of municipal honorary titles and awards</i>	4.8 %	-	-
<i>Beneficiary of the rent allowance program</i>	14.2 %	-	-
<i>Homeless person out of state care service</i>	-	-	3.4 % (in the case of 18-30-year-old persons)
<i>Homeless person newly released from a penitentiary institution or homeless person sentenced to probation</i>	-	-	2.1%
<i>The fact of loss/selling the living space</i>	-	-	4.1- 6.8 % (at least 5 years should have passed from loss/selling the living space)
<i>Duration of registration on the territory of the municipality</i>	-	-	0.7- 6.8 % (in the case of registration for more than 15 years)
<i>Other factual circumstances</i>	4.8 – 9.5 %	-	-

Along with the inconsistency of the criteria, the challenge is posed by the municipal regulations regarding the satisfaction of homeless people and households with housing in accordance with the municipal resources. In particular, according to the existing regulatory framework, the fact of homeless registration does not give the municipality the obligation to meet the necessary deadlines in any particular period for the provision of a homeless person/household with housing, and this is to be done considering the availability of resources.<sup>12</sup>

The resolutions of city assemblies also indicate the duration of housing usage. For example, in the case of Tbilisi, registered homeless families sign a 3-year contract with the Tbilisi Municipal Shelter, while in Rustavi and Kutaisi homeless persons sign a 2-year contract with the Municipalities. After the expiration of the term, the Tbilisi Municipal Commission re-examines the existence of criteria for the registration of a homeless household and issues a recommendation to extend the contract for 2 years or to reject the extension.<sup>13</sup> On the other hand, Rustavi and Kutaisi municipalities do not have fixed dates - according to the regulations, further deadlines depend on the monitoring results, fulfillment of contractual obligations and conditions and the socio-economic status of the resident.<sup>14</sup> Such general regulation can become a mechanism for abuse of power by the administrative body, while, on the other hand, might cause a feeling of instability in the residents.

In parallel with the above-mentioned regulations, the resolutions adopted at the City Assembly level do not reflect the obligation of the municipalities to strengthen the recipients of housing services and to support them in overcoming the state of homelessness. The legal regulations do not mention the minimum standards of housing services and the criteria for their adequacy. The only, scarce record in these areas can be found in the regulation of Tbilisi Municipality, according to which the average living space allocated to each person should be 6 square meters,<sup>15</sup> which is against the standard set by the Supreme Court in December 2021.<sup>16</sup>

In the end, the lack of minimum housing standards poses a risk to the service beneficiaries of violating the rights to adequate housing and gives municipalities unjustifiably wide discretion in providing services. In particular, in the absence of a uniform standard of housing adequacy, municipalities are allowed to use unsuitable buildings in the provision of housing to homeless people and families, which not only affects the quality of living of beneficiaries but may also endanger their lives and health.

An example of the above-mentioned concern is the case of the Kutaisi Municipality. According to the report of the State Audit Office, the work on the construction/reconstruction of the social housing was carried out poorly, while the City Hall did not supervise the compliance between the quality of work and the expenses incurred on the Municipality.<sup>17</sup> According to the same conclusion, the building, which was planned to be reconstructed, as well as the design of the project, did not meet the necessary conditions for living (for example,

---

<sup>12</sup> Resolution N 37 - 14 of the Tbilisi Municipality Assembly of February 12, 2019 “On Approval of the Rule of Homeless Registration and the Provision with Shelter/Housing on the Territory of the Tbilisi Municipality”, Annex N 1, Art. 6 (9); Resolution N 160 of the Kutaisi Municipality Assembly of February 22, 2017 “On Approval of the Rules for Registration of Homeless Persons on the Territory of Kutaisi Municipality and Provision with Temporary Housing”, Annex N 1, Art. 3 (2); Resolution N 83 of the Rustavi Municipality Assembly of December 24, 2018 “On Approval of the Rules for Registration of Homeless Persons on the Territory of the City of Rustavi Municipality and Provision with Temporary Housing”, Annex N 1, Art. 2 (6).

<sup>13</sup> Resolution N 37 - 14 of the Tbilisi Municipality Assembly of February 12, 2019 “On Approval of the Rule of Homeless Registration and the Provision with Shelter/Housing on the Territory of the Tbilisi Municipality”, Annex N 1, Art. 6(10) – (12).

<sup>14</sup> Resolution N 160 of the Kutaisi Municipality Assembly of February 22, 2017 “On Approval of the Rules for Registration of Homeless Persons on the Territory of Kutaisi Municipality and Provision with Temporary Housing”, Annex N 1, Art. 5 (1); Resolution N 83 of the Rustavi Municipality Assembly of December 24, 2018 “On Approval of the Rules for Registration of Homeless Persons on the Territory of the City of Rustavi Municipality and Provision with Temporary Housing”, Annex N 1, Art. 6 (1).

<sup>15</sup> Resolution N 37 - 14 of the Tbilisi Municipality Assembly of February 12, 2019 “On Approval of the Rule of Homeless Registration and the Provision with Shelter/Housing on the Territory of the Tbilisi Municipality”, Annex N 1, Art. 6 (8).

<sup>16</sup> According to the Supreme Court, allocating 6.4. sq.m. of living space per person is a violation of the right to adequate housing, see, <https://bit.ly/3umjrZw>.

<sup>17</sup> State Audit Office, Compliance Audit Report, 2019, pp. 4, 16-23.

windows were not suitable for living;<sup>18</sup> the house did not have balconies, the kitchen was not separated from the bedroom, etc.). Along with the poor quality of housing, the report shows that the terms of the competition for the construction of social housing were tailored to the interests of a particular person and budget funds were spent in excess.<sup>19</sup>

Although the report of the State Audit Office was prepared several years ago, the living conditions of the residents of Kutaisi social housing have not changed and the central or municipal authorities have not taken steps towards the eradication of this specific problem or other systemic challenges.

## **2. Social Housing Service – Functioning and Key Challenges**

Regulation of the content of housing services cannot be regarded as the only challenge in municipalities. The research identified several other important systemic problems, including those related to the living environment, the service inclusion process, and the socio-economic vulnerability of beneficiaries. This Chapter is aiming at examining the peculiarities of the functioning of the social housing service and identifying and analyzing the main challenges in this area.

### **2.1. The Process of Inclusion in the Service**

Before entering social housing, most of the beneficiaries' living was arranged through rent. As they point out, paying rent over the years has put families under constant psychological stress. *“I have changed 11 apartments in 15 years. The child found it difficult to establish himself in the new space because he was subject to bullying. He was told – “nobody is asking you, you are on rent”. I have been also nervous about it.” - Beneficiary of Rustavi housing.*

In all three cases, the beneficiaries learned about the existence of the social housing service through various information sources (mass media, employees of the City Hall, acquaintances). The waiting period for deciding on housing satisfaction lasted from 3 months to 1 year. Due to the inability to cover housing costs independently, access to social housing services is an important mechanism for the socio-economic stability of the beneficiaries – *“As I have moved into housing, I know that no one will kick me out, no one will let me go” - Beneficiary of Rustavi housing.*

Interviews with Rustavi housing beneficiaries revealed<sup>20</sup> that they had to spend a considerable amount of money to collect the documents needed to obtain housing – *“The collection of documents was a costly process, as the document needed to be obtained from the archives. It cost us about 200 GEL. One document cost 20-30-50 GEL”- Beneficiary of Rustavi housing.* It is noteworthy that solving the housing problem for people means being on the “battlefield”. During the interviews, the beneficiaries of housing often used the phrases, such as “I am in a fight”, “I fought a lot” and so on.

In the case of Kutaisi housing, there is an additional practice of obtaining housing. Some families arbitrarily occupy the vacated living space and then apply to the City Hall with an application to hand over the already occupied housing for their temporary use. *“I have occupied the apartment and then applied to the City Hall with the application. City Hall itself told us to make a request. I have written 2-3 applications. I think they will not let me go anymore” - Beneficiary of Kutaisi housing.*

---

<sup>18</sup> “The Windows are installed at such a height that the distance between the window and the floor is about 2 meters”- State Audit Office, Compliance Audit Report, 2019, p. 21.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, pp. 17-23.

<sup>20</sup> During the interviews, the beneficiaries of Kutaisi and Tbilisi social housing did not focus on the money spent on collecting documents.

An important issue in relation to the lack of communication between municipalities and residents arises regarding the understanding of the purpose of social housing and the temporary nature of the service. This problem is found in the cases of Rustavi and Kutaisi Municipalities where part of the residents expects to be permanently involved in this service or get ownership of the living space.

## **2.2. The Living Conditions in the Housing**

The administration and security service functions neither in Kutaisi, nor Rustavi social housing. Security in Rustavi housing ceased after the beneficiaries settled in 2019. Before that, the protection of the building was intended to prevent anyone from arbitrarily occupying the residential area.<sup>21</sup> On the other hand, Kutaisi housing was served by a security guard in 2017-2019.<sup>22</sup>

The administration operates only in Orkhevi Social Housing, which includes a foreman, a social worker, a psychologist and a security guard. Cameras are installed in the public areas of the housing, which constantly monitor the residents. If any beneficiary decides to leave the residence for a certain period (for example, a few days), he/she is obliged to inform the administration about it.

Orkhevi and Rustavi Social Houses have standard one-size apartments (26 sq.m. in Rustavi, 38 sq.m. in Tbilisi), while Kutaisi Social Housing has 2 types of apartments – one-room (36 sq.m.) and two-room (50 sq.m.) apartments. Beneficiaries of Kutaisi and Rustavi housing are satisfied with the housing location, as public transport, as well as hospital, school, kindergarten, pharmacy, market and other services, are easily accessible. Beneficiaries of Tbilisi housing are dissatisfied with the location, as vital services are not available to them. In particular, the free food service for the socially vulnerable persons, a daycare center, a hospital and other facilities are geographically inaccessible.

Additionally, the living environment in the buildings is regarded as challenging. For example, the building of Kutaisi Social Housing was previously used as a communication facility. Consequently, despite the renovation of the building, the environment is not habitable and also, to some extent, is dangerous - on the one hand, the building is damaged and unstable, and the walls are cracked, on the other hand, the building has no emergency stairs.<sup>23</sup> Beneficiaries of Kutaisi housing noted, that part of the families who were offered to live in the housing refused to receive the service. Through this information, the respondents would like to emphasize that living in the Kutaisi Social Housing is an extreme solution for households. Against this background, Kutaisi Municipality does not carry out internal works in the housing, as a criminal investigation has been underway for several years concerning the targeted spending of the budget funds allocated for the development of social housing, as well as the adequacy of the housing.<sup>24</sup>

The research found that in all three houses, especially for Orkhevi housing, the challenge is the size of the living space, which precludes the existence of sufficient living space for the multi-member households. Space is challenging in Rustavi housing as well. The beneficiaries here do not assess the living conditions sharply negatively because, in their estimation, the apartments are habitable; However, due to the small size of the living space (26 sq.m.), the large-sized households surveyed are forced to put their minor children with relatives or institutions (orphanages).

Noise in housing is problematic in all three facilities. This issue is especially acute in Orkhevi Housing - the constant noise is caused by the thin walls and the lack of sound insulation mechanisms, which negatively affects

---

<sup>21</sup> Individual interviews with residents of Rustavi Social Housing.

<sup>22</sup> Individual interviews and focus groups with Kutaisi social housing residents.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> In-depth interview with the representatives of Kutaisi Municipality.

the mental state of the beneficiaries, as well as the quality of children's education, and often leads to conflicts.<sup>25</sup> Additionally, because the residence is located close to the Tbilisi Airport, the constant sound of planes flying over is troubling.

Families living on the first floor of the Kutaisi Social Housing state that the dampness and dust in the house pose a significant problem for their health. Given that families spend a lot of time in their homes, being constantly in a humid environment causes a variety of illnesses and infections. *"Before I got to the residence, my joints hurt less. It is very humid. We are here for the fifth year. The first floor is not habitable"- the beneficiary of Kutaisi Housing.*

### **2.3. The Socio-Economic Vulnerability of Residents**

Various social cash benefits (social allowance, pension for war veterans, the social package for the person with disabilities, old-age pension, etc.) are a stable income source for beneficiaries, which is not enough to meet the basic needs of families. To earn extra income, some beneficiaries work in various (mostly one-time) jobs in order not to lose their status of socially vulnerable and, consequently, not to be left without a small but stable cash benefit, as well as social housing. *"You cannot survive only via social assistance, if some opportunity appears, I work. If I get a stable job, my social allowance will be terminated"- Beneficiary of Kutaisi Social Housing.*

Family members of persons with disabilities are unable to work due to a lack of support. Therefore, they can be employed in only part-time jobs. *"I would find a job, but part-time, because I cannot leave my son with disabilities alone all day. Even if I had an income of 100-200 GEL per month, it would be helpful"- Beneficiary of Kutaisi housing.*

The costs of housing beneficiaries are related to the basic livelihoods such as food, hygiene items, clothing, medicines, etc. As the respondents noted, special attention is paid to the education of school-age children. Because of this, the fee for private tutors is another significant expense for families. Beneficiaries' income is also spent on utility bills, such as electricity, gas and water expenses.<sup>26</sup> Although the municipalities subsidize the electricity tax, large families are not eligible for this assistance because their monthly consumption exceeds the established threshold of kilowatts. Therefore, residents are dissatisfied with the high electricity bills. *"I cannot spend only 200 kilowatts. You cannot turn it off. I have "Termex" installed by the City Hall. It spends electricity too much – for 100 GEL, 85 GEL. High bills have come" - Beneficiary of Rustavi Housing.*

Due to the high costs and extreme hardship, part of the beneficiaries survives by collecting metals (copper, aluminum) and selling them. Also, as the residents mentioned, in order to meet their basic needs, they often have to take products from the grocery shops via loans – *"I am getting the pension in the morning, there is no money by the evening" - Beneficiary of Kutaisi housing.* Another expense is related to bank loans. Some of the housing beneficiaries cover the loan with the monthly social cash assistance – *"I have a disability pension of 140 GEL and I'm actually receiving 85 GEL. I am paying the rest on credit"- Beneficiary of Rustavi housing.* People with disabilities surveyed during the research are dissatisfied with the fact that during the pandemics the social package was increased only for people with severe disabilities, which once again increased the already large gap between them and persons with significant and moderate disabilities.

---

<sup>25</sup> Open Society Georgia Foundation, Living in Social Housing: Reasons, Needs, Environment, 2020, pp. 24-25.

<sup>26</sup> Municipalities provide subsidies in individual cases.

### 3. Service Modification – a Necessary Step?

While the development and operation of social housing services is an important step by municipalities, issues concerning the service delivery and improving the human situation of beneficiaries are constantly presented and require a systemic approach.

In all three houses, during their existence, no transition of beneficiaries took place. On the other hand, the municipalities did not use the eviction mechanism. In fact, rooms are only vacated as a result of the deaths of single beneficiaries. The absence of a transition deprives the social housing of its aim and essence concerning empowering residents, getting them out of homelessness, outflowing the residents and receiving new flows, which itself poses significant risks of institutionalizing service recipients. To overcome the existing challenges, it is unequivocally important to develop a complex and multi-layered policy that would, on the one hand, improve the socio-economic situation of the residents and, on the other hand, create democratic and inclusive forms of communication between the municipality and the beneficiaries.

Residents of social housing emphasize that they will leave housing voluntarily only if 1) the state offers better housing services, or 2) they can afford to buy an apartment. Beneficiaries categorically refuse to leave housing in alternative with rent because the exemption from the obligation to pay rent is the main reason why they continue to live in the degrading living conditions. However, due to the inadequacy of the social housing, some residents also wish to be included in the municipal apartment rental program and return to an unstable living environment.

It should be noted that new social housing is being built on Gugunava Street in Kutaisi, where 40 families will be provided with temporary housing. Beneficiaries of Kutaisi Housing are willing to move from the existing housing to a new one. However, according to the representative of Kutaisi Municipality, the new housing will receive new beneficiaries, as hundreds of applications have already been submitted to the City Hall. On the other hand, according to the beneficiaries of Orkhevi Housing, Tbilisi City Hall plans to provide apartments to 400 families.<sup>27</sup> Despite the desire, they have no information whether the City Hall will provide them with a new residence.

According to residents, the transition would be greatly facilitated by finding a stable job, with adequate pay. For residents, the term “adequate” means a salary that will meet their basic needs and give persons an opportunity to buy an apartment. However, even though homeless families do not have to pay rent, they do not have any cash savings. Even if they can save, it will not be enough to improve their housing – *“For example, I paid 200 GEL in rent, how long does the beneficiary have to save to buy an apartment? It is impossible” - Beneficiary of Tbilisi Housing.*

One way for female beneficiaries to leave the housing service is to migrate abroad for work and, like immigrant women there, engage in informal labor. However, as the beneficiaries noted, labor migration will be very difficult for women who have minor children or are committed to caring for family members. *“The alternative is to go abroad as a caregiver, leaving the child alone, who is a schoolboy. This is difficult” - Beneficiary of Rustavi Housing.*

People with disabilities interviewed during the research have rarely been employed during the period of having disability status – *“I do not think about employment, as I am on medicines. Who will give the job to me, when*

---

<sup>27</sup> Resolution N 4-7 of the Tbilisi Municipality Assembly of December 27, 2021 “On the Approval of the 2022 Budget of the Tbilisi Municipality”.

*healthy persons do not have jobs?”- Beneficiary of Rustavi Housing.* Therefore, the residents of housing with disabilities see an improvement in their living conditions with the support of the state.

Beneficiaries of social housing who have certain professional skills feel that their development opportunities are limited. However, despite the potential, they are not willing to be employed at an adequate salary, because the increase in income means the loss of the status of the socially vulnerable, which itself will cause the loss of the right to social housing. – *“If my status is removed, I will automatically be removed from the list and I will have to stay on the street with my child again” - Beneficiary of Rustavi Housing.* The fear of being left homeless after employment in a paid job is completely logical considering the regulations of Rustavi and Kutaisi Municipalities. In particular, the rule of homeless registration and provision with housing does not apply to households that are registered in the unified database of socially vulnerable families and have a rating score of 150,001 (in the case of Rustavi) or 200,000 (in the case of Kutaisi) and above.<sup>28</sup> These regulations do not provide for exceptions for households that might be in transition and need to stay in housing for a particular period. On the other hand, there is no affordable housing service in the municipalities that would offer housing to low- and middle-income households, which in turn would maintain the transitional nature of social housing.

According to the respondents, while the older members of the family have not been able to overcome poverty and solve the problem of homelessness, the state should still provide appropriate conditions for young people to eradicate their challenges. This is why it is necessary to increase access to vocational and higher education for young people. Also, the development of social programs that will employ young people and enable them to grow professionally is vital.

Another problematic issue regarding the empowerment of the residents is the work of a social worker. As Orkhevi Social Housing has its administration (including a social worker), beneficiaries have the opportunity to engage in a variety of services, including vocational training, support and occupational therapy services for job seekers.<sup>29</sup> However, due to a large number of residents and the complexity of their challenges, involving the relevant part of them in different types of activities is a challenge. Additionally, it should be noted that only 1 social worker is assigned to the housing, which is sharply insufficient; in some cases, this position was vacant for months, which excluded the possibility of minimal social work with residents.

On the other hand, the residents of social housing in Rustavi and Kutaisi Municipalities have minimal communication with the social worker. They do not get information about the services operating at the central and municipal levels. Residents are unaware of the responsibilities of a social worker in improving their social, economic and health status.

Over the years, municipalities have been ineffective in responding to the above-mentioned challenges, which require significant modifications. As mentioned above, the main problem is ineffective communication between municipalities and residents of social housing. The representatives of Kutaisi Municipality City Hall noted that beneficiaries of the housing belong to the “difficult category”, to whom communication is extremely challenging. After the 2019 incident, when residents physically confronted a City Hall employee, the municipal representatives stopped coming to the housing. It should be noted that the responsibility for the functioning of social housing in Kutaisi lies with the Housing Infrastructure Management and Development Unit of the Municipality. However, due to the specifics of their field of work, the employees of the given Unit do not have

---

<sup>28</sup> Resolution N 160 of the Kutaisi Municipality Assembly of February 22, 2017 “On Approval of the Rules for Registration of Homeless Persons on the Territory of Kutaisi Municipality and Provision with Temporary Housing”, Annex N 1, Art. 1 (3); Resolution N 83 of the Rustavi Municipality Assembly of December 24, 2018 “On Approval of the Rules for Registration of Homeless Persons on the Territory of the City of Rustavi Municipality and Provision with Temporary Housing”, Annex N 1, Art. 1 (3<sup>1</sup>).

<sup>29</sup> Open Society Georgia Foundation, *Municipal Housing in Georgia*, 2019, p. 3.



enough knowledge and experience in the management of relationships with the residents, as well as the processes of their strengthening and recovery from vulnerability. This challenge necessitates the involvement of other Units, especially the Social Protection Unit, in the service management process.

Considering the communication problem, in case of the need to clarify and resolve specific issues, the representatives of Kutaisi Municipality City Hall contact one of the women residents, who informally assumed the responsibility of the foreman of the housing. Some of the residents refer to her as the “Resident Commandant”. Unlike Kutaisi, the employees of Rustavi Municipality City Hall periodically visit the residence and get acquainted with the situation there.<sup>30</sup> Unfortunately, there is no inclusive platform for communicating between the municipalities and residents, that would ensure the effective and systematic delivery of beneficiaries’ needs to decision-makers, which would be further considered in the policy planning process.

To conclude, given the lack of the transitional nature of the social housing service and the appropriate support mechanisms, its residents are deprived of the opportunity to leave the housing because they cannot improve their situation and are still at real risk of being roofless outside of social housing.<sup>31</sup> Additionally, the lack of transition leads to a constant filling of places in the service, which means ignoring the housing needs of other homeless households and their being on the service waiting list for many months. For example, currently, 395 registered homeless families are on the waiting list in Tbilisi, 50 households in Rustavi Municipality, while in Kutaisi municipality, 181 families, 2 unconditionally resettled persons and 14 roofless people are not satisfied with housing due to a lack of resources.<sup>32</sup>

## **Conclusion**

The process of examining the content of the social housing service and the situation of its beneficiaries has revealed the systemic challenges that deprive the given service of its original content and put the implementation of the primarily set tasks at serious risk. It should be noted that the identified barriers are found due to the absence of housing policy at the central level, as well as given the serious problems in the establishment and management of services by the municipalities.

On the one hand, due to the absence of an adequate standard of living, people formally satisfied with social housing have to live in inadequate conditions for years, which has a drastic negative impact on their physical and mental health, as well as the integration into society. On the other hand, the lack of mechanisms to strengthen the residents and the existing regulations deprive them of the opportunity to move to decent housing at their own expense from the very beginning of the inclusion of social housing services.

Existing challenges can only be answered through the development and implementation of a complex and coherent policy. It is important to pay special attention, on the one hand, to the identification of the needs of residents, their strengthening and the removal of barriers to the process of leaving the service, and, on the other hand, to the establishment and usage of inclusive and democratic platforms/mechanisms for the effective communication and the decision-making process regarding services.

---

<sup>30</sup> Individual Interviews with residents of Rustavi social housing.

<sup>31</sup> Open Society Georgia Foundation, *Municipal Housing in Georgia*, 2019, p. 2.

<sup>32</sup> Correspondence N 10-01213282924 of Tbilisi Municipality City Hall, 24.11.2021; Correspondence N 01-3821321273 of Rustavi Municipality City Hall, 17.11.2021; Correspondence N 01-4421316324 of Kutaisi Municipality City Hall, 12.11.2021.

## Recommendations

In view of all the above, the central and municipal authorities of Georgia should consider the following recommendations:

- Develop a standard of housing adequacy that takes into account the provisions of international human rights law (including access to services, habitability, accessibility) and provides decent living conditions for recipients of housing services;
- Assess the adequacy and habitability of social housing in the shortest possible time, and in case of a negative conclusion, immediately provide the residents with adequate and safe alternative housing. If possible, correct deficiencies identified during the assessment;
- Study the individual needs of the people living in social housing and the challenges they face in the shortest possible time, which will form the basis of the policy and process of improving their human rights situation and socioeconomic status;
- Ensure active work of the social worker with the families to identify needs and redirect to the services at the central or municipal level, including employment and education services;
- Develop a social housing service standard, which, among other things, includes:
  - A systemic vision for empowering residents and overcoming their homelessness, which, *inter alia*, means continuing the intensive work with residents in the case of a stable income and maintaining legal force for a service contract until they can leave the service independently;
  - Establishment and usage of an inclusive and democratic platform/mechanism for effective communication between the municipality and service recipients and the decision-making process regarding housing.
- Develop a comprehensive housing policy, which, *inter alia*, ensures:
  - Reviewing existing services, their harmonization with international standards, and development and implementation of the long-term housing services, including affordable housing;
  - Ensuring uniformity of criteria for homeless registration by municipalities and establishing a unified methodology at the national level;
  - Ensuring uniformity of prioritization in the process of providing housing to homeless persons/households by municipalities and establishing a unified methodology at the national level;
  - Changing the regulation of housing provision for homeless persons/households in such a way as to prevent them from being on the housing service waiting list for many months.
- Ensure effective cooperation between state agencies to:
  - Eliminate unnecessary financial costs and bureaucratic barriers in the process of collecting documents necessary for homeless registration and provision of housing;
  - Ensure a multifaceted and multi-profile approach in the process of communicating with residents and working to strengthen them.

## Living in a “Dream City” – Needs and Resettlement Process

### Introduction

About one-fifth of the world’s population lives in informal settlements.<sup>33</sup> As a result of ongoing armed conflicts and climate change, a growing number of people are looking for a safer environment, thus, it is expected that this number will double in the next decades. At the same time, those who have to relocate due to economic hardship continue to seek housing opportunities in urban areas. Although informal settlements are associated with the living environment for some, in reality, most of these settlements do not have the basic infrastructure necessary for health and well-being, including access to clean water and sanitation systems.<sup>34</sup> For decades the governments in low- and middle-income countries have shown a negative attitude towards informal settlements, which, *inter alia*, was reflected in the eviction of residents and the total or partial demolition of settlements.<sup>35</sup>

Due to the lack of a policy for combating homelessness and guaranteeing housing in Georgia, as well as the government’s inaction in this regard, various homeless groups have been resorting to self-help measures for years, including building shelters on lands they do not own. The settlement in Adjara is one of the large-scale examples of this practice. The change of government as a result of the 2012 parliamentary elections forced the population with housing problems in highland Adjara to settle arbitrarily in the territory of 53rd and 25th Battalions of the former military base of the Russian Federation near Batumi, as well as on Tbeti Street. The population has been living in an informal settlement for 9 years, which is known as the “Dream City”.

In 2019, the Government of the Autonomous Republic of Adjara launched a program to build buildings, the beneficiaries of which will be families with housing needs living in the informal settlement.<sup>36</sup> Although the first phase of the program (construction of 582 flats) is to be completed in 2022, the criteria and priority groups for obtaining housing have not yet been defined.

The present research aims to overview the current situation in the so-called “Dream City” and examine the main challenges faced by the population, as well as the process of providing housing for these people. Given its content, the document is divided into 3 parts. The first part summarizes the international standards regarding people living in informal settlements and improving their situation; the second part reviews the settlement history of the “Dream City” and the main challenges faced by its residents, while the third part deals with the resettlement processes and addresses government agencies with relevant recommendations.

### Methodology

In order to analyze the content of the service, the relevant national legislative acts, bye-laws and international standards, as well as the public information received from the Batumi Municipality and international and national reports on the topic were examined.

The research also used a qualitative research method - in-depth interviews. The research tool was a guide consisting of open-ended questions. The target groups of the research were persons with different social statuses living in the “Dream City”, a representative of the Government of Adjara, as well as a representative of the

---

<sup>33</sup> GSRDC, Urban governance, 2016, <https://bit.ly/3AHI7Nz>.

<sup>34</sup> Report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context, Raquel Rolnik, A/HRC/22/46, 2012, par. 29.

<sup>35</sup> Vahapoğlu L., Strategies for Improving Informal Settlements, 2019.

<sup>36</sup> “The Construction of the so-called “Dream City” has begun in Batumi”, 2020, <https://bit.ly/3s0fZ4k>.

Public Defender's Office. 3 individual and 4 group interviews have been conducted within the research. A total of 15 respondents have been interviewed.

## 1. International Obligations towards the Residents of Informal Settlements

According to the European Typology of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion (ETHOS), the concept of homelessness includes, *inter alia*, those living in informal settlements. The state should identify these people, examine their needs and offer safe and long-term housing, as well as develop a uniform and consistent policy towards the representatives of this group.

Clearly, the examination of international standards in this sphere goes beyond the scope of this document, however, given the Georgian context, it is possible to identify several major areas/obligations of the state:<sup>37</sup>

- Prioritization of residents of informal settlements in housing policy, including housing strategy;
- Providing access to services and infrastructure;<sup>38</sup>
- Ensuring access to water and sanitation, regardless of the ownership of the territory/dwelling;
- Protecting people from discrimination, violence and forced evictions;
- Providing long-term housing and support services to people in need;
- Taking into account the challenges and needs of people living in informal settlements during the construction of housing and considering the needs of the most vulnerable groups, such as women, children, people with disabilities, the elderly;
- Ensuring the involvement and active participation of the local population in the process of improving the living conditions of the residents of the informal settlement, as well as ensuring access to information;
- Ensuring transparency and accountability of agencies in the process of improving housing in informal settlements. To this end, ensure the functioning of an independent oversight mechanism towards this process;
- Examining the human rights situation of the residents of the informal settlement, supervising the process of their support and collecting detailed statistical information;
- Combating stigma towards people living in informal settlements;
- In the long-term perspectives, provide affordable housing programs and develop a preventive homelessness policy.

For the real improvement of the human rights situation of the residents of the informal settlement, it is essential that the state strictly adheres to the above-mentioned standards and reflects them in its legislation, as well as in its policies and practices.

---

<sup>37</sup> See, for example, Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, General comment No. 4: The right to adequate housing, (art. 11 (1) of the Covenant), 1991; Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, General comment No. 15: The Right to Water, E/C.12/2002/11, 2003; Report of the special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, Miloon Kothari, E/CN.4/2004/48, 2004; Report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context, A/HRC/37/53, 2018; Report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context, A/HRC/43/43, 2019; Report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context, A/73/310/Rev.1, 2018; Martha F. Davis and Natasha Ryan, *Inconvenient Human Rights: Water and Sanitation in Sweden's Informal Roma Settlements*, 2017.

<sup>38</sup> For example, emergency assistance, household waste disposal service, safe drinking water, heating and lighting, area drainage.

## **2. “Dream City” Settlement – the Main Challenges of the Residents**

In the absence of a national housing policy, hundreds of people in Georgia are resorting to various measures of self-help, including building housing without permission. Unfortunately, the needs of most of these people have been neglected by the state for years. The purpose of this chapter is to identify and analyze the process of formation of the largest informal settlement in Georgia – “Dream City” - and the main challenges faced by the population.

### **2.1. The Establishment of a “Dream City” Settlement**

The first houses on the territory of the “Dream City” appeared in October 2012.<sup>39</sup> The number of houses has increased over the years and as of December 2021, it has reached 1740. The informal settlement is inhabited by families with different socio-demographic characteristics. Among them are representatives of vulnerable groups - people with disabilities, war veterans, large families, families without breadwinners, landslide-affected households, the elderly and single parents. Residents of informal settlements were granted socially vulnerable status *en masse* in 2014.<sup>40</sup>

According to the residents, before settling in the so-called “Dream City”, most of the families lived in the villages of highland Adjara. There were a number of reasons for families to leave their original residence. Among them, it is noteworthy:

- Living in landslide and avalanche danger zone;
- Unsuitable and insufficient space for living;
- Lack of vital infrastructure (road, wiring) and services (education, health, etc.) in rural areas;
- Inability to be employed and have an income;
- Severe climatic conditions in winter, which lasts for 6-7 months per year.

The convenient location was the main reason for settlement on the territory of the “Dream City”. Apart from the fact that the area is large, the proximity to the economically active districts of Batumi offers employment opportunities to the people living there. At the same time, according to the residents, the long-term goal of settling in the “dream city” is getting housing from the state. They deem that in the current situation, the decision to settle in the “Dream City” was the best way to improve their social and economic situation. It should be noted that the informal settlement is located along the Batumi-Akhalsikhe Central Highway, which connects the population with the municipalities (Keda, Shuakhevi, Khulo) where they originate. This facilitates their contact with places of origin (villages), which is important for the social and economic sustainability of families.

### **2.2. Living in a “Dream City” – Main Challenges and Needs**

For the residents of the “Dream City” living in an informal settlement has been associated with significant challenges for years. Inadequate living conditions, inaccessibility to infrastructure and services, the delayed realization of children's right to education, threats from electricity systems, road problems are just a small list of the obstacles that people face on a daily basis. Unfortunately, many problems are still unresolved.

#### *2.2.1. Infrastructure of the Settlement*

During the first phase of settlement in the “Dream City”, the habitants did not have basic living conditions. The people lived in huts made of cardboard; There was no electricity, no drinking water and the sanitary and

---

<sup>39</sup> Report of the Public Defender of Georgia on the Situation of Human Rights and Freedoms in Georgia, 2014, p. 766.

<sup>40</sup> Individual interviews and focus groups with the residents of “Dream City”.

hygienic norms were completely ignored. The settlement was built spontaneously and was not subject to any logical order. Gradually, over time, cardboard huts were replaced by houses built of solid material; a shrine for the Muslim community was built, educational space and a bath were set up. Additionally, a service of free meals was developed, which provides socially vulnerable families with less than 61 000 points with food. The problem of drinking water has also been partially solved, however, unresolved infrastructure challenges remain.

As mentioned above, one of the main problems is the electricity supply system in the settlement, which poses a risk of fire in the dwellings. As one resident noted, during the existence of the informal settlement, 14 dwellings were burnt. Out of this, in 12 cases, the cause of the fire was faulty electrical wiring. As the installation of electric poles is necessary for safety, the population has applied to the Government of Adjara; however, they have been waiting for an answer for 4 months.

The residents also noted that during heavy rains, the area of the “Dream City” is flooded as the road and drainage systems are out of order. Rainfall makes it even more difficult to move on inland roads, and in some parts of the area, water enters yards and houses, creating inadequate living conditions.

Another important challenge in informal settlements is the absence of a waste management system. although the population applied to the administrative unit of Batumi Municipality to solve the problem, the issue of waste disposal is still present. As the inhabitants explain, the reason for this is the illegal presence of the population on the state territory, therefore, the local government does not take responsibility – *“the answer is always the same, you have illegally occupied the land and nothing applies to you”* - residents of “Dream City”.

Residents also underlined the needs of the youth and noted that the situation in the settlement does not create favorable conditions for their development. Near the settlement, there is no opportunity to engage in cultural-cognitive and sports activities. Due to the distance, as well as the failure of the road infrastructure, access to the school is difficult during bad weather. As the representative of the Government of Adjara noted, along with the construction of apartments, the development of the necessary infrastructure is also planned. In particular, it is planned to build a school and a kindergarten, as well as a gym.

### 2.2.2. The Socio-Economic Vulnerability of the Population

Some of the residents of the “Dream City” have a connection with the village and cultivate the land there. The agricultural products are mainly used for personal consumption and are rarely sold because, as mentioned, inhabitants own only small plots. In addition, the population is employed seasonally in different places<sup>41</sup> or performs other types of informal work.<sup>42</sup> Given that most households have a socially vulnerable status, they do not even try to find a stable job because of the danger of losing their status. At the same time, in case of removal of the socially vulnerable status, there will be a risk that they will not be able to receive housing in the buildings built by the Government of the Autonomous Republic of Adjara for families living in the “Dream City”.

The Covid-19 Pandemics has caused significant damage to the population of the “Dream City” in terms of employment. Part of the inhabitants is working in seasonal jobs in Turkey, therefore the closure of the Georgian-Turkish border (due to the Pandemics) has significantly reduced household incomes. In parallel with these challenges, the Government has subsidized the electricity<sup>43</sup> consumed by families for 1 year. Additionally,

---

<sup>41</sup> During the tangerine season, families are starting harvesting. Many households emigrate to Turkey seasonally to pick tea and nuts, which is an important source of income.

<sup>42</sup> For example, men work as loaders, truck and passenger drivers, construction workers, and women work as shopkeepers and/or cleaners.

<sup>43</sup> Note: The dwellings are collectively re-metered, so it is practically impossible to determine the amount of individual electricity consumption.

persons with different statuses (persons with disabilities, the elderly, etc.) received one-time financial and material assistance.

Residents of the “Dream City” settlement note that despite many difficulties, the socio-economic situation of their families has improved compared to 2012. Positive changes are associated with better living conditions, more employment opportunities and increased incomes. However, the main positive change for them is the construction of housing for the residents of the area and, if the process is conducted fairly, getting adequate housing.

On the other hand, due to their health condition, some people living in the settlement are not able to work and are completely dependent on state benefits (social allowance, social package for a person with disabilities). Despite the diverse needs, the population is not informed about employment or other social services existing at the central and local levels. The involvement of social workers in the settlement is also scarce, they do not provide information to the population about public services and programs, some of the respondents do not have information about their identities and responsibilities. The social workers mainly have a relationship with the families where the children live and they are focused on children's rights and cases of domestic violence.

In the area of social protection, the population is dissatisfied with the efforts of the Batumi Municipality, which does not consider applications from informal settlements. As the majority of the inhabitants are not registered in Batumi Municipality, they are not able to use municipal social services. Residents registered in the mountainous municipalities of Adjara (Keda, Shuakhevi, Khulo) are unable to apply to local authorities, *inter alia*, due to the lack of funding for transportation.

In addition to social vulnerability, poor housing conditions in the settlement pose a health problem for the population - especially for people suffering from various chronic diseases. Dampness in dwellings during the winter causes various allergic and respiratory diseases and infections. During the summer season, the waste management problems, along with an unpleasant odor, lead to the proliferation of rodents and insects, which further aggravates the existing poor sanitation. The source of health problems also might be connected with a disordered drinking water system. As residents point out, water wells and household waste are located side by side. The high price of medicines poses another major problem for households.<sup>44</sup>

Respondents also talked about the state of women's health. As noted during the interviews, women are so involved in labor that they do not pay attention to health with the exception of the obvious problems and the extreme necessity. Information on the services relevant to them is also not provided proactively.

It should be noted that, at the time of the interviews, respondents were not vaccinated against the Covid-19 infection. Part of them thinks they can easily handle the virus if they become infected, while others fear that because of chronic diseases, the vaccine will adversely affect their health. Finally, one of the main reasons for the delay in the immunization process of the settlement inhabitants is the low awareness about both the Covid-19 virus and respective vaccines.

### *2.2.3. The Experience of Residents' Relationship with Each Other and the Government*

At the initial stage of the settlement in the “Dream City”, the main reason for the disagreement between the neighbors was the process of redistribution of the territory, as well as various types of humanitarian aid; However, the conflicts were regulated over time. It should be noted that despite the size of the settlement,

---

<sup>44</sup> Individual interviews and focus group meetings with residents of the “Dream City”.

residents have a mostly positive attitude and close relationship with each other. It is easy to exchange information, self-organize and help each other.

The research has identified that public protest is the most effective way to achieve the goal for the residents of the “Dream City”. For example, in 2013, a large-scale protest with the Supreme Council of Adjara made it possible to resolve the issue of electricity supply. It is also the result of a long protest that in 2019 the Government of Adjara decided to build 3 residential buildings for them.

Respondents think that due to media coverage and publicity, the government tries to avoid public protest as much as possible and by establishing individual communication with inhabitants, is trying to convince families that there is no need for protest. *“The government is slowly finding common ground with the population. They are telling the citizens that they will be provided with the newly built housing and therefore they should not have to protest anymore” - a resident of the “Dream City”.*

Respondents, based on their own experience, state that individual conversations with the government have rarely brought them a positive result. Therefore, unity, organizing protests, high media coverage and thus putting pressure on the government are the best way to solve problematic issues.

Ultimately, the unity and activism of the residents of the settlement have had a positive impact on the formation of their social, legal and civic awareness, as many are already aware of their rights and how to act to solve specific problems. Life experience has given the population the belief that it is possible to solve the problems they face with unity and consistent action. *“People are not afraid to fight, they are direct and they know that they will get what belongs to them fairly. They will go to the Government in 5 minutes from the city and ask, or if you have a challenge with the police, you will arrange this problem” - a resident of a “Dream City”.*

### **3. The Resettlement Process of a “Dream City” Residents**

#### **3.1. Working on the Resettlement Criteria**

Shortly after the emergence of the first settlements in the “Dream City”, on November 16, 2012, by the order of the Chairman of the Government of Adjara, a government commission was set up to investigate the facts of arbitrary occupation of the real estate by citizens.<sup>45</sup> Before the completion of its work (March 2013), the Commission created a unified electronic database of applications for housing, and in parallel, in the municipalities of Batumi, Keda, Khelvachauri, Shuakhevi, Kobuleti and Khulo, commissions were set up to examine and overcome the challenges of homeless people.<sup>46</sup> Based on the conclusion of the commission established in 2012, part of the illegally constructed buildings were demolished in 2013 and 2014, however, the process was stopped due to the resistance of the population.<sup>47</sup>

On December 5, 2014, a Joint Government Commission was established, which aimed at studying the facts of arbitrary occupation of real estate owned by the Autonomous Republic of Adjara and its municipality.<sup>48</sup> As part of the commission's work, dwellings built on the territory of former battalions were registered and numbered.<sup>49</sup> The data on the registered households were provided to the municipalities of Adjara and the relevant district administration offices were instructed to discuss the issue of assistance to the families affected

---

<sup>45</sup> The Public Defender of Georgia, The Right to Adequate Housing: Special Report, 2015, p. 20.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Report of the Public Defender of Georgia on the Situation of Human Rights and Freedoms in Georgia, 2014, p. 769.

<sup>48</sup> The Public Defender of Georgia, The Right to Adequate Housing: Special Report, 2015, pp. 20 – 21.

<sup>49</sup> Report of the Public Defender of Georgia on the Situation of Human Rights and Freedoms in Georgia, 2015, p. 782.



by the disasters.<sup>50</sup> However, the Commission did not use the mechanism to study the individual needs of these households, which would be the first important step in addressing their challenges.<sup>51</sup>

Despite the existence of commissions in the first years of the settlement, it was problematic for them to identify the individual needs of the people living in the area and study the socio-economic vulnerability in detail, as well as to formulate and implement an effective response plan.<sup>52</sup>

Years later, as a result of the scale of informal settlement and the challenges facing households in the area of the “Dream City”, as well as the special activity of the residents, the Government of the Autonomous Republic of Adjara decided to provide them with housing.<sup>53</sup> This decision was reflected in the 2019 Budget of the Autonomous Republic of Adjara and 3 750 000 GEL was allocated for the construction of multi-apartment housing.<sup>54</sup> After 2019, this component is included annually in the Budget of the Autonomous Republic of Adjara (2020 - 14 000 000 GEL; 2021 - 30 000 000 GEL; 2022 - 15 000 000 GEL). The construction of residential buildings is planned in three stages.<sup>55</sup>

On February 6, 2019, a special commission was set up to study the social and economic situation of families living in the “Dream City” and determine the criteria for obtaining housing. In the summer of 2019, a comprehensive census was conducted in the informal settlement, which determined that 1740 families had been living in the settlement. The census document includes the following information: age, sex, gender, social status, place of registration, year of commencement of living in the settlement and permanence of living. Residents of the informal settlement noted that after the media reported on the construction of housing, many people became willing to settle in the “Dream City”. That is why 40 families settled in this area after the completion of the registration process were not given a registration number, therefore they will not be able to become beneficiaries of the social program.

Along with the representatives of the Adjara government, human rights organizations and organizations working on vulnerable groups, such as the Public Defender’s Office, the Georgian Office of ICRC and the UNICEF are engaged in the working process of the Commission. So far, 7 meetings have been held, during which the above-mentioned organizations provided their views and recommendations to the Government of Adjara regarding the selection criteria. One of the main focuses in this process was the identification of priority, vulnerable groups in the resettlement process and the definition of the concept of “homeless person”. *“The Public Defender’s Office focused on the definition of “homeless person”. We support the widest possible definition of “homelessness”, to whom this term applies, who may be the bearer of this status” - a representative of the Public Defender’s Office.*

Despite the ongoing process, the Commission has not yet been able to identify priority groups and develop appropriate criteria. However, there is an outline of the criteria that the Commission plans to take into consideration. As the representative of the Government of Adjara noted in the interview, the vulnerability of families living in the “Dream City” will be considered during the development of the criteria - in particular, the disability status, single parenthood, family with many children, the status of war veteran and the person who lost a breadwinner. The criteria are expected to take into account the longevity of living in the informal

---

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Report of the Public Defender of Georgia on the Situation of Human Rights and Freedoms in Georgia, 2014, p. 720.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, p. 770.

<sup>53</sup> The fact, that the decision was derived from the efforts of the population, was underlined by, *inter alia*, the representative of the Government of the Autonomous Republic of Adjara.

<sup>54</sup> Law of the Autonomous Republic of Adjara “On the Republican Budget of the Autonomous Republic of Adjara for 2019”.

<sup>55</sup> In-depth interview with the representative of the Government of the Autonomous Republic of Adjara.

settlement (for at least six months continuously) and the fact of the damage caused by various natural events (flood, fire, etc.) while living in the area.

Another criterion that the Commission plans to consider is the territory where the household lives. Namely, the construction of the second and third stages of the social project is also planned in the area of informal settlement where the population currently lives. However, according to the Public Defender, under the international human rights standards, prioritizing people in the process of transferring ownership of apartments only due to their place of residence and not their vulnerability, cannot be considered fair.<sup>56</sup>

The population recognizes that there are families in the “Dream City” who have alternative housing but continue to live here in the hope of getting an apartment. Over the years, the government has been suggesting the fact that there are no homeless people among the residents of the informal settlement. Given the above-mentioned situation, one of the proposals of the Public Defender's Office before the Commission was to develop threshold criteria; However, presumably, to avoid public dissatisfaction, the Adjara Government did not accept this recommendation.<sup>57</sup> According to the representative of the Government of Adjara, most of the families living in informal settlements belong to the category of homeless in the sense that they have adequate housing neither in the “Dream City” nor in the mountainous villages of Adjara, where the majority lived before settling in the informal settlement.

### **3.2. The Process of Provision with Housing into Ownership – Challenges and Long-term Perspectives**

Even though the goal of the long protest has been achieved and houses are being built, the residents of the “Dream City” are still protesting. They note that the reason for the protest is the lack of information about the quality of construction,<sup>58</sup> the non-transparency of the commission’s work, as well as the insufficient communication with the authorities and lack of awareness. The fact that the population is still unaware of the criteria according to which the families in the informal settlement will receive apartments is of particular concern. They also do not have information about the reason for the delay in defining the criteria. In addition to the criteria for obtaining housing, the inhabitants are interested in the size of apartments to be received by different households, although this issue has not yet been determined by the Commission.

As mentioned above, it is planned to provide 582 households with apartments into ownership in the first phase of housing construction, while a total of 1740 families live in the settlement. Given the non-transparency of the work of the Commission and the scarcity of information, the population fears that they will be left without housing, which is logical, as in the second and third stages of construction, the situation may change - for example, new criteria and priority groups may be defined or the project may be suspended.<sup>59</sup> With this in mind, residents are requesting a written legal guarantee document from the Government to confirm that they will still be satisfied with the apartments in the second and third stages of the project. Although there is a precedent for issuance of such a document in the territory of Batumi Municipality,<sup>60</sup> the Government refuses to provide the residents of the “Dream City” with such a guarantee.<sup>61</sup>

---

<sup>56</sup> In-depth interview with the representative of the Office of the Public Defender of Georgia.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> According to the residents, at the beginning of the construction, about 400 sq. m. of walls were demolished by the construction company itself. As the residents found out, the reason for the demolition was the use of inappropriate materials. Due to this particular example and lack of information about the current construction processes, the residents would like the building to be inspected after the construction is completed to determine whether the quality of the building meets the existing standards.

<sup>59</sup> In-depth interview with the representative of the Office of the Public Defender of Georgia.

<sup>60</sup> A representative of the Public Defender's Office cited a specific example when the Batumi Municipality City Hall included a promise in the contract with the beneficiaries of the Batumi Shelter that it would return them to service after the renovation of the building.

<sup>61</sup> In-depth interview with the representative of the Government of the Autonomous Republic of Adjara.

Eventually, tensions and feelings of injustice increase among the population in a state of uncertainty and information vacuum, which may lead to conflicts on the ground during the provision of some households with the ownership of the apartments. It should be noted that the Government of Adjara also foresees these risks, but has not yet taken appropriate steps to defuse the situation and avoid possible future confrontations.<sup>62</sup>

Although the first phase of housing satisfaction for households living in the area of the “Dream City” has not yet reached the final stage, it is already possible to assess the current processes and analyze them in the context of a more general policy. Expressing readiness to satisfy the residents of the informal settlement is an important positive step by the Government of Adjara; However, the Government considers this process only in the light of quantity (the number of families who will receive housing) and financial context (the funds needed to be mobilized), while focusing less on the social dimension, including long-term work with the population, their empowerment and ensuring the overcoming of social vulnerability.<sup>63</sup>

On the other hand, the decision of the Government of Adjara to focus on only one group of homeless people on its territory and ignore the needs of other people/groups does not meet the standard of adequate housing and the content of its obligations, especially given the fact that the housing service designed for homeless persons (except for a temporary shelter) does not exist.<sup>64</sup> Ultimately, the housing process cannot be seen as a pre-determined, systemic solution to the problem, which is resulted by, *inter alia*, the lack of a short-term and long-term strategy regarding the housing provision of the homeless.

## Conclusion

The study of the needs of the residents of the “Dream City” and the examination of their resettlement process revealed the systemic challenges encountered at the central and municipal levels regarding fighting against homelessness and ensuring housing. In the absence of a coherent policy in this area, hundreds of people occupying territories as self-help have to live in the harshest conditions for many years.

The Government of Adjara has started working on solving the problem and taking measures in this direction due to the scale of the “Dream City” settlement, the challenges faced by its residents and, first of all, the activism of the local population. Although the first phase of the building process of the apartments for residents is nearing completion, the criteria for households to be provided with housing in the first place have not yet been developed by the commission, and amid scant information about the process, risks of tensions and confrontation between residents are rising.

Given the current situation, it is essential to have close and frequent communication with the target population, proactively inform them and conduct the relevant processes as transparently and inclusively as possible. On the other hand, the government must not consider its obligation to guarantee the right to housing exhausted by transferring ownership of the apartments and should continue to work to eradicate the socio-economic vulnerability of the population. In addition, it is absolutely necessary to have a unified policy that will be compliant with international standards and which would cover all groups in need of housing, as well as set short-term and long-term perspectives for their satisfaction with housing.

---

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> In-depth interview with the representative of the Office of the Public Defender of Georgia.

<sup>64</sup> Correspondence of Batumi Municipality City Hall N 01-1421335829, 01.12.2021.

## Recommendations

Given all the above, the Government of the Autonomous Republic of Adjara should consider the following recommendations:

- In the shortest possible time, in accordance with the international human rights standards, determine the criteria for obtaining housing and groups to be satisfied the first time;
- Ensure regular communication with the residents of the “Dream City” and proactively provide them with information about the work of the Commission;
- Ensure maximum transparency of the process of housing provision and facilitate effective involvement of the local population;
- Issue an administrative promise concerning the satisfaction with housing in the next stages for households that cannot be satisfied in the first place;
- Ensure continuous examination of the human rights situation and socio-economic vulnerability of residents, as well as collection and analysis of detailed data;
- Take non-violent and cooperation-oriented measures to avoid confrontation and conflicts among the population during the resettlement process;
- Ensure intensive work and development of necessary programs with resettled households to strengthen them and overcome their social vulnerability;
- Develop municipal and/or regional housing policy, that will be in line with international standards and will provide support and housing to homeless groups based on the principle of equality;
- Overcome the challenges related to the safety of electricity in the settlement, flooding of the area and waste management system in the shortest possible time;
- Strengthen the work of a social worker on the territory of the “Dream City”. It is important to ensure proactive provision to the population with information about relevant services;
- In the shortest possible time remove the barrier to inclusion in the programs of Batumi Municipality due to lack of registration in the municipality;
- Proactively involve residents in health services, *inter alia*, by informing and referring women to reproductive health services and various disease screening programs.

# Assessment of the Shelter Service for Persons with Psychosocial Disabilities

## Introduction

The failures of the state policy regarding fighting against homelessness and guaranteeing the right to adequate housing severely affects persons with disabilities as a vulnerable group. They are subjected to practices of homelessness, severe and persistent human rights abuses, institutionalization, stigma, and discrimination around the world.<sup>65</sup> Along with the global challenges, the current situation in Georgia is also difficult. The inability of the government to provide adequate housing for members of this group has led to the forced institutionalization of hundreds of people. In this regard, people with psychosocial and intellectual disabilities, who are forced to live for years in specialized institutions - for the most part, in psychiatric institutions and boarding houses - and suffer from severe violations of dignity and rights on a daily basis, are particularly vulnerable.

Under the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (hereinafter referred to as “the Convention”), Georgia is obliged to take immediate measures to dismantle institutions for persons with disabilities and to provide adequate housing and support services for these people in the community. Despite this commitment, the practice of institutionalization still applies to more than 1 000 people in the country. At the same time, in recent years, various services for people with psychosocial needs have been developed in Georgia. These include a Convention-compliant family-type home service, community housing for 24 people, and a shelter program for people with mental disabilities.<sup>66</sup>

This document focuses on the above-mentioned shelter service and its transitional nature. To this end, it analyzes the content, significance and compliance of the program with international human rights standards. Due to its content, the document is divided into 3 main parts. The first part analyzes the content of the program and the regulations related to its implementation, the second part assesses the challenges related to the content and management of the service, as well as the human rights situation of the service recipients and problems regarding their independent living and integration into society. Third and the final part examines the possibility of service transformation and addresses government agencies with the relevant recommendations.

## Methodology

To analyze the content of the service, the research process included the examination of national legislation and by-laws regulating the provision of housing for persons with psychosocial needs, as well as policy documents relevant to the field of mental health. In addition, the relevant international standards, including the Convention and the instruments/documents developed based on this mechanism were analyzed.

The study foresaw the development of an open-ended questionnaire, which was used to conduct two expert interviews with a representative of the Public Defender's Office and an activist with a psychosocial disability. In addition to the above-mentioned tools, the study examined public information received from the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labor, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia and relevant international and national reports on the topic. Special emphasis was placed on the reports of the Public Defender of Georgia.

---

<sup>65</sup> Report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context, A/72/128, 2017, par. 80.

<sup>66</sup> On the right to housing of persons with disabilities and services, see, Social Justice Center, The Right to Adequate Housing - the Analysis of Basic Challenges, 2018.

## 1. Content and Architecture of the Shelter Service

For an overview of the shelter service delivery, this chapter reviews the history of service development, its place in the system of services, its content, target groups, and administration peculiarities. The same chapter will briefly review the main postulates of international legal obligations regarding the provision of housing (including shelter services) for people with psychosocial needs.

### 1.1. Shelter Service – Basic International Standards

Before analyzing the content of a shelter service for people with psychosocial disabilities, it is important to briefly review the key international legal standards that are relevant to the design and operation of a shelter and housing service in general. The Convention is the primary instrument that presents the major basis for the identification of the state obligations in this field.

As a result of the analysis of the human rights standards with regard to adequate housing and independent living,<sup>67</sup> the following key state obligations can be identified:

- Adoption of the legislation, as well as a comprehensive national housing strategy and action plan in line with international standards, which will prioritize persons with disabilities;
- Avoiding institutionalization, carrying out deinstitutionalization, reforming and replacing the specialized and/or segregated services with the community, human rights-based services;
- Increasing the number of social housing, financially affordable and subsidized housing for people with disabilities;
- Providing housing accessibility;
- Introducing the principle of equality and non-discrimination in housing policy;
- Providing access to community infrastructure, transport and communication for persons with disabilities;
- Development of independent living as well as community mental health programs and provision of geographical, financial and informational accessibility to them;
- Training of program and service providers in the field of rights of persons with disabilities;
- Ensure the participation and active involvement of persons with disabilities and organizations representing them in the development, implementation and monitoring of relevant legislation, policies and programs;
- Collection of detailed quantitative and qualitative data on the exercise of the right to housing by persons with disabilities.

The above standards can be regarded as indicators in determining the quality of guaranteeing the right to housing for people with psychosocial needs in the country and identifying the steps to be taken by the state in this area.

### 1.2. The Shelter Service in Georgia

As mentioned above, different types of housing services are provided for people with psychosocial needs. These services are scarce, they are targeted at a specific segment and are only available in certain regions and municipalities. Depending on the content of the services, the specialized services for the representatives of this

---

<sup>67</sup> The above-mentioned standards are pointed out by, *inter alia*, Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2006, Art. 28; Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, General Comment No. 5 (2017) on living independently and being included in the community, CRPD/C/GC/5, 2017, par. 59, 97; Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities, A/70/297, 2015; Report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context, A/72/128, 2017; Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Concluding observations on the seventh periodic report of Finland, E/C.12/FIN/CO/7, 2021; OHCHR, Human Rights Indicators on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities”, <https://bit.ly/3r9neHW>.

group are still provided in the form of boarding houses, community housing and shelters. The purpose of this chapter is to review the main content of one of these specialized services - shelter - and its management peculiarities.

### 1.2.1 The Basic Content of the Shelter Service

The mental health service for people with psychosocial disabilities is an integral part of the State Mental Health Program. This latter is included in the State Health Care Program, that is approved annually by a Government Resolution.<sup>68</sup> The main content of the above-mentioned program is determined by this Resolution - it indicates the circle of service beneficiaries, service financing and management regulations.

Shelter service has emerged in the State Mental Health Program since 2013 as part of inpatient services.<sup>69</sup> Initially, the circle of its beneficiaries was defined as the following groups: 1. Persons with disabilities aged 18 and older with congenital and dementia acquired as a result of mental health problems; 2. Persons benefiting from the institutional patronage component for persons with psychosocial disabilities provided by the Mental Health Program; 3. Other persons with psychosocial disabilities who do not enjoy the institutional patronage component but are in need of shelter and whose inclusion in this sub-program is subject to a relevant decision of the regional council. It is noteworthy that the circle of recipients of this service has been unchanged over the years and provided services to a maximum of 100 people per year.

The list of service recipients only transformed in 2018 when one group of service recipients changed.<sup>70</sup> In particular, under the new regulations, the persons should cumulatively meet several additional criteria to receive the service.

<b>Until 2018</b>	<b>After 2018</b>
Congenital and acquired dementia as a result of a mental health problem	Congenital and acquired dementia as a result of a mental health problem or intellectual disability
Above 18 years of age	Above 18 years of age
Status of a person with disabilities	Status of a person with disabilities
	Lack of a supportive environment

Within the framework of the shelter service, in parallel with housing provision, additional services were foreseen, such as the development and implementation of care and individual rehabilitation programs; Providing at least three meals a day; Organizing appropriate psychiatric services and medical services as needed; Teaching household skills; Providing residents with the opportunity to participate in cultural events, including outside of a specialized facility. With the changes in the program in 2018, additional services were added to the shelter program: reviewing/evaluating the individual service plan of the resident once every 6 months and involving them in various labor activities according to their interests and capabilities.<sup>71</sup>

<sup>68</sup> For example, see Resolution N 4 of the Government of Georgia of January 12, 2022 “On Approval of State Health Care Programs for 2022”.

<sup>69</sup> Resolution N 279 of the Government of Georgia of October 31, 2013 “On Approval of State Health Care Programs for 2013”.

<sup>70</sup> Resolution N 592 of the Government of Georgia of December 28, 2017 “On Approval of State Health Care Programs for 2018”.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

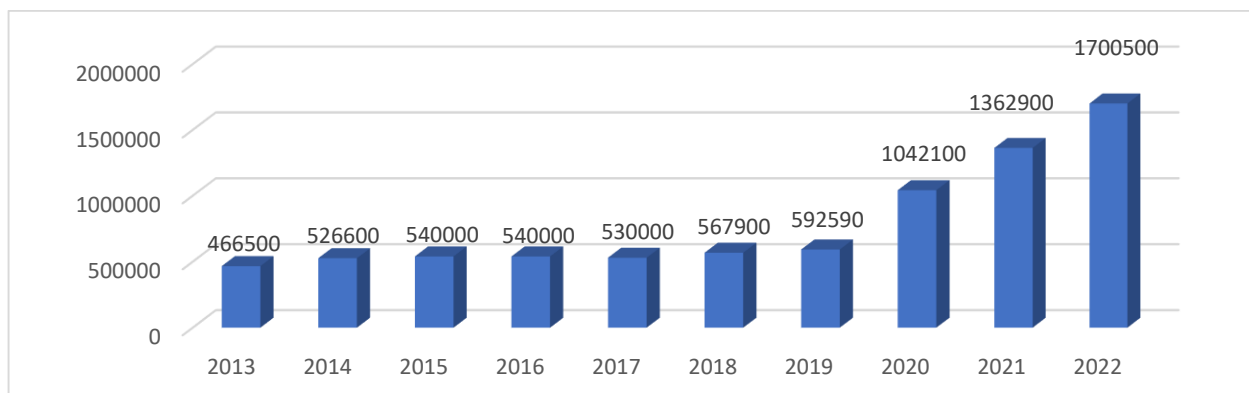
### 1.2.2. Peculiarities of the Management of Shelter Service

Along with a list of services provided by the shelter program, the State Mental Health Program covers issues of its management, including information on the funding allocated to each resident, the financial resources provided for the service, and the identity of the service providers.

The institution responsible for the implementation of the State Mental Health Program is the LEPL - National Agency for Health of the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labor, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia. According to the Government Resolution, the powers of the Agency include concluding a contract with the program implementer, receiving reporting documents from service providers, supervising the program, monitoring, imposing fines on service providers for detected violations, setting additional conditions for program administration, and more.<sup>72</sup>

On the other hand, the Resolution regulates the purchase of shelter services and indicates the financial resources allocated for the service providers. In particular, according to the program, the procurement of services within the framework of the shelter service is carried out under the provisions of the Law of Georgia “on State Procurement.”<sup>73</sup> Currently, the program foresees two service providers: “Acad. B. Naneishvili National Mental Health Center” Ltd. (Khoni Institution - 100 inhabitants) and Eastern Georgia Mental Health Center Ltd. (Bediani Institution - 37 residents).<sup>74</sup> The shelter service is financed on the principle of a global budget, within the monthly budget allocated to the service providers - the monthly budget of Khoni Institution is equal to 106 750 GEL, and budget of Bediani Institution is 37 363 GEL.<sup>75</sup>

**Table N2. Budget for Shelter service in 2013-2022**



The Mental Health Program also underlines the expenses allocated for each beneficiary per day. Despite the almost annual increase in funding for services, the funding provided to service recipients has not increased over the years (until 2017). In particular, in 2013-2017, the amount allocated to each person did not exceed 15 GEL, in 2018-2019 - 17 GEL, in 2020 - 23 GEL, in 2021 - 28 GEL, and 2022 - 35 GEL.

<sup>72</sup> Resolution N 4 of the Government of Georgia of January 12, 2022 “On Approval of State Health Care Programs for 2022”, Art. 3, 8 – 10, 13 - 14, 23; Annex N 11, Art. 7.

<sup>73</sup> Law of Georgia “on State Procurement”, Article 10<sup>1</sup> (3) (d).

<sup>74</sup> Correspondence of the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labor, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia N 01/10863, 9.09.2020.

<sup>75</sup> Resolution N 4 of the Government of Georgia of January 12, 2022 “On Approval of State Health Care Programs for 2022”, Annex N 11, Art. 4 (10), Annex N 11.12.



## **2. Main Challenges in the Functioning of the Shelter Service**

Despite the importance of housing services in the field of mental health, the functioning of shelter services in this form is connected with several important, systemic challenges. In addition to the shortcomings in the provision of services, the practice of institutionalization of its beneficiaries is extremely problematic, which deprives them of the opportunity to live in the community. This chapter aims to review and analyze these key challenges.

### **2.1. Challenges in the Service Management and Delivery**

Although the Mental Health Program regulates the general content of the shelter service and the rules for its administration, several challenges in service management raise a number of serious questions about its effectiveness. Among them is the scarcity of funds allocated to service recipients, the lack of service standards, and insufficient regulation of oversight of service providers.

As mentioned above, the scarcity of funds allocated to each beneficiary of the shelter, which has remained one of the major challenges for years, made it impossible, on the one hand, to create decent living conditions for them and, on the other hand, to provide relevant staff and quality services. It should be noted that by 2022, an equal amount (35 GEL) was allocated to long-term beneficiaries of shelter service and psychiatric inpatient services, which improved inequality between persons with similar needs in the light of funding.<sup>76</sup>

Despite the increase in the daily funding for each resident, the problem is the wording of the relevant regulation, which sets a ceiling for daily expenses per beneficiary (35 GEL), but does not specify the minimum daily expenses, as well as the daily expenses allocated solely for the personal needs of the beneficiaries (for example, personal items and food), which poses a risk of abuse of power by the service provider and neglecting the needs of shelter beneficiaries.

In addition to funding, the issue of regulating the service oversight process is also problematic. The State Health Care Program envisages the submission of reporting documents by the service providers (in this case, Khoni and Bediani Institutions) to the program implementer (LEPL - National Health Agency). The list of the above-mentioned documents, the procedure and the form of submission is stated in the Government Resolution. Namely, Article 14 of the Resolution provides a general rule for reporting to all service providers of the Health Care Program. In particular, the service provider must provide the program implementer with information such as a case register (a general report of the medical services provided, which would cover the general information on the recipient of the service, the calculation of each case, diagnosis and interventions), health information, cost documents.

The program also states that in addition to the above-mentioned general rule, the service provider should use the regulations provided by the specific program. Indeed, the Mental Health Program provides additional conditions for the management and reporting of the services it provides (e.g., psychiatric outpatient and inpatient services), however, the program does not say anything about the management of shelter services.<sup>77</sup> In addition to monitoring service delivery procedures, the mechanism for checking beneficiaries' human rights conditions is also not found in the Mental Health Program, which in turn poses a significant problem.<sup>78</sup>

---

<sup>76</sup> It should be noted that the National Preventive Mechanism of the Public Defender of Georgia has been issuing this recommendation for years; See, for example, the 2018 report of the National Preventive Mechanism of the Public Defender of Georgia, p. 105.

<sup>77</sup> Resolution N 4 of the Government of Georgia of January 12, 2022 "On Approval of State Health Care Programs for 2022", Annex N 11, Art. 9.

<sup>78</sup> In-depth interview with the representative of the community of persons with disabilities.

One of the most important ways to effectively monitor and ensure the quality of shelter services is to develop service standards. Such standards exist concerning various services and fields, for example, the services of the daycare center for persons with disabilities, the operation of temporary shelters for the homeless, psychosocial rehabilitation, the establishment and operation of a crisis center, and services for people with autistic spectrum disorder. It should be noted that the minimum standards have been developed for the services for persons with disabilities and the elderly resided in specialized housing facilities.<sup>79</sup> A shelter for people with psychosocial disabilities is a housing service, although the minimum standards designed for specialized institutions do not apply to it, as by law the standards are applied only to programs that provide social services to individuals on a day-to-day basis.<sup>80</sup> According to the relevant by-laws, such institutions are childcare institution, a nursing home for the elderly, boarding house for the persons with disabilities, community organization, daycare center and mother and child shelter.<sup>81</sup> Accordingly, the areas covered by the minimum standard, including the nutrition of beneficiary, health care, protection from violence and discrimination, individual approach, security and confidentiality, do not apply to mental health shelter service.

Ultimately, regulatory barriers to service management and delivery, in terms of both the content of the service and its quality and oversight, create substantial challenges and ignore the individual needs of people with psychosocial disabilities.

## **2.2. Challenges of Protecting the Rights and Independent Living of Shelter Beneficiaries**

Barriers to the regulation and implementation of the shelter service cannot be regarded as the main problem of this program. The main and systemic challenge is the violation of the rights of shelter beneficiaries and their segregation from society. Although the National Preventive Mechanism under the Public Defender's Office, as well as the Committee against Torture (CPT),<sup>82</sup> have continuously indicated that their human rights situation is dire, systemic mechanisms for changing shelter services and protecting the rights of service recipients have not been established yet.

One of the main challenges in this direction is the segregated nature of the service. Khoni Shelter is located on the territory of the inpatient facility of "Acad. B. Naneishvili National Mental Health Center", while the Eastern Georgia Mental Health Center Ltd. is located in Bediani, which in both cases means isolation from the community, community services and infrastructure.

In addition, as mentioned above, the shelter service is specialized - it is intended only for certain categories of persons with psychosocial and intellectual disabilities, has institutional nature and prevents its beneficiaries from independent living and integration into society.<sup>83</sup> Institutional environment, among others, implies a homogeneity of the living environment, lack of individual approach, inability to strengthen its beneficiaries and engage them in community services. It is clear that the human rights situation of service recipients and the practice of institutionalizing them completely ignores the requirements of the Convention, which the Government has been obliged to comply with for the last 7 years.

---

<sup>79</sup> Order N 01-54/N of Minister of Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia of July 23, 2014 "On the approval of the minimum standards of services for persons with disabilities and the elderly in specialized daycare institutions".

<sup>80</sup> Law of Georgia "on Social Assistance", Art. 13 (1).

<sup>81</sup> Order N 01-52/N of Minister of Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia of February 26, 2010 "On Approval of the Procedure and Conditions for Placing and Withdrawing a Person in a Specialized Institution", Annex N 1, Art. 2 (5<sup>1</sup>); Resolution N 22 of the Government of Georgia of January 27, 2010 "On Approval of the Rules and Conditions for Financing (Co-financing) the placement of a Person in a Specialized Institution", Art. 2 (e).

<sup>82</sup> See, Report to the Georgian Government on the Visit to Georgia Carried out by the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT), from 10 to 21 September 2018, CPT/Inf(2019)16, 2019.

<sup>83</sup> In-depth interview with the representative of the Office of Public Defender of Georgia; In-depth interview with the representative of the community of persons with disabilities.

According to the CPT and the National Prevention Mechanism, the harsh living and institutional environment in the shelter equates to degrading and inhuman treatment.<sup>84</sup> Although some infrastructural changes have been made to the Khoni Institution recently, provision of the adequate housing for shelter beneficiaries is not considered as a priority.<sup>85</sup> In most cases, residents are victims of neglect by staff.<sup>86</sup> A special challenge is the condition of wheelchair users. Unlike men, due to the inaccessibility of bathrooms in the women's section of the Khoni Institution, a woman in a wheelchair (with amputated lower limbs) is forced to enter the bathroom only with the help of her upper limbs.<sup>87</sup>

Due to the institutionalization regime, the residents' daily routine is scarce and pre-scheduled. It is noteworthy that people have limited relationships with beneficiaries of the opposite sex.<sup>88</sup> There are restrictions on going outside the facility, even in the yard. For example, according to a representative of the community of people with psychosocial disabilities, the beneficiaries of the Khoni Institution have the opportunity to go out in the yard a maximum of 2 times a day for 1 hour, while the outer perimeter is conditionally divided into "sectors" for men and women. In addition, infrastructural changes have made it particularly impossible for people using wheelchairs to go out into the yard.<sup>89</sup>

In addition, as mentioned above, the shelter service includes components of nutrition of the beneficiaries, psychiatric care, individual rehabilitation, household skills training, etc. However, it does not include several services that are provided by other housing services designed for persons with disabilities,<sup>90</sup> the implementation of which would play an important role in their independent living and integration into society. The list, *inter alia*, includes the following services:

- Development of a personality-oriented plan and provision of services promoting maximum functional independence of residents;
- Provision of the information on sexual and reproductive health rights and referring to an appropriate medical facility for involvement in relevant services (including, family planning services);<sup>91</sup>
- Provision of the information on various disease screening programs and promoting inclusion in services;
- Development of professional skills;
- Ensuring the involvement in activities promoting integration into society.

In addition, according to experts, it is difficult to provide a significant part of the services formally covered by the shelter program. Care of the shelter beneficiaries is largely limited to pharmacotherapy only.<sup>92</sup> The work of

---

<sup>84</sup> Report to the Georgian Government on the Visit to Georgia Carried out by the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT), from 10 to 21 September 2018, CPT/Inf(2019)16, 2019, p. 53; Public Defender of Georgia, National Preventive Mechanism "Thematic Report on the Monitoring Carried out at Acad. B. Naneishvili National Centre of Mental Health Ltd.", 2019, pp. 3, 31; Public Defender of Georgia, National Preventive Mechanism "Human Rights Situation in Closed Institutions", 2017, p. 46.

<sup>85</sup> In-depth interview with the representative of the Office of Public Defender of Georgia.

<sup>86</sup> Public Defender of Georgia, National Preventive Mechanism "Thematic Report on the Monitoring Carried out at Acad. B. Naneishvili National Centre of Mental Health Ltd.", 2019, p. 7.

<sup>87</sup> In-depth interview with the representative of the community of persons with disabilities.

<sup>88</sup> For example, in Khoni Institution; An in-depth interview with the representative of the community of persons with disabilities.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> The component of providing community services for the elderly and disabled and the component of providing support services for the independent family-type living of persons with disabilities under the State Program of Social Rehabilitation and Child Care.

<sup>91</sup> UNFPA, Assessment of Legal Framework and Policies on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights of Women and Girls with Disabilities in Georgia and Specific Recommendations (in Relation to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities), 2020, p. 57.

<sup>92</sup> In-depth interview with the representative of the Office of Public Defender of Georgia; Public Defender of Georgia, National Preventive Mechanism "Thematic Report on the Monitoring Carried out at Acad. B. Naneishvili National Centre of Mental Health Ltd.", 2019, p. 21.

a social worker and a psychologist in the service is also problematic - there are no detailed job descriptions, and their working methods are scarce, while certain activities (e.g., excursions, psychologist-created groups, land/vegetable cultivation (Khoni facility)) involve only a few beneficiaries.<sup>93</sup> The issue of qualifications is also problematic - shelter social workers usually do not have information about community services, including support services, which would enable the shelter residents to develop skills and prepare for independent living.<sup>94</sup> Their activities are mainly limited to assisting the residents in the process of receiving a social package and ensuring a telephone call with a family member.<sup>95</sup> In parallel with these challenges and taking into account a variety of reasons, including insufficient pay, stigma, the high number of beneficiaries and the complexity of the problems, attracting professional staff is problematic.<sup>96</sup>

Eventually, because of years of living in an institutional environment, people's social and self-care skills are severely impaired and their chances of returning to the community are virtually lost.<sup>97</sup> The current situation is exacerbated by the fact that, as a rule, people stay in psychiatric institutions for years before moving to a shelter, they have already had lost contact with family members and are left without support.<sup>98</sup> According to the thematic experts, because of the above-mentioned fact, as well as the lack of housing and support services in the community, most of the shelter beneficiaries are forced to spend their entire lives in the institution.<sup>99</sup>

### **3. The Possibility of Service Transformation**

Given both the regulation of the service and the human rights situation of service recipients, the question arises regarding the ways to modify the shelter service and whether the context in the country, the relevant legislative and policy framework allow it.

When talking about service transformation, first of all, it is important to discuss the place of this service in the social protection system. As mentioned above, currently the service is provided by the Mental Health Program, which excludes the application of standards designed for specialized institutions. Given the content of the shelter service and the place of other housing services, it makes sense for this service to be part of a social protection system rather than a health care system. The above logic was followed by the pre-2013 regulation of the shelter service, which considered this program as part of the State Program of Child Care and Social Rehabilitation, not the Mental Health State Program.<sup>100</sup>

The reasoning for considering of the shelter service as a part of the social protection system (and not the health care system) is also derived from other housing services operating at the central level and designed for persons with psychosocial and intellectual disabilities. In particular, the Social Rehabilitation and Child Care program, which is part of the social protection system (and not the health care system), provides housing services under the community service sub-program: 1. Component of the community-based service for the elderly and persons with disabilities (which is designed for adult persons with disabilities and their children under the age of 18, as well as the elderly); 2. Component of providing independent living through family-type houses (which is

---

<sup>93</sup> In-depth interview with the representative of the Office of Public Defender of Georgia; In-depth interview with the representative of the community of persons with disabilities.

<sup>94</sup> In-depth interview with the representative of the Office of Public Defender of Georgia.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid; In-depth interview with the representative of the community of persons with disabilities.

<sup>98</sup> In-depth interview with the representative of the Office of Public Defender of Georgia.

<sup>99</sup> Public Defender of Georgia, National Preventive Mechanism, "Thematic Report on the Monitoring Carried out at Acad. B. Naneishvili National Centre of Mental Health Ltd.", 2019, p. 5.

<sup>100</sup> See, Resolution N 101 of the Government of Georgia of February 23, 2011 "On Approval of the 2011 State Program of Social Rehabilitation and Child Care"; Resolution N 503 of the Government of Georgia of December 29, 2011 "On Approval of the 2012 State Program of Social Rehabilitation and Child Care".

intended for adult persons with psychosocial and intellectual disabilities and their children under 18 years of age).<sup>101</sup> It should be noted, that among its target groups the latter component considers the shelter for persons with psychosocial disabilities in the list of beneficiaries,<sup>102</sup> which is an important regulation in the process of returning of institutionalized persons to society.

With the definition of the place of shelter service in the social protection system, a fundamental change in another direction is essential - the transformation of services from an institutional environment to community service. When examining the above changes, it is important to consider the general context as well. Although shelter services are formally available in the Mental Health Program, a significant proportion of people in psychiatric facilities also use inpatient services for housing purposes.<sup>103</sup> People are unable to leave institutions because of different types of social challenges - in most cases, they do not have housing in the community, or family members refuse to receive them back, while these people's income and community services do not give them the opportunity to live independently. Therefore, it is essential to create community housing and support services for the beneficiaries of shelter service and psychiatric facilities to facilitate their independent living and integration into the community,<sup>104</sup> and in the framework of this process, work with them transitionally to develop relevant skills before returning to the community.<sup>105</sup>

Despite the need, the existing legal framework in Georgia does not provide sufficient mechanisms for carrying out deinstitutionalization regarding shelter service or, more generally, specialized institutions. Although the Parliament passed the Law of Georgia "on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities" in 2019, it does not say anything about the state's obligation to ensure the return of institutionalized people to the community.<sup>106</sup>

The possibility of changing the state vision in the direction of transformation of shelter services in the near future is also questioned by the process of privatization of psychiatric institutions carried out a few years ago and the content of the agreements concluded during this period. For example, in the framework of the privatization of the Khoni facility in 2016, the National State Property Management Agency entered into an agreement with B&N Ltd., under which the latter, with various types of responsibilities, undertook to maintain a medical profile for the purchased property/buildings and provide services, including the shelter services for persons with psychosocial disabilities for the entire period of the physical existence of buildings and at least 50 years from the moment of privatization.<sup>107</sup>

On the other hand, the Action Plan of the Mental Health Strategy for 2022-2030 can be considered a positive development,<sup>108</sup> which foresees the revision of the concept of shelter service and its transformation into such

---

<sup>101</sup> Resolution N 634 of the Government of Georgia of December 31, 2021 "On Approval of the 2022 State Program of Social Rehabilitation and Child Care", Annex 1.4.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> In-depth interview with the representative of the Office of Public Defender of Georgia.

<sup>104</sup> Public Defender of Georgia, The Report of the National Preventive Mechanism, 2019, p. 123; Public Defender of Georgia, National Preventive Mechanism, "The Monitoring Report of Acad. B. Naneishvili National Centre of Mental Health Ltd.", 2018, p. 22.

<sup>105</sup> In-depth interview with the representative of the community of persons with disabilities.

<sup>106</sup> The Law contains only a general provision regarding ensuring the accessibility of mental health services. See, Law of Georgia "On the Rights of Persons with Disabilities", Art. 26 (2) (a).

<sup>107</sup> Public Defender of Georgia, Global Initiative on Psychiatry - Tbilisi, Federation Global Initiative on Psychiatry, Privatization of Mental Health Care Facilities in Georgia – Assessment, Conclusions and Recommendations to the Georgian Government, 2017, pp. 24 – 25.

<sup>108</sup> Although the Mental Health Development Strategy and Action Plan for 2015-2020 underlined the acute shortage of community housing and foresaw the drafting of the deinstitutionalization action plan (which, in turn, was not implemented), it did not explicitly mention the need to modify shelter services for people with mental disabilities; See, Resolution N 762 of the Government of Georgia of 31 December 2014 "on the Approval of the Strategic Document for the Development of Mental Health and the Action Plan for 2015-2020".

structures that will facilitate the independent living of the beneficiaries.<sup>109</sup> It is important that the implementation of this activity and the process of returning residents to the community is not sporadic and unsystematic and is seen as part of the policy of deinstitutionalization of large-sized and specialized institutions. The most important mechanism in this regard could be the deinstitutionalization strategy and action plan, which has not yet been developed at this stage, and the process of creating which, among other data, should be based on the number of institutionalized people, their needs and foresee adequate financial and human resources.<sup>110</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Housing policies for people with psychosocial needs have a significant impact on the human rights situation of members of this community and the degree of their integration into society. Only systemic and consistent policies which are compliant with the international standards can prevent their institutionalization and ensure independent living.

Given the content of the shelter service and its administration, as well as the nature of the violations of the rights of its residents, it is clear that the existing service needs significant transformation. It is essential to modify it from an institutionalized and segregated model to a community, human rights-based system, while the issue of its development and implementation should become an important part of social protection and housing policies.

Clearly, the above-mentioned processes should be part of the deinstitutionalization framework, taking into account the socio-economic and health needs of the residents and preventing people from becoming roofless without any support, which is the risk that exists both in Georgia and globally.<sup>111</sup>

## **Recommendations**

Given all the above, the Government of Georgia should consider the following recommendations:

- Amend the national legislation, including, the Law of Georgia “on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities”, to clearly regulate the obligation of the state to prevent the process of institutionalization and ensure deinstitutionalization, as well as develop the community-based housing services;
- With the active participation and involvement of people with psychosocial needs develop a deinstitutionalization strategy and action plan, which will cover the issues of transformation of the shelter service for people with psychosocial disabilities and their return policy to the community. The policy vision should be based on the results of a study regarding the needs of people living in the shelter and cover relevant financial and human resource calculations derived from the study;
- Properly implement the Action Plan of the Mental Health Strategy for 2022-2030, which envisages a change in the concept of shelter, and ensure compliance of this process with international human rights standards;
- Transform the service and consider it not part of the health care sphere but of the social protection system;
- Develop a standard for shelter/housing programs and transform them into small community human rights-based services;

---

<sup>109</sup> Resolution N 23 of the Government of Georgia of January 18, 2022 “On Approval of the Mental Health Strategy of Georgia for 2022-2030”.

<sup>110</sup> Report of the National Preventive Mechanism of the Public Defender of Georgia, p. 102.

<sup>111</sup> See, for example, Canadian Institute for Substance Use Research, Homelessness, Mental Health and Substance Use: Understanding the Connections, 2021.

- *Before the transformation of the service -*
  - Determine the amount of minimum daily expenses allocated to each beneficiary (as well as to their personal needs);
  - Systematically study the human rights situation of the beneficiaries and create an effective mechanism for this end;
  - Ensure the accessibility of the physical environment of the building and the outer perimeter to all residents and the ability to use them without any hindrance;
  - Ensure communication between residents without any hinderance;
  - Ensure effective support for the shelter psychologist and social worker, including through the preparation of a detailed job description and the development of a continuous retraining mechanism;
  - Carrying out a detailed study of the needs of the residents of the shelter service and based on them, implementation of the transition process of teaching/developing the skills necessary for independent living;
  - Ensure the provision of information to residents of the shelter service on sexual and reproductive health rights and related services (including, family planning services), as well as the inclusion of this component as part of the shelter program;
  - Providing information to residents of the shelter service on disease screening programs and ensuring their inclusion in relevant services, as well as considering the inclusion of this component as part of the shelter program;
  - Inclusion of the maximum number of residents in activities promoting integration into society.